An Exploration of How Primary School Teachers in Malawi Plan and Implement Social Studies Lessons for the Preparation of Active Participatory Citizens in a Democratic Society

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Dissertation submitted to the faculty of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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in
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(ABSTRACT)

The purpose of public schooling in many democratic nation-states is the preparation of an active participatory citizenry. For this reason, educators advocate the use of participatory classroom practices for instilling in students knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes for active civic responsibilities. In this connection, Malawi has since the re-introduction of democracy in 1994, reformed the primary school curricula to emphasize participatory classroom practices. Therefore, the aim of this study was to explore how primary school teachers in Malawi planned and implemented social studies lessons for the preparation of competent citizens in a democratic civil society. The study used a case study genre of qualitative research involving three senior grade teachers as research participants. The study yielded four major results based on four generic research questions. The first result was that the social studies primary school curriculum has content and pedagogical approaches that are appropriate for the preparation of active participatory citizens. The second result was that the three teachers displayed limited understanding of the concept of participatory learning that was suggested to them in the curriculum documents. As such, their planning of lessons was largely teacher-centered, which they thought was participatory in approach. The third result was that the teachers’ limited conception of participatory learning, as reflected in the teaching plans, was transferred to their classrooms. In this way, the teacher-centered classroom practices caused a lot of missed opportunities for the students’ development of skills in critical thinking, problem solving, and rational decision-making that are necessary for active participation in a shared democratic political community. The last result was that state policies on the use of English as the medium of class instruction and the grade eight mandated examinations negatively contributed to the decisions that the teachers made in the organization of participatory classroom practices. Thus, the general picture based on these research results showed that there was a discrepancy between the state’s intended curriculum and the teachers’ enacted curriculum.
DEDICATION

To my wife Grace who encouraged me to persevere hardships when the going got tough. To my children Tapiwa, Pamela, and Wisdom for their perseverance of my long absence. To my late mom, Dorah and my dad, Peterson. I also dedicate this work to all people in the world who love genuine democracy.
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<td>ASSP</td>
<td>African Social Studies Programme</td>
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<tr>
<td>LEA</td>
<td>Local Education Authority</td>
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<tr>
<td>MANEB</td>
<td>Malawi National Examinations Board</td>
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<td>MIITEP</td>
<td>Malawi Integrated In-service Teacher Education Programme</td>
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<td>MUSTER</td>
<td>Multi-Site Teachers Education Research</td>
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<tr>
<td>PEA</td>
<td>Primary Education Advisor</td>
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<td>PCAR</td>
<td>Primary Curriculum and Assessment Reform</td>
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<td>PCK</td>
<td>Pedagogical Content Knowledge</td>
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<td>TALULAR</td>
<td>Teaching and Learning Using Locally Available Resources</td>
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<td>TK/F</td>
<td>Teacher Knowledge Formal</td>
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<td>TK/P</td>
<td>Teacher Knowledge Practical</td>
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<td>TTC</td>
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CHAPTER ONE
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Introduction

A fundamental premise of modern democracies is that the survival of such societies rests on people who think critically and participate actively in the affairs of public life (Winch, 2004). For this reason, there has been a resurgence of interest in citizenship and citizenship education in the modern democratic nation-states since the early 1990s (Kymlicka & Norman, 2000). Three major trends have contributed to this upsurge of interest. The first trend in the establishment or re-establishment of democratic systems of governments in Africa, Europe, and Latin America since the early 1990s (Ahluwalia, 2001; Kalu, 2003; Osaghae, 2003). The second trend is the decline in motivation by citizens to actively participate in public life especially in the old established democracies. The last trend is globalization, which has contributed to the decline of welfare states all over the world (Carnoy, 1999; Heater, 2004; Osler & Starkey, 2003).

The resurgence of interest in citizenship has also motivated politicians and educators who support the view that the principle obligation of public schooling is citizenship education (Banks, 1997; Dam & Volman, 2004; Kristjansson, 2004; Leistyna & Woodrum, 1996; Winch, 2004). In addition to this, some educators observe that social studies stands out as the most appropriate subject for the preparation of competent citizens because of the multidisciplinary nature of its content, and a wide array of pedagogical teaching and learning approaches (Biesta; 2006; Barton & Levstik, 2004; Thornton, 2005a). Despite a general consensus on bolstering citizenship and citizenship education, research studies on classroom practices for the preparation of active citizens have not kept pace with the philosophical and theoretical developments of the concept (Dilworth, 2004). In this paper, “classroom practices” refer to the whole range of teaching and learning techniques, lesson activities, and teaching and learning resources that teachers organize in classrooms for the preparation of active citizens.

From this perspective of classroom practices, the paradigm shift that occurred in the Malawi education system after the re-introduction of democracy in 1994 sparked the interest for this study. The political change necessitated educational reforms to reflect the political, social, and economic life associated with a democratic society (Simbeye, 2005; Tlou, 1998). Such reforms made citizenship learning the first of the eight national goals of primary school
education in Malawi (Ministry of Education, Science & Technology, 2001). Simbeye agreed that the whole essence in including citizenship education in the primary school curriculum in Malawi was to prepare students for active participation in public life.

Theoretically, the paradigm shift in the classroom changed the status of the students from passive witnesses of events to that of active agents. The role of teachers also changed from that of traditional teachers to that of facilitators of learning processes. Such a shift is worth a critical investigation because teachers make everyday decisions regarding classroom practices (Chapin & Messick, 2002; Thornton, 2005a). However, various constraints influence teachers’ decisions and actions in the classrooms (Adler & Goodman, 1983; Grant, 2003). Thus, using the case study genre of a qualitative inquiry, this study was an exploration of how social studies primary school teachers in Malawi planned and implemented lessons that reflected the preparation of active participatory citizens for the democratic civil society. In this study, the term “social studies citizenship curriculum” is used to describe the prime motive of social studies in the preparation of active citizens.

This chapter has four sections. The first section, “critical pedagogy theory,” is a discussion of the lens for learning how primary school social studies teachers in Malawi planned and implemented classroom practices that aimed at the preparation of active and critically minded citizens. The second section, “statement of the problem,” is a comprehensive discussion of the nature of the problem that warranted this investigation. The third section, “purpose of the study,” details the reasons that made this investigation a worthwhile endeavor. The last section, “research questions,” is a discussion of research questions that set the parameters for the investigation of this study. Such questions also guided the review of literature.

Since the overall goal of this study was an exploration of classroom practices that promote the preparation of active participatory citizens, critical pedagogy theory provided the appropriate lens for this kind of exploration.

Critical Pedagogy Theory

Social studies educators assert that knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes students gain in classrooms can help them to participate actively in social, economic, and political issues affecting their adult lives in a shared community (see Barton & Levstik, 2004; Giroux, 1994; Leistyna & Woodrum, 1996; Parker, 2003). In this study, “active participation” refers to the development of critically minded citizens who can make informed decisions for sustaining a
vibrant democratic shared political community. Therefore, social studies classrooms must display an environment that helps students in the gaining of knowledge and development of skills and attitudes for the promotion of active engagement in public life. It is from this perspective that critical pedagogy theory helps us in understanding classroom practices that aim at the preparation of competent citizenry.

Nieto (2005) defined critical pedagogy as an interactive process through which students and teachers view issues with critical minds for making informed decisions. According to Evans (2004), critical pedagogy is connected to John Dewey’s works on social reconstruction during the early twentieth century. However, it was not until the 1980s that critical pedagogy became an important model for interactive learning in the classroom (Evans, 2004). Paulo Freire, a Brazilian educational theorist, was one of the earliest and influential commentators of this notion in his work *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (Evans, 2004). In this book, Freire distinguished between “banking education” and problem-solving education. By banking education, he referred to the traditional ways of teaching that assumed that students were like empty vessels, waiting to be filled with knowledge from their teachers. The problem with this kind of education is that it makes schools centers of reproduction of existing social inequalities through a curriculum that represents the interests of influential groups (Luykx, 1999).

Leistyna and Woodrum (1996) agreed that banking education “focuses exclusively on preparing learners for the work force, abstracts education from the challenges of developing a critically conscious, socially responsible, and politically active student body and citizenry” (p. 1). Indeed, this form of education does not promote critical thinking that is necessary for the preparation of active citizens. On the other hand, problem-solving education encourages a dialogue between teachers and students. It is this second approach that is linked to critical pedagogy theory. Having looked at the definition of critical pedagogy theory, the rest of this section discusses the importance of the theory for the exploration of classroom practices.

There are three reasons that make critical pedagogy theory significant to this study. The first reason is that the theory emphasizes the importance of critical thinking about “taken for granted” everyday life issues. Thus, the theory primarily helps teachers and students to analyze issues from multiple perspectives through reasoning, reading, and writing (Giroux, 1994; Greene, 1996). The goal is for teachers and students to critically examine the links between ideology, power, and culture in a politically shared community (Leistyna & Woodrum, 1996).
The advantage with this approach is that it gives students multiple views, which they could use for a critical judgment of their own prior beliefs, perspectives, and stances they bring to class from home. In turn, such critical judgments help students in the making of rational decisions for solving problems in and outside their own societies.

The second reason is that critical pedagogy theory links well with participatory learning, which is the hallmark of civic learning (Barton & Levstik, 2004; Parker, 2003; Parker, 2004). Since the success in preparing active participatory citizens depends on the curriculum, a poorly framed curriculum can be a conduit for reproducing existing social inequalities that prohibit active participation in a shared community (Banks, 1997; Banks 2004b). In this respect, the theory informs us about the importance of a proactive citizenship curriculum in a democratic society. The goal of such a curriculum is to engage students in a critical inquiry of how social and historical situations created the existing inequalities in a society. Indeed, students can demonstrate their critical thinking and decision-making skills only when they take an active role in their own learning. Viewed from this perspective, the theory empowers both teachers and students “to make sense of the world and their interactions therein--to engage and thus interact as participants (shapers) of history rather than simply objects (passive recipients) to be acted upon, manipulated, and controlled” (Leistyna & Woodrum, 1996, p. 6; emphasis in original).

The last reason is that critical pedagogy theory shows us the context in which learning for the preparation of active citizenry takes place. As already indicated, this approach takes students as thinking beings who should take an active role in their own learning (Greene, 1996; Leistyna & Woodrum 1996). The theory informs us that teachers should use interactive learning techniques that take into account the students’ prior knowledge to promote critical thinking and decision-making processes. Thus, the theory offers the best lens for understanding how teachers facilitate active learning processes in their classrooms in terms of students’ acquisition of knowledge and development of skills, values, and attitudes necessary for active participation in a democratic civil society.

All in all, critical pedagogy theory gives us the sort of participatory learning expected in a social studies classroom. Details of what social studies educators view as appropriate active participatory classroom practices are discussed in Chapter Two under the section of “The social studies curriculum and citizenship education.” Having looked at critical pedagogy theory as a
Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate how primary school teachers in Malawi planned and taught social studies lessons for the preparation of active participatory citizens in a democracy. As Dilworth (2004) correctly argued, understanding the preparation of effective citizens based on curriculum documents alone is not enough without reference to how teachers enact the curriculum. For this reason, the understanding of the preparation of active participatory citizens was from the perspective of both the design of the social studies curriculum and how teachers enacted it in their classrooms. On the one hand, understanding of the design of the curriculum involved analysis of curriculum documents and interviews with two curriculum developers. This process helped in learning how the state organized the content and pedagogies of the curriculum for the preparation of active participatory citizens.

On the other hand, understanding of how teachers enacted the curriculum involved interviewing three case study teachers, analyzing their teaching plans, and observing their lessons. In this regard, interactive dialogues with the teachers helped in learning their conceptions of democracy, citizenship, and participatory learning, as well as how those conceptions influenced the decisions they made in the planning and teaching of their lessons. Analysis of teaching plans aimed at learning how the teachers organized lesson activities to meet specific objectives of the lessons. As such, the analysis helped in understanding how the teachers either adhered to or deviated from the intended curriculum. Pre-lesson and post lesson interviews with each of the teachers helped in understanding the decisions that the teachers made in the planning and implementation of the lessons. Classroom observations helped in learning how the teachers implemented their planned lessons and the kind of challenges that influenced their organization of classroom practices.

In this connection, McLaughlin and Talbert (1990) observed that teachers’ organization of classroom practices are either constrained or stimulated based on the context in which the teachers operate. As shall be explained in the next section, various systemic problems constrain teachers in the organization of effective lessons in Malawi. Therefore, the next section is a discussion of the context of the research problem.
Statement of the Problem

The paradigm shift that occurred in primary school classrooms in Malawi following the post-democratic curriculum reforms constituted a problem that required a thorough investigation. The problem came about because the Ministry of Education expects teachers to change their classroom practices from the traditional didactic teaching to participatory learning (Simbeye, 2005). For example, in connection with the new social studies curriculum, Simbeye (2005) argued that:

Citizenship education must depart from using the traditional teaching methods and focus more on participatory methods such as group work and group discussions, role plays, simulations, matching exercises, ranking activities, decision-making, enter-educate…, case studies, field work, debates, community-action projects, values clarification etc. (p. 2)

This assumption is not without problems, of course, because such a shift requires that teachers must possess appropriate content and instructional knowledge for implementing participatory classroom practices. Yet the reality on the ground is that teachers in Malawi face various constraints that include poor teacher preparation programs (Hauya, 1993; Kunje, 2002; Stuart, 2002), large class sizes (Stuart, 1999), and inadequate classrooms (Croft, 2002). Other constraints are inadequate teaching and learning resources (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, 2001; Kunje, 2002), and diversity in students as reflected in their ethnicity, language, religion, gender, and age (Hicks, Kishindo & Tlou, 2003). However, understanding of how this shift constitutes a problem for teachers makes sense in context of the political, social, and economic problems that Malawi has experienced since the gaining of its independence from Britain in 1964. This background is important in understanding why the Ministry of Education embarked on curricula reforms that compel teachers to use participatory classroom practices for the preparation of competent citizens in a democracy.

Malawi is one of the sub-Saharan countries, and has a population of approximately 13 million people. The country is culturally heterogeneous composed of several ethnic groups, but the major ones are the Chewa, Yao, Lomwe, Tumbuka, Ngoni, Mang’anja, and Nyanja (Pike & Rimmington, 1965). In terms of religion, 55% are Protestants, 20% are Catholics, 20% are Moslems, and the rest practice traditional religions. Both Christianity and Islam are foreign religions and they cut across the ethnic groups. Thus, ethnicity and religion are the main ways
people in Malawi identify themselves. At a glance, this picture gives the kinds of challenges that Malawi faces in an effort at nation building.

Just like many other nation-states in Africa, Malawi started facing problems associated with citizens’ participation in nation building soon after gaining political independence. For example, it became evident that ethnicity influenced people’s political participation during the early experimentation of multiparty democracy in Malawi (Kaspin, 1997). Such ethnic bloc citizenship led to the failure of the first experimentation of multiparty democracy and national citizenship in many of the new post-colonial states in Africa, including Malawi. The failure of the first experimentation of democracy during the early post-colonial period made Malawi, just like many other states, to adopt a one-party system of government (Nohlen, Krennnerich & Thibaut, 1999). The one-party system of government quickly degenerated into an authoritarian regime as one way of silencing the opposition to achieve the goal of nation building for social and economic developments (Englund, 2006; Kaspin, 1997). Details of the evolution of ethnic citizenship and its impact on nation building are discussed in Chapter Two.

However, Malawi re-established a multiparty democratic form of government in 1994. The following year the country adopted a new Republic Constitution that is based on the common standard of governance of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of the United Nations. There are three fundamental principles to this common standard of governance. The first one is that of civil and political rights (Quigley & Bahmueller, 1991). This principle provides adherence to desirable democratic civil and political rights to all citizens in a nation-state. The second principle is that of the right to free elections that grant citizens the freedom to participate in free and fair democratic elections in their nation-states. The last principle grants economic, social, and cultural rights to all citizens in a nation-state. The implication of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is that people in every democratic nation-state are granted equal participation rights in political, social, and economic matters affecting their lives (Quigley & Bahmueller, 1991).

As a member of the United Nations, the new Republic Constitution in Malawi grants equal participation rights to all citizens in the country. For example, Chapter IV of the Human Rights section 20 (1) of the Constitution reads:

Discrimination of persons in any form is prohibited and all persons are, under any law, guaranteed equal and effective protection against discrimination on grounds of race,
Thus, the new Republic Constitution grants citizens with the rights of active participation in political, social, and economic affairs of their country.

While the new Constitution grants equal participation rights to all citizens, exercising of those rights has proven to be a problem. In terms of political participation, multiparty democracy has, once again, revealed that people in Malawi put their interest in ethnic bloc political participation at the expense of national citizenship (Kaspin, 1997; Meinhardt, 1999; Von Doepp, 2005). For example, the three multiparty elections after the re-introduction of the democratic system of government have revealed that the country is divided on ethnic and region lines (Kaspin, 1997; Meinhardt, 1999; Von Doepp, 2005). Under such circumstances, active participation for national development is hard to implement because the less influential groups are excluded or they feel excluded from participating in activities of national interest. In addition to this problem is that most people, including the youth, have misconceptions about freedoms and rights that are associated with the democratic form of government (Simbeye, 2005). Simbeye noted that increased crime rate, juvenile delinquency, increased violence against women and children, political and religious intolerance, abuse of power, voter apathy, and unsustainable use of the environment are some of the manifestations of such misconceptions.

Against this background, the democratic government of Malawi emphasized the need for a more active participatory citizenry for national development regardless of the citizens’ political, economic, or cultural identities. Therefore, during the post-democratic era, the Ministry of Education embarked on a series of curricula reforms for the preparation of such an active participatory citizenry (Malawi Institute of Education, 1996; Simbeye, 2005; Tlou, 1998). For example, the Ministry stressed that primary school education is important for the preparation of “a more economically active, informed, healthier, and participatory population” (Ministry of Education, Science & Technology, 2001, p. vii). The Ministry’s expectation is that students who display active participation in class activities are more likely to exhibit the same posture in the larger society during their adulthood. Consequently, the Ministry compels teachers to use participatory classroom practices for the preparation of competent citizens in a democratic civil society.
Social studies was one of the subjects that received great attention during the post-democratic curriculum reforms because of its posture in addressing social, economic, and political aspects of life that affect all citizens in a democratic civil society. In terms of content, the new social studies curriculum was re-organized into a multidisciplinary and multicultural field with the goal of equipping students with knowledge about the social, economic, and political issues affecting people’s lives. As regard to classroom practices, the new social studies emphasizes active participatory learning approaches for the enhancement of skills and attitudes in students (Simbeye, 2005). Critical thinking, problem solving, and rational decision-making were key elements to this reform process because these are the tenets of active civic life in a democratic society. In fact, educational reforms in the post-democratic Malawi emphasize active participatory classroom practices whether such reforms are based on subject areas or the whole school curricula. The social studies curriculum that had been reformed since 1997 was launched in all public schools in 2005. Details of such reforms are discussed in Chapter Two under the title “The social studies curriculum and citizenship education.”

Therefore, from the context of preparing an active participatory citizenry in a shared democratic political community, this study aimed at investigating how various systemic factors influenced three senior grade primary school teachers in the enactment of the new social studies citizenship curriculum. The term “systemic factors” is used to refer in this paper to a group of factors that jointly influence teachers in the decisions they make in relation to the planning and implementation of lessons. In this study, such factors included the teachers’ (and students’) socio-cultural backgrounds, state policies on education, types of students, availability of resources, and class sizes. The research problem provided the rationale of the study as discussed in the next section.

Rationale and Significance of the Study

Although literature in Malawi indicates that teachers in the primary school sector face enormous constraints, Nyirenda (2005) observed that there are not many studies that have investigated, in a critical way, how such constraints impact on teachers’ organization of participatory classroom practices. In this connection, Croft (2002), who studied the use of songs in English lessons of lower classes in primary schools in Malawi, argued that most of donor-funded research studies in the country focused on factors affecting quality of education rather than classroom practices. He, therefore, recommended a more critical investigation of how
teachers implement the school curricula. For example, he recommended that observations and discussions with teachers were critical avenues in the exploration of participatory classroom practices. Owing to the limited number of studies in this area, this study aimed at learning how teachers enacted the new social studies curriculum to meet the state’s goal of preparing active participatory citizens in a democracy.

Teachers were the focus of this investigation because they make final decisions as regard to the implementation of any curriculum (Chapin & Messick, 2002; Thornton, 2005a). There were two main reasons that made studying from the standpoint of the teachers important. The first reason was based on the fact that many African countries spend their energies in the development of various school curricula, but do very little in ensuring their effective implementation (Mchazime, 2005). An understanding of the implementation of any curriculum entails an investigation of the decisions that teachers make in the enactment of the curriculum. In fact, Mchazime cautioned that neglecting the implementation of the school curricula is counterproductive to all the efforts that were put in the development stages.

The second reason was based on curriculum reformers’ blatant exclusion of classroom teachers at all levels of curricula development processes. For example, Hertzberg (1981) observed that in the United States, “the reformers assumed that they already know what was going on, and they tended to underestimate the problems as well as the consequences of change” (p. 165). Usually curriculum developers reform curricula based on researchers’ formulated theories about teaching and learning (Fenstermacher, 1994). We will fall in the aura of stating the obvious that such theories are important sources of knowledge for the reformation of the curricula. However, there is abundant research evidence that suggests that teachers produce knowledge in classrooms as they enact any curriculum (see for example, Fenstermacher, 1994; Shulman, 1991). Yet reformers do not usually take into consideration the practical knowledge, which teachers produce and use in their classrooms as they enact the intended curriculum (Hertzberg, 1981). Thus, this study was not just aimed at investigating how various systemic factors affected teachers in the organization of social studies lessons, but also the kind of practical knowledge the teachers produced and used in their classrooms depending on what worked best for them (Thornton, 1994).

The significance of this study was in terms of adding new knowledge to the improvement of the social studies curriculum and its implementation as regard to the preparation of active
participatory citizens in Malawi. As discussed in Chapter Five, the results of this study add insights to the existing body of knowledge that stakeholders in the country can use for the effective preparation of an active participatory citizenry. The stakeholders include the Ministry of Education, teacher training colleges, curriculum reformers, and the Malawi National Examinations Board (MANEB). It was in the context of the research problem and significance of the study that I developed research questions for this investigation.

Research Questions

Four generic research questions were framed to guide the actual investigation and were as follows:

1. How are the content and pedagogical strategies of the social studies primary school curriculum in Malawi organized for the preparation of active participatory citizens in a democracy?
2. How do teachers’ conceptions of participatory classroom practices influence their planning of lessons for the preparation of effective citizenry in a democratic society?
3. How do teachers’ conceptions of participatory classroom practices influence their decisions in the implementation of the social studies citizenship curriculum?
4. How do the state’s policies on language and grade eight public examinations influence teachers in the organization of classroom practices for the preparation of active participatory citizens?

An understanding of how teachers plan and implement social studies lessons for the preparation of active participatory citizens can make sense in relation to the curriculum that the teachers use for the organization of their lessons. Therefore, the first question aimed at investigating how the Ministry of Education organized the content and pedagogical approaches of the social studies curriculum for the preparation of competent citizens in a democracy. The concepts of democracy, citizenship, critical thinking, problem solving, and making informed decisions were very critical for this investigation. From this perspective, the second question aimed at exploring how the teachers’ understanding of participatory learning influenced their decisions in the planning of lessons. The third question sought to understand how the teachers implemented their planned lessons in the classrooms. However, as shall be discussed in greater details in the next chapter, teachers face a wide array of constraints that affect their decisions in the organization of classroom practices. Therefore, the last question aimed at exploring how state policies in the use
of English as a medium of class instruction and the grade eight public examinations influenced the teachers’ organization of classroom practices.

Although, the four research questions provided the parameters for the systematic investigation of the teachers’ classroom practices for the preparation of active citizens, there might have been some limitations that negatively affected the achievement of this goal.

Personal Reflection about Research Limitations

There are three limitations that might have affected the results of this study. The first limitation is that I used English during the semi-structured interviews with teacher participants. In the exception of possibly one teacher, the other two case study teachers were not very fluent English speakers. The three teachers had chosen English for the interviews, which I felt was the right thing because most of the concepts used during the interviews had no direct equivalent translations in the local vernaculars. However, in some areas the teachers failed to express themselves better during the actual interviews. Such struggles might have affected what they intended to say. The second limitation is that my presence in the classrooms of the three case study teachers might have forced the teachers to change some of their practices. Such circumstances might have some halo effects on the data I gathered during classroom observation episodes. The last limitation is that the seven-week period of classroom observations might not have been adequate for a thorough investigation of what actually occurred in the classrooms.

However, the goal of the four research questions was to overcome the stated potential limitations. For example, the questions aimed at getting detailed data from various sources for learning the teachers’ organization of classroom practices that were close enough to the teachers that the data represented. The questions also provided the framework for the review of literature. Therefore, discussion in the next chapter delves into the understanding of the conversations among authors and researchers about the preparation of active participatory citizens in a democracy.
CHAPTER TWO  
REVIEW OF LITERATURE  

Introduction  

An understanding of the teachers’ roles in the classrooms makes sense in relation to the citizenship curriculum they use in planning their lessons and the students they teach. In this connection, Luykx (1999) correctly observed that curriculum issues are an interplay of the state, students, and teachers. However, viewing from this perspective the topic becomes too cumbersome for this study. Therefore, I will review literature about the roles of the state and students in the context of understanding decisions that teachers make concerning classroom practices for the preparation of active participatory citizens in a democracy. There are four sections that make up this chapter.  

The first section, “conceptions of citizenship,” sets the tone for understanding the conversations about citizenship and citizenship education in democratic nation-states. Discussion in the second half of this section gives the background for understanding the link between teachers’ cultural histories and their classroom practices. The second section, “the citizen factory,” is a discussion of arguments in favour of the school as a hub for the preparation of competent citizens in a democratic nation-state. The third section is about “the social studies curriculum and citizenship education.” This section examines the conversations about the role of social studies in the preparation of active citizens, and the kind of classroom practices that are appropriate to fulfill that goal. The last section, “the curriculum gatekeepers,” is the epicenter of the review of literature. The focus of the discussion in this section is what research studies reveal about a wide array of factors that influence classroom practices.  

Conceptions of Citizenship  

Citizenship is a value-laden concept with meaning that changes according to the political systems in which it operates (Arai, 1999; Beiner, 1995; Jones & Gaventa, 2002). All over the world societies developed forms of citizenships according to their needs, aspirations, and contexts. This shows that citizenship is a socially constructed concept. Understanding the concept in this context, the first part of this section is a discussion of the development of the Western conceptions of citizenship since Ancient Greece. Many nation-states in the world use this conception of citizenship, though in modified ways. The second part of the section is a discussion of the
evolvement of Traditional forms of African governance and citizenship since the pre-colonial times and how those forms have survived to the modern times. The section also examines the implications of the co-existence between the indigenous forms of governance and citizenship and those adopted from other parts of the world, especially the West. In this paper, the term “Traditional” is used to refer to the indigenous forms of governance and citizenships that evolved in Africa since pre-colonial times, whereas the term “Western” refers to democratic values and citizenship that developed in the Western world since the Greek times.

Western Conceptions of Citizenship since Ancient Greece

A definition of citizenship is a starting point to the understanding of the Western meaning of the concept since Ancient Greece. In this connection, Abowitz and Harnish (2006) provided a more comprehensive definition of citizenship in a democracy as they stated:

Citizenship in a democracy (a) gives membership status to individuals within a political unit; (b) confers an identity on individuals; (c) constitutes a set of values, usually interpreted as a commitment to the common good of a particular unit; (d) involves practicing a degree of participation in the process of political life; and (e) implies gaining and using knowledge and understanding of laws, documents, structures, and processes of governance. (p. 653)

Although this definition is comprehensive, its flaw is that it leans too much on the political participation in the civil society, making citizenship a fundamentally political concept. However, citizenship also includes all other aspects of human interactions such as in social and economic spheres of life. In this regard, Griffith and Barth’s (2006) definition fills this gap as they explained that citizenship enhances humanity through membership and participation in a wide array of life that include the social, political, and economic spheres of life. They added that these human interactions occur at various levels such as the family, community, nation, and the world. But, to understand the modern usage of citizenship, we need to begin with its earliest conception, tracing out why and how the meaning has changed over time (Carr, 1991).

Athenians and Romans were the first to articulate the ideals of the Western form of citizenship the way we understand it in modern times (Gardner, 1993; Pocock, 1995). The Athenian usage of citizenship dealt with participation in political self-governance, and this has survived to the modern world, but in a greatly modified form (Smith, 2002; Heater, 2004). The Greeks used the term “polites” and the Romans “civitas” to refer to human associations in a
political system. The implication of this is that right away from its inception, citizenship was a form of belonging within a given political entity. The Athenians were also the first people to associate citizenship with a democratic form of political system. At that time, Aristotle, one of the great Greek philosophers, defined a citizen as an individual who participated in the public affairs of his community (Carr, 1991; Heater, 2004). Women, slaves, and settled immigrants were excluded from this kind of political participation (Carr, 1991; Heater, 2004). Thus, during the Greek times, all people had civil rights as citizens of a political territory, but not all of them had rights for political and economic participation.

Romans extended the Greek conception of citizenship to include all free men (such as freed slaves) in their empire, but allowed the people to operate in their local cultures (Gardner, 1993; Heater, 2004), as long as the people observed the Roman Laws. They broadened the conception of citizenship because the Roman Empire was the first global village that comprised various nations and diverse peoples (Bauman, 2000). Romans were the first to associate human rights (also called *humanitas* in Latin) with citizenship. For example, political rights gave government the obligation to protect its citizens in the empire. However, as Barbalet (1988) correctly observed, states create rights for people to exercise them. Hence, the adult males performed duties like paying taxes, joining military service, and voting, in return for the state’s protection. This was the conception of active participation during the Romans times, but the usage of participation in modern times is much broader (Jones & Gaventa, 2002; Mohanty & Tandon, 2006). Although Roman citizenship was more inclusive than the Greek, citizenship still remained a restricted political concept because it involved only recognized men.

Many Western nation-states practiced the Greco-Roman form of citizenship for almost two millennia (Pocock, 1995). However, during the twentieth-century the conception of citizenship as merely a status held under the authority of a state has been contested and broadened to include various political and social struggles of recognition (Isin & Turner, 2002). Minority groups, defined differently in different societies, fought their way to gain citizenship rights that garnered them full participation in political, social, and economic matters. Thus, the core meaning of citizenship in modern times is membership in a political system with some rights for active participation in public life (Smith, 2002). To date, various models of citizenship have been proposed and debated, but there is no single version of citizenship, which is acceptable to all (Arai, 1999). For this reason, various conceptions of citizenship emerge based
on the political system in which the concept operates. Such conceptions include democratic citizenship, liberal citizenship, cultural citizenship, national citizenship, global citizenship, and participatory citizenship (Jones & Gaventa, 2002). However, participation is a key element to all models of citizenships (Mohanty & Tandon, 2006). This paper uses the conception of participatory citizenship in a democratic society because the goal of this research was an investigation of classroom practices for the preparation of active citizens in such a society.

Although citizenship remains a highly contested concept, social studies educators agree that the Western conception of citizenship in a democracy must contain four core elements. Identity is first core element and it forms the basis for understanding other core elements. Sears and Hughes (1996) defined identity as a feeling of belonging to a group that is different from others. People can identify themselves by birthplace, class, gender, race, ethnicity, religion, culture, or nationality, and these forms of identity give the people a sense of belonging to the community they share (Banks, 2005b; Sicakkan & Lithman, 2005). However, the way people identify themselves has contributed negatively to active participation in a shared political community (Gaventa, 2006; Mohanty & Tandon, 2006). The reason for this is that people tend to put their micro-level interest first, at the expense of national interests (Ceuppens & Geschiere, 2005; Gulalp, 2006; Lebovics, 2004). But, this is generally because citizenship draws abstract boundaries as to who should be included or excluded from a community or nation (Steveson, 2004).

Rights, also known as entitlements, are the second core elements of citizenship. Citizenship in a democracy confers equal legal rights upon all people, regardless of their identities. Equality is, thus, an attempt by modern democratic nation-states to allow all people’s active participation in national activities. However, granting of rights is one thing, exercising those rights is the other. Social inequalities affect effective participation of people in public affairs because the people who are marginalized, or feel marginalized, have negative feelings towards active participation in public life (Nohlen et al., 1999).

Duties, responsibilities, and obligations are the third core elements of citizenship in a political entity. While identity and rights are non-functional components of citizenship, duties and responsibilities are the functional side of citizenship (Harvard Law Review, 1997). Citizens passively acquire the non-functional components, but functional components empower them to perform certain roles in their shared community (Harvard Law Review, 1997). Indeed,
citizenship in a democratic society does not imply merely obeying the laws of the country, but taking an active sort of participation in political, social, and economic aspects of life for the maintenance of a decent society (Heater, 2004; Ricci, 2004). In many political systems, especially in liberal democratic states, rights and duties indicate the duality of citizenship, which is both vertical and horizontal (Cairns, 1999; Harvard Law Review, 1997; Reuben, 1997). The vertical dimension indicates the relationship between the individuals and the state, whereas the horizontal dimension connects the individuals themselves as members sharing the same political community (Harvard Law Review, 1997). The vertical dimension defines the obligations of people to their state, and the reciprocal role of the state to its citizens (Cairns, 1999). The horizontal dimension empowers members who share the same identity to participate actively as equals in the affairs of their civic community.

Participation is the last core element of citizenship, which Ricci (2004) described as the hallmark of the concept. In fact, participation is also another functional dimension of citizenship. In this connection, Arai (1999) and Ricci (2004) correctly observed that good people live according to a set of legitimate moral principles, but good citizens carry the additional role of participating actively in public life. Indeed, participation is a key concept in active citizenship in a society regardless of the context we use it (Mohanty & Tandon, 2006). While agreeing with the notion that people attain participatory citizenship through practice and engagement, Gaventa (2006) admitted that participation is a value-laden and contested political concept.

From this understanding of the origins and development of the Western forms of citizenship and democracy, discussion in the next subsection is about African traditional conception of citizenship. Discussion in this subsection will help us understand how ethnic identities in African democratic nation-states have presented a big challenge to participatory citizenship.

African Conceptions of Citizenship since Pre-colonial Times

Modern African democratic nation-states are developing their forms of governance and citizenship, which have elements of both Traditional and Western forms of democracy and citizenship. However, indigenous forms of ethnic citizenship have posed a challenge at attempts of nation citizenship in some of the nation-states (Englund, 2006; Schraeder, 2004; Thomson, 2000). An African historical trajectory will help us understand this state of affairs. Hence, this sub-section is a discussion of three important elements. The first element is about the
development of African indigenous forms of citizenship and governance since the pre-colonial times. The second element is about the survival of African forms of citizenship and governance during the colonial times. The last element is about how the post-colonial African nation-states are attempting at blending their own forms of traditional citizenship and democratic values with those adopted from other parts of the world. However, since culture is key to all these elements, the starting point to this discussion is the role of culture in keeping alive the traditional forms of citizenship and governance in Africa.

Culture has been the most powerful tool, which has kept alive the African traditional forms of political governance and citizenship. It is, therefore, not surprising that cultural practices and activities, or cultural tools, have increasingly become important avenues for understanding people’s thinking, learning, and development (Nasir & Hand, 2006; Rios, 1996). In this study, the term “culture” refers to beliefs, customs, activities, and practices that a group of people hold in common, and how those shared views influence their thinking and social behavior (Thomson, 2000). Ever since the pre-colonial times, elders in Africa have the social obligations of passing down to their young ones the values, norms, duties, and responsibilities of active participation in their societies (Busia, 1967). In this study, the role of cultural fabric was very important in understanding the decisions that teachers made in their classrooms. From this short disposition of culture, the first element for discussion is the evolvement of African forms of citizenship and governance during the pre-colonial times.

Pre-colonial Africa (from time immemorial to 1884)

Just like in the Western world, the evolvement of citizenship in Africa cannot be separated from the political systems in which it operated. In this regard, Africans evolved myriads of mosaic political systems during the course of the pre-colonial period (Chikeka, 2004; Schraeder, 2004; Thomson, 2000). Although the evolvement of such political systems were varied in time and space, common to all these political systems were the elements of lineages and kinships (Busia, 1967; O’Toole, 2001; Schraeder, 2004; Thomson, 2000). A lineage is a group of families that trace their origins to a common ancestor, whereas kinship or clan is a network of lineages that are related by blood or fictitious genealogies (Busia, 1967). The goal of fictitious relationships was to bring a sense of belonging and unity among people who shared the same culture. Hence, it is in such traditional forms of political systems that we can understand the indigenous forms of African citizenship.
Members in lineages or kinships shared political territories based on core values and attitudes they held together towards political, social, and economic aspects of life. The socially constructed core values on matters like beliefs, rituals, marital laws, inheritance, justice, as well as land owning rights, became their culture (Busia, 1967; Olorunsola, 1972). The clan leaders of these political units yielded considerable amount of power when dealing with such matters (Thomson, 2000). In return, the clan leaders had the duties and obligations of providing security and unity necessary for the welfare of their members (Thomson, 2000). Thus, the emergence of political organizations in Africa was the desire for social order, but they evolved taking different patterns in both time and space (Busia, 1967). For example, some of the political entities were states, but others were stateless (O’Toole, 2001; Schraeder, 2004). For those that were states, some of them were bureaucratically centralized and others were decentralized. In addition, some of these political entities followed a patriarchal system of inheritance yet others followed a matriarchal system (O’Toole, 2001; Schraeder, 2004).

Given the poor communications of the pre-colonial times, many of these political systems developed as separate entities, each with its own culture. With the passage of time, the kinship networks in the political entities developed into various ethnic groups as we know them today (Busia, 1967). In this paper the concept of ethnicity is used in the African sense to mean:

A sense of collective identity in which people (the ethnic group) perceives itself as sharing a historical past and a variety of social norms and customs, including the roles of elders and other age groups in society, relationships between males and females, rites and practices of marriages and divorce, legitimate forms of governance, and the proper means of resolving conflict. (Schraeder, 2004, p. 101)

Defined this way, some ethnic groups were very small while others were considerably larger depending on how they traced their origins to common ancestors.

For economic reasons, some of the political systems expanded considerably to include members of other ethnic groups, especially for purposes of getting tribute in form of taxes. Such political systems were not hegemonic states in the Western sense because their boundaries fluctuated a great deal depending on the amount of political power held at the central office (Thomson, 2000). Thus, in the period just prior to the colonial era, many political systems were multiethnic entities for economic reasons, although usually one ethnic group was politically dominant (Schraeder, 2004). In such political entities, sometimes there were several lineages or
clans competing for chieftaincy. Such situations posed challenges to the societies whenever several candidates were eligible to the chieftaincy (Busia, 1967).

There is ample evidence that suggests elements of democracy whenever such situations occurred (Busia, 1967; Hayward, 1987; Nohlen et al., 1999). In such cases, those individuals sanctioned by customs in their political communities conducted some forms of elections. It is important to note here that we should understand “elections” in the traditional African context as “…choosing between individuals to fill an office” (Hayward, 1987, p. 5). Viewed this way, choice of leaders involved different strategies like discussions, consultations, and making decisions, which greatly varied among the pre-colonial political states. The variation came about in the ways the political systems used adults, clan or lineage heads, or influential elders in the society for the tasks of choosing leaders (Hayward, 1987). For example, in the case of the Ashanti people in Ghana, the chief’s council represented the voices of people in several political issues including elections (Busia, 1967). The council also had powers to depose the chief if he proved to be a tyrant or that he did not behave according to the constitutional customs. Nonetheless, “there were constitutional procedures to protect the individuals concerned, and to check arbitrariness or vindictiveness” (Busia, 1967, p. 24). This shows that people participated in political matters although the level of participation was confined to a small group of people sanctioned by the society (Busia, 1967; Hayward, 1987; Nohlen et al., 1999). These forms of political participation were not very different from the practices of Ancient Greece. In fact, even in the Western democracies this was the view of political participation for a long period of time. It was not until the dawn of the Enlightenment period in the closing decades of the eighteenth century that democratic nation-states in the Western world began to promote national franchise and participation by all citizens.

Thus, African forms of indigenous citizenship evolved in political systems whether the systems were states or stateless. There were three elements that made African forms of indigenous citizenship unique. The first one was that blood relationship was the determinant factor for citizenship in a political unit, and this relationship was largely ethnic (Busia, 1967; O’Toole, 2001; Schraeder, 2004; Thomson, 2000). The second one was that the preparation of citizens was meant for family and communal responsibilities because there were no nation-states at the time. The last one was that it was the responsibility of the whole community to inculcate in the youth the expected adulthood duties and responsibilities according to the core values of their
societies (Department of Curriculum Development and Evaluation, 1990). Initiation rites were forms of indigenous “schools” that many African societies used for the preparation of the youth for civic responsibilities at both family and societal levels. In these schools, boys and girls were taught separately through the use of different “informal curricula.” Elderly women taught girls and elderly men taught boys. The teaching was elder-centered while the youth had to demonstrate a posture of listening. In these schools, only community-sanctioned elders were responsible for inculcating in the youth the aspects of civic life like history of the people, the societal core values, and the expected adulthood duties and responsibilities at both family and societal levels (Department of Curriculum Development and Evaluation, 1990). Therefore, the indigenous informal curriculum for citizenship education was basically an integration of history, cultural beliefs and customs, as well as adulthood duties and responsibilities according to the core values of each ethnic group (Department of Curriculum Development and Evaluation, 1990).

What comes clearly from the discussion thus far is that by the advent of colonial rule during the second half of the nineteenth century, Africans had evolved their indigenous forms of governance and citizenship, but these were essentially based on blood relationships. In this connection, Busia correctly observed that, “in Africa the concept of citizenship has continued to be more closely associated with kinship than with territory” (p. 19). Dibua (2006) also agreed that what developed in Nigeria was more of ethnic citizenship. Although Dibua was referring to the post-colonial history, ethnic citizenship dates back to the pre-colonial times.

This view of African ethnic citizenship based on blood networks is different from the Western perspective that is based on territory. Sicakkan (2005) agreed that citizenship in the Western sense is a convenient way of governing people of different identities in a nation-state. However, this does not suggest that territorial boundaries were not important in African traditional conceptions of citizenship. The critical issue here is that African forms of ethnic citizenship determined the sizes of political territorial units, and not vice versa. Against this background, the second element is about the survival of African traditional forms of citizenship and governance during the colonial period.

*Colonial Africa (1884-1957)*

Although the 1884-1885 Berlin Conference symbolized the beginning of the scramble for and partition of Africa, European imperial powers had already started claiming territories
amongst themselves a decade prior to the conference. The imperial powers carved their colonies in total disregard of the indigenous political systems that evolved based on ethnic citizenship (Olorunsola, 1972; Thomson, 2000). Thus, the coming of the colonialists resulted in the creation of new states with clearly marked boundaries based on what the colonial administrators considered convenient to them and not based on the African political traditions or forms of ethnic citizenship. In this way, the colonialists ploughed together different African ethnic groups under new political umbrellas. As shall be explained later in this section, the putting together of different ethnic groups sowed the seed of political challenges and crises that post-colonial African states have faced since the gaining of their political independence. The question at this juncture is: what happened to the African forms of governance and ethnic citizenship during the colonial administration?

There are some scholars who believe that the colonial rule destroyed the elements of African traditional democracy and forms of citizenship, whereas others argue that authoritarian regimes that emerged in the post-colonial Africa nation-states were resilient elements of the traditional political systems (Busia, 2000; Thomson, 2000). I do not quite subscribe to both accounts for reasons I will explain later in this section. Indeed, since colonial African states were created out of coercion, the different ethnic groups in the new colonial political umbrellas never identified themselves as one nation largely due to their historical backgrounds. Although this was the situation, two factors might have prevented the potential manifestation of ethnic cleavages in the colonial states.

The first reason is that colonial administrators considered Africans as subjects of their imperial monarchs, and not as citizens. The implication of this is that Africans only had civil rights by virtual of their natal status, and not political rights for active participation in matters of governance. The non-involvement in active political participation might have overshadowed the potential ethnic bloc participation. The second reason is that colonial administrators largely used the policy of divide and rule in the administration of the colonial states (Dibua, 2006; O’Toole, 2001). In this system, colonial administrators, especially the British, used the “dual mandate” and “indirect rule” for governing their colonies. The other imperial powers like France, Belgium, Germany, and Portugal also used the same forms of colonial governance, although with some minor variations amongst them.
Lord Fredrick Lugard, an early British colonial administrator in Nigeria between 1900 and 1906, was the architect of the dual mandate and indirect rule after his experiences of using the same form of colonial administration in Sudan and India (Dibua, 2006; Lugard, 1965). This form of administration used the then existing traditional administrative machinery at local government level; that is, chiefs governed their subjects on behalf of the colonial administrators. Hence, the system was called dual mandate because colonial administrators manned the central government, while traditional chiefs maintained governance of their subjects at local government level. Dual mandate was also referred to as indirect rule because the colonial administrators ruled the indigenous people indirectly through the traditional chiefs. The traditional chiefs governed their people on matters concerning collection of tax for the colonial government, organization of colonial labor force, and ensuring that their subjects followed colonial laws (Thomson, 2000).

There were two reasons why Lugard proposed this kind of administration. The first reason was that indirect rule aimed at minimizing costs in the administration of African colonies. The second reason was that Lugard thought that, under the tutelage of British administrators, the system would help in the preservation of Africans customs and traditions until such a time that the indigenous people were to be granted their political independence (Chikeka, 2004; Lugard, 1965). With this system, the colonial administrators left the traditional chiefs to continue with their own traditional political practices and culture as long as there were no compromises with colonial interests (Thomson, 2000). In this regard, Dibua (2006) argued that one negative side of indirect rule was reinforcement of ethnicity. Indeed, it is from this perspective of colonial administration that we can understand the survival of African indigenous forms of governance and ethnic citizenship throughout the colonial period. Thus, the claim that the introduction of colonial rule led to the demise of traditional forms of governance and citizenship is rather myopic.

What becomes apparent from this discussion is that the African forms of ethnic citizenship survived during the colonial era, but operated in a different political environment. However, the implication of the creation of colonial states was that Africans had to begin thinking of citizenship beyond their families and kinship-based societies as was the case during the pre-colonial period. In this case, the role of initiation rites for the preparation of citizens at national level was not possible because these practices were essentially organized according to the customs of each ethnic group. Therefore, the formal education, which early missionaries and
the colonialists had introduced in Africa, were the only better tools for national citizenship education. However, the organization of formal education in the colonial states was not meant for nation building, but for the glorification of the colonial powers through a school curriculum that was bloated with topics of the Western civilization (Department of Curriculum Development and Evaluation, 1990). Similarly, missionary education was also not intended for nation building, but for helping Africans to read and understand the Bible (Wandiga, 1994). The implication of this state of affairs was that at the time of political independence, the colonialists had not prepared Africans for national citizenship responsibilities. For this reason, ethnic citizenship soon became one of the major challenges of the post-colonial African nation-states. The next subsection is a discussion of how that occurred.

Post-colonial Africa (1957 to date)

Colonial masters began granting political independence to Africans from 1957 and onwards. At the time of granting political freedoms, the outgoing colonial masters prescribed to the new African national leaders the Western forms of multi-party democracy. However, ethnic kinship citizenship soon became sources of contention in the new post-colonial nation-states (Adejumobi, 2001; Nohlen et al., 1999; Olorunsola, 1972; Osaghae, 2003). For instance, ethnic bloc political voting was a common feature in the new post-colonial nation-states (Kaspin, 1997; Nohlen et al., 1999). This challenge explains better why the first experimentation of Western forms of democracy and citizenship hit a snag during the early period of post-colonial African states.

Against this background, many African political leaders of the time argued that one party systems of governance were the best tools for national unity, political stability, and socio-economic development (Nohlen et al., 1999). Hence, many sovereign African states adopted one party systems of governance, which soon degenerated into authoritarian regimes as one way of silencing the opposition. Botswana, Gambia, and Mauritius were the only countries in Africa that maintained unbroken record of democratic principles of governance since the end of colonial rule (Nohlen et al., 1999). Thus, the emergence of authoritarian regimes in Africa soon after independence was, not necessarily, products of traditional elements of governance as some scholars want us to believe. On the contrary, such regimes flourished in a hopeless attempt to bring together different ethnic groups, which had evolved on kinship networks for a considerable long period of time.
It became apparent that ethnic citizenship influenced the thinking of the early politicians because many of them mainstreamed national citizenship and citizenship education around the interests of influential ethnic groups as a tool for nation building (Englund, 2006; Nohlen et al., 1999). Such practices often resulted in the exclusion and sometimes marginalization of some groups from the mainstream of national politics and economy (Mbaku, Agbse, & Kimenyi, 2001). The excluded groups used various ways like violence in an attempt to gain entry into both political and economic spaces (Mbaku et al., 2001).

However, by the early 1990s, many of the one party authoritarian regimes in Africa collapsed in preference to multiparty democracy (Kaspin, 1997; Meinhardt, 1999; Von Doepp, 2005). This exemplifies the argument I am making that the growth of authoritarian regimes soon after independence was only a convenient way of solving problems that came about because of ethnic-bloc political participation. Indeed, if authoritarian regimes were resilient elements of traditional forms of governance, then such regimes could not have collapsed the way they did. The re-introduction of multiparty democracy, after decades of authoritarian rule, has once again revealed that individuals still identify themselves by ethnic, linguistic or religious blocs (Mbaku et al., 2001). For example, since the 1990s, multiparty democracy in Africa has revealed conflicts over who has the right to vote, and also who has the right to stand as a candidate in an area (Ceuppens & Geschiere, 2005). Ethnicity with its elements of tribe, language, religion, and culture still remains the major threat to democracy in Africa (Adejumobi, 2001; Mbaku et al., 2001). Osaghae (2003) agreed that the problem of ethnicity in Africa is more serious than is revealed in literature.

For this reason, many African nation-states are using the school curricula in their attempts at evolving their own forms of democracies and citizenship based on the common standard of governance of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The adaptation is largely achieved through a curriculum, which has a hybridization of the traditional values of governance and citizenship with those from other parts of the world, especially the West. This kind of hybridization makes sense considering that elements of traditional forms of governance and citizenship have continued to exist to the modern times. A good example is that many modern nation-states use traditional chiefs at local administration level of democratic government machinery. The chiefs still govern their people using the acceptable traditional customs that fit well with National Constitutions.
Similarly, traditional forms of citizenship are still important in the preparation of the youth for civic responsibilities at family and local community levels. Such preparations are largely done through initiation rites. Thus, in the traditional African setup, families are still an important source of civic education. Quigley and Bahmueller, (1991) observed that families in the developed world like the Unites States of America are also important for the preparation of the youth for civic responsibilities. Suffice it to say that elsewhere in the world the roles of families, and also initiation rites in the case of Africa, are not enough for the demanding tasks of civic responsibilities in modern democratic societies. This is why the youth must attend schools for learning about active civic responsibilities beyond their families or their local communities. To this effect, many African nation-states use school curricula that contain both indigenous and foreign concepts of governance and citizenship for the preparation of active participatory citizens at various societal levels.

**Summary**

The Western concepts of citizenship and democracy have evolved since the Greek times. Although citizenship during the Greek times was associated with city-states, its development in the Western world came to be associated with nationhood. In the same way, Africans evolved their own forms of citizenship and governance that were based on blood relationships. The evolvement of African forms of citizenship was associated with preparation of citizens for family and communal duties and responsibilities. Such forms of citizenship have survived to the modern day and they exist alongside Western forms of citizenship and governance. Many modern African nation-states are using school curricula that have an integration of traditional forms of citizenship and governance and similar forms from other parts of the world for the preparation of active participatory citizens. However, success in the achievement of this goal depends on the organization of the schools and the citizenship curriculum. Luykx (1999) referred to school as a “citizen factory” because of its power in the promotion of existing social inequalities. Therefore, the next section is a discussion of how the organization of schools affects the preparation of active citizens in a democracy.

**The Citizen Factory**

There is a general agreement that goes down in history that the principle obligation of public schooling is citizenship education (Kristjansson, 2004). Politicians and educators who agree with this notion argue that citizenship education in public school systems is a conscious
effort of building a modern state (Dam & Volman, 2004; Winch, 2004). Indeed, the complex life of modern democracy necessitates the inclusion of formal training in school for proper participation in citizenship life (Banks, 1997; Leistyna & Woodrum, 1996). Quigley and Bahmueller (1991) agreed that schools are important centers for the preparation of active participatory citizens because what the youth acquire informally is not adequate enough for the demanding responsibilities in a democratic society. However, there are two bones of contentions about how public schools fulfill this mission.

The first bone of contention is the role of schools in producing and reproducing the social inequalities of the existing social order (Luykx, 1999). For example, Luykx conducted an ethnographic study on the role of schools in citizenship education in Bolivia and noted that for a long time “…public schooling was purposely designed around aims of control and reproduction of a particular division of labor, rather than the expansion of democratic participation or the intellectual betterment of the population” (p. 40). Hence, she considered a school as a citizen factory. However, if schools can reproduce an oppressive system, it follows that they can also promote values for the common good. For example, Parker (2003) contended that students’ different values of life issues offer the best opportunities for the promotion of citizenship knowledge, skills, and attitudes for active civic participation. The critical issue is how a citizenship curriculum is organized with appropriate content and teaching and learning pedagogies that can help students work together and discuss their multiple perspectives.

The second bone of contention is the approach that the schools follow in the preparation of active citizens. Two major views emerge. Some educators suggest that the responsibility for citizenship education rests in all subjects in the school curricula (Mahan, 1972; Okpala & Okpoko, 2003; Peters, 1999). The other group of educators counter argues that this task should be reserved to selected subjects in the curricula (Sears & Hughes, 1996; Winch, 2004). Those who advocate for whole-school curricula approach base their arguments on the premise that citizenship preparation is a lifelong process that requires tackling from multiple sources (Williams & Humphrys, 2003). For example, Mahan (1972) contended that the role of all subjects in the school curriculum is to contribute to the development of good citizens. Those who have a different view argue that not all subjects in the school curricula have the moral, historical, religious, and civic elements necessary for citizenship education (Winch, 2004).
Indeed, active participation in the civil society entails that all subjects in the school curricula should prepare students with knowledge, skills, and attitudes for civic responsibilities. Preparation for lifelong processes necessitates the whole spectrum of human interactions in such areas as the political, social, and economic spheres of life. All subjects in the curricula aim at these spheres in one way or the other. However, there are some subjects that are better placed for the achievement of that goal because of their content and orientation towards social interactions. Thus, while the responsibility of citizenship education is in all subjects in the curricula, some subjects should take a lead for that cause. For example, Canada, Italy, Japan, New Zealand, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United States use the integrated name of social studies for their citizenship curricula. In some countries, like the United States, Canada, and Japan, history forms the core of the integrated field of social studies (Torney-Purta, 2004). Malawi uses the whole curricula approach for citizenship learning, but the integrated field of social studies leads the cause.

Summary

Politicians, policy makers, and educators generally agree that the prime purpose of the school system is preparation of citizens for active participation in the civil society. However, nation-states differ in the way they address this kind of preparation. Some prefer whole curriculum approach, whereas others prefer use of specific fields like social studies to lead in this cause. Indeed, nation-states face different kinds of challenges and they also differ in their core values. However, since many democratic nation-states prefer social studies as the curriculum leader for citizenship learning, the next section is a discussion of why this is the case.

The Social Studies Curriculum and Citizenship Education

Many nation-states use social studies curriculum in the preparation of their young ones for active public life in their adulthood. However, much of the success in such endeavors is dependent on the organization of the curriculum and also the teachers’ implementation of the curriculum. Thus, discussion in this section is in two parts. The first part looks at the foundations of social studies as a field for citizenship education. This part will help us appreciate why many democratic nation-states use social studies as a school curricula leader for citizenship learning. The second part looks at what social studies educators propose as appropriate content and pedagogies for effective preparation of active citizens. The second part of the discussion is
important because it acts as a lens for the investigation of classroom practices for the preparation of effective citizens.

*Foundations of Social Studies*

Social studies is an integrated field that draws its content from various other disciplines. The National Council for the Social Studies (1994) provided a comprehensive definition of social studies as:

The integrated study of the social sciences and humanities to promote civic competence. Within the school program, social studies provides coordinated, systematic study drawing upon such disciplines as anthropology, archeology, economics, geography, history, law, philosophy, political science, psychology, religion, and sociology, as well as appropriate content from the humanities, mathematics, and the natural sciences. (p. vii)

From this perspective of multidisciplinary content and child-centered pedagogical approaches, educators observe that social studies stands out as the most appropriate subject for citizenship education (Barton & Levstik, 2004; Biesta; 2006; Parker, 2003; Ross, 1997a; Ross, 1997b; Thornton, 2005b). Brief backgrounds to the foundations of the social studies in the U. S. A, English-Speaking African countries, and Malawi can help us appreciate the arguments of these educators.


Although the foundations of social studies are fraught with mythologies and misconceptions, available evidence suggests that the United States was the first country in the world to include social studies in its public school curricula as far back as 1916 (Murry, 1997). Up until 1916, history was the leading subject for citizenship education in the U.S. public schools (Correira, 1997; Lybarger, 1983). However, after the 1900s, the United States faced a lot of social, economic, and political problems that came about because of a confluence of factors. Such factors included the traumatic experiences from the Civil War and Reconstruction, rapid industrialization, and massive migration into the country (Correira, 1997; Saxe, 1992; Woyshner, 2003-2004). Against this background, it did not come as a surprise that by the early 1900s, social sciences activists challenged history’s claim of uniqueness in the education of citizens (Correira, 1997; Evans, 2004).

The activists challenged that epistemological and methodological constraints made history unable to address the new problems the United States was facing at the time (Correira,
For example, they challenged that history emphasized rote learning and social events that were not connected to the present (Hertzberg, 1981). These arguments made disciplines like sociology and political science to gain legitimacy for citizenship education (Correira, 1997). It thus became clear that the challenges the United States faced after the 1900s “created the opportunity for social studies ideas to enter school politics” (Saxe, 1992, p. 271). This shift marked the symbolic beginning of social studies.

The activists of social science saw the discipline as a general area of inquiry drawn from other subjects to help solve societal problems. However, educators agree that any comprehensive social study must include historical content because knowledge about the past is important in understanding the present (Thornton, 2005b). This factor explains why, in spite of the protracted disputes between the apologists of the two disciplines since the 1900s, the integrated social studies field relies heavily on history and other social sciences for the purposes of its academic rigor (Thornton, 2005b). The American philosophy of social studies soon spread to other parts of the world including Africa.

**Foundations of Social Studies in English-speaking African Countries**

In Africa, social studies took time to reach the continent (Chilambo, 1988), probably due to conservative attitudes of missionaries and colonialists who controlled formal schooling in the colonies. In British colonies, the entire school curricula were tailored to produce obedient subjects of the British Monarchy (Tlou & Kabwila, 2000). However, after gaining their political independence, African educators’ thinking of the meaning of social studies took a different view from that perceived by their former colonial masters. The articulation of these views dates back to 1967 when educators from eleven countries met their counterparts from the U.K. and the U.S. at Oxford. African educators who attended the meeting came from Botswana, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia (Merryfield, 1988; Merryfield & Tlou, 1995). The Oxford meeting laid the foundation for the African Social Studies Programme (ASSP), an organization responsible for the improvement of social studies in the Africa. A follow-up international conference held at Mombasa, Kenya, in 1968 laid the foundation for social studies in African school curricula (Adeyinka, 2000; Merryfield, 1988).

Three major resolutions came out of these discussions. First, the purpose and objectives of social studies became preparation of active citizens for both local communities and nations (Adeyinka, 2000). This kind of philosophy was compatible to the change of status of Africans,
from colonial subjects to citizens in their nation-states. Second, the content of social studies emphasized culture, environment, and problems relevant to the African needs (Shiundu & Mohammed, 2001). This change was also necessary because the goal of the inherited colonial school curriculum was preparation of obedient and loyal subjects, but this view was irrelevant in the post-colonial era. Instead, ASSP’s emphasis was on the role of social studies in the development of nationhood, installation of skills and attitudes towards economic development, and creation of self-reliant citizens (Merryfield, 1988). For these reasons, the new social studies was an integration of the traditional subjects of history, geography, and civics, with some elements of other subjects like agriculture, economics, sociology, political science, and anthropology. Last, the pedagogies for teaching social studies changed from the traditional-teacher-centered to learner-centered approaches (Adeyinka, 2002). Thus, African educators also saw the importance of active participatory approaches that were necessary for the preparation of critical-thinking minds for making informed decisions.

As a result of the efforts of the ASSP, 17 African nations had initiated social studies programs in their school curricula by the mid 1980s. To date, ASSP has continued its efforts in making social studies relevant to the preparation of competent citizens for culturally diversified societies.

**Foundations of Social Studies in Malawi**

In Malawi, the available literature evidence suggests that elements of social studies education appeared in the Scottish mission school curricula as early as the 1930s and 1940s, but as topics in other subjects like civics, nature study, rural science, and religious instruction (Chilambo, 1988). After 1940s, the colonial government took over the control of the education system through a centralized curriculum. The colonial government’s control of the curriculum resulted in the provision of education for the preparation of colonial subjects. For example, subjects that comprised social studies contained topics that aimed at the glorification of the colonial hegemony and Western culture (Tlou & Kabwila, 2000). The primary school curricula offered history, geography, and civics as separate subjects of social studies.

After gaining political independence in 1964, Malawi continued to offer social studies as topics in other subjects, although the country was one of the signatories of the AASP. History content, for example, remained colonial in taste with 85% coverage of European history (Tlou & Kabwila, 2000). Two reasons might have contributed to this scenario. First, probably the
authoritarian regime after gaining political independence did not prefer the nature of social studies curriculum because of its political stance. Second, it may be that the early educators were more inclined to the colonial kind of education since they were products of the same education systems. However, socio-economic problems the country was facing from the late 1980s initiated the feelings towards the introduction of social studies in the primary school curriculum. For instance, the new Education Plan in Malawi (1985-1995) emphasized the importance of problem solving, and scientific and reflective thinking as a foundation for effective participation in society (Chilambo, 1988). The Plan also called for appreciation of culture, economic independence, self-sufficiency, loyalty, and interdependence. Through this plan, the government saw the need for the preparation of citizens who could be culturally literate, knowledgeable about conservation of the environment, and for active participation in nation building (Chilambo, 1988; Tlou & Kabwila, 2000).

Thus, primary school curricula reforms in 1991 made the first ever step towards the integration of civics, history, and geography into a social studies curriculum. In essence though, this curriculum comprised separate entities of history, geography, and civics topics under an umbrella name of social studies. A noticeable feature in the curriculum was the reduction of Western oriented topics in favor of national topics (Tlou & Kabwila, 2000). In spite of this change, the orientation of the curriculum content was towards the aspirations of a one-party dictatorship government’s political ideology popularly called the “four-corner stone”: that is, unity, loyalty, obedience, and discipline (Englund, 2006; Simbeye, 2005). This notion validates what many educationists have argued that curricula reform processes reflect the desires of the state (see for example Banks, 1997; Parker, 2003). Another noticeable feature was the focus on participatory learning practices (Kabwila, 1995).

Subsequent social studies reforms occurred after Malawi re-introduced a multiparty democratic government in 1994. The government felt the need in the re-organization of the primary school social studies curriculum to reflect the ideals of a pluralistic democratic society. Therefore, between 1996 and 1999, the Ministry of Education, through the Gable/PPC project revised the social studies curriculum to suit the new democratic disposition in Malawi. In this regard, a team of curriculum developers, under the guidance of Professor Josiah Tlou, a social studies expert from Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in the U. S. A., reformed the curriculum.
A series of workshops were conducted in order to come up with the curriculum that could suit the aspirations of all Malawians (Malawi Institute of Education, 1996). For example, the first stakeholders’ conference drew participants from the University of Malawi, Malawi National Examinations Board (MANEB), Primary Education Advisors (PEAs), teacher educators, primary school teachers, curriculum specialists, Traditional Authority chiefs, and non-government organizations that represented various social, economic, and political fields (Malawi Institute of Education, 1996). This shows that the goal of the first stakeholders’ conference was to come up with a more representative field of social studies to replace the old curriculum that was largely mainstreamed based on influential groups in the society. What followed were a series of workshops that finally developed a revised social studies curriculum in 1999. The Ministry of Education approved the new primary school social studies curriculum that included topics on culture, gender, socio-economic development, environment, moral issues, and traditional and government structures. Furthermore, the curriculum included topics about human rights, conflict resolutions, population issues including HIV and AIDS, and interdependence of nations. For the first time ever, the primary school social studies curriculum became an integrated field of history, civics, and geography with some elements of political science, philosophy, economics, moral ethics, and environmental education (Tlou & Kabwila, 2000). Sadly though, probably because of limited financial resources and lack of political will, the Ministry of Education shelved the new curriculum. It was not until 2003 that the 1998 curriculum, that never entered the classroom, was revised to include some social, economic, and political issues that had emerged since its development (Simbeye, 2005). The Ministry finally launched the new social studies curriculum in all public schools in January 2005 (Simbeye, 2005).

Discussion in the preceding paragraphs has shown that the foundations of social studies in various countries were purposely designed for the preparation of active citizens based on the societal problems each political community faced. However, Krisjajsson (2004) cautioned us that “it is one thing …to acknowledge the need for values education in the schools; it is quite another to decide precisely what should be taught and how” (p. 208). Indeed, the content and pedagogies for the social studies curriculum matters most in the preparation of a robust citizenry. The next subsection details what social studies educators propose as appropriate classroom practices for the preparation of active citizenry.
The Social Studies Classroom

Discussion on the social studies content will give us insights of an appropriate curriculum for citizenship learning, whereas the pedagogies will help us in the construction of a picture of classroom practices befitting the preparation of active participatory citizens. Such a discussion was important for the investigation of how primary school teachers in Malawi planned and implemented the intended social studies citizenship curriculum.

The Social Studies Content

Banks (1997) asked pertinent questions that are worth considering in the selection of appropriate content for social studies curriculum especially in a culturally diversified society. Some of the questions he asked are:

Whose concept is citizenship education? To who does the concept belong? Who constructed it? Whose interest does it serve? Whose lived experience does it reflect? Can individuals and groups on the margins of society effectively participate in a transformation of the concept and of society? (p. 3)

In this connection, Barton and Levstik (2004) made an interesting suggestion of a broad humanistic education for the preparation of active citizens in a democratic civil society. This kind of education is the one that does not expose students to simple-minded indoctrination as planned by the state or teachers (Barton & Levstik, 2004). They proposed three dimensions for the nature of a humanistic curriculum for citizenship education, which I found applicable to this study.

First, they proposed the kind of content that promotes critical thinking and reasoned judgment about human affairs. This implies that the historical context of social studies content must engage students in the evaluation of the current political, social, and economic affairs as outcomes of the past. Second, Barton and Levstik (2004) explained that a humanistic study for citizenship must aim at an expanded view of humanity so that students must make their judgments of what it takes to be a human being in a larger society. Indeed, from the standpoint of an expanded view of humanity, students can understand better their own perspectives when compared to the perspectives of other groups of people (Barton & Levstik, 2004).

Last, Barton and Levstik explained that a humanistic study must be deliberative in nature. The implication of this is that students are part of the process of a deliberative curriculum. Paradoxically, the inclusion of students is a contested part of the humanistic study because some
teachers and historians think that students cannot make reasoned judgments (Barton & Levstik, 2004). This argument does not hold water because research studies indicate that students make reasoned judgments when they are engaged in activities that promote critical thinking (see for example findings of research studies by Shanks, 1994; VanSledright, 1995; Zhao & Hoge, 2005). Detailed discussions of some of these studies come in the next section of “The curriculum gatekeepers.”

The Social Studies Classroom Pedagogies

The framing of citizenship curriculum content around humanistic content is necessary, but certainly not enough for the preparation of active citizens because much depends on what happens in the classrooms. Adeyinka, (2000) agreed that while teachers’ knowledge of the content to teach is important, it is equally significant for teachers to know how to translate the content into meaningful learning experiences. The question that inevitably arises here is: how should a social studies classroom that prepares active citizens look like? Brophy and Alleman, (1991) give us good insights because they argue that the goal of citizenship education is “providing students with the knowledge, skills, and values that they will need to understand modern life and participate effectively as prosocial group and responsible citizens” (p.3). This argument tells us that classroom practices that aim at the preparation of effective citizens must display three tenets, namely knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Therefore, discussion is this section will use these three tenets.

The first tenet of citizenship learning is the acquisition of knowledge. This is an important aspect because it gives the students the political, social, and economic background knowledge necessary for participation in a civil society. Indeed, for citizens’ effective participation in discussions or debates in a shared political community, they must first of all, possess the knowledge base necessary for such engagements. In this connection, Barton and Levstik’s (2004) argument makes sense that knowledge of citizenship life is not enough, but students must develop skills and positive attitudes to perform the expected roles of good citizenship in their communities. Thus, the second tenet of citizenship learning is the development of skills and values necessary for citizenship life.

Social studies educators agree that the best way for students’ development of citizenship skills is engagement in participatory activities both in schools and the communities around their schools (Carr, 1991; Peters, 1999; Remy, Anderson, & Snyder, 1976). For example, Carr argued
that participatory learning helps to cultivate necessary values and skills necessary for a democratic society. Peters concurred that the role of social studies’ teachers in citizenship education is promotion of students’ active involvement in lesson activities as a way of empowering them in making rational decisions in the everyday life. Hence, “preparing learners to make reasoned judgment cannot be accomplished by telling them what to think…. Preparing them to take part in collaboration discourse about the common good cannot be accomplished by tightly controlled, teacher-centered instruction” (Barton & Levstik, 2004, p. 260). This indicates that teachers must organize classroom practices that enable students’ development in skills necessary for active participation in public life. Such skills include public speaking, tolerance to other people’s views, listening to other people’s views, making positive arguments, and peaceful conflict resolutions. Thus, educators propose that teachers must use learner-centered pedagogies and techniques like debate, panel discussion, simulation, drama and role-play, and oral reports to develop positive skills and values in students (Department of Curriculum and Evaluation, 1990).

The last tenet of citizenship learning is positive change in values and attitudes. Students can demonstrate change in attitudes if they are given opportunities to practice the knowledge and skills they acquire in the classroom or elsewhere (Parker, 2003). For example, Parker explained that students must be engaged in school-based activities to practice what they could do in their adult life. Some school-based activities that can help students in skill development and positive change in their attitudes include making school rules, deciding on school policies, making plans for school activities, and electing fellow students in positions of leadership at the schools.

For these reasons, social studies educators propose that citizenship learning must not be confined to the classroom because working with the communities around the schools can also help students in the acquisition of knowledge and development of skills and attitudes appropriate for adult life (Barton & Levstik, 2004). In this regard, Cogan, Grossman, and Mei-hui-Liu (2000) correctly observed that community projects provide avenues for students’ direct interactions with community elders in the making of decisions and active participation in project activities. In this way, citizenship education provides active links between classroom activities and actual life experiences in the surrounding community (Giroux & McLaren, 1999).

Literature reveals that such active classroom practices have several positive implications for citizenship learning. First, active learning helps students transfer learning experiences in the classroom to the practical problems of everyday life. “The greater the similarity between the
situation in which that learning may transfer, the greater possibility of positive transfer” (Remy et al., 1976, p. 35). Second, this approach helps students tolerate and accommodate other students of different identities. The reason for this is that learning by practice requires that students should work with other groups of people who may be different from them. For example, “when a diverse group of learners deliberate together, they create a new ‘we’ in which differences are regarded as an asset, listening as well as expressing occurs, stories and opinions are exchanged, and a decision is forged together” (Parker, 2004, p. 80). In this way, activities that engage students in practicing their skills help in the creation of public consciousness required in a democratic society. Last, participatory learning offers teachers rare opportunities of viewing students’ thinking and learning processes (Turner & Patrick, 2004). Thus, teachers can plan how to scaffold activities for the students.

Summary

Politicians and educationists accept the role of social studies as the leader of citizenship education in the school curricula because of its wide content and pedagogical approaches. Social studies educators propose that classrooms for the preparation of active citizens must display activities and practices that are appropriate for the students’ acquisition of knowledge, and the development of skills and positive attitudes. Critical thinking, problem-solving, and making informed decisions are keys to such classroom practices. In this connection, the role of teachers in the classrooms is very important in the accomplishment of these tenets of citizenship learning. For that reason, the next section, which is the nexus of the review of literature, delves into the various factors that influence teachers’ decisions in the planning and implementation of a social studies citizenship curriculum.

The Curriculum Gatekeepers

As classroom managers, teachers make decisions in the selection of subject matter and how to present it to the students. Thornton (2005a) correctly referred to teachers as curriculum gatekeepers because of the kind of decisions they make in the implementation of any intended curriculum in their classrooms. Indeed, teachers make lots of decisions about the implementation of any curriculum, but they do so under various constraints (Grant, 2003). It is not surprising that for the past two decades, a lot of research has concentrated on how teachers acquire knowledge they use in their classrooms (Zembylas, 2007). Such studies have indicated that several factors like teachers’ pedagogical content knowledge, teacher preparations, socio-cultural beliefs,
teachers’ knowledge of their about the needs of their students, mandated tests, and availability of resources influence classroom practices (Adler, & Goodman, 1983; Grant, 2003; Yeager & Wilson, 1997). An examination of these issues can help us understand how various systemic factors influence teachers’ decisions in the selection of content and pedagogies for the implementation of a citizenship curriculum. I will begin the analysis with what Shulman (1991) called “pedagogical content knowledge.”

**Teachers’ Pedagogical Content Knowledge**

Shulman’s (1991) conceptualization of the pedagogical content knowledge (hereafter referred to as PCK) during the late 1980s came about as he wondered of what and how teachers taught. His study helped in the rejuvenation of research work that revealed that teachers gained knowledge from multiple sources, which influence their decisions in the classrooms (Fenstermacher, 1994). Shulman (1991) asked thought provoking questions on how teachers gain and use knowledge, and some of the questions were:

How do teachers decide what to teach, how to represent it, how to question learners about it…? What are sources of teacher knowledge? What does a teacher know and when did he or she come to know it? How is new knowledge acquired, old knowledge retrieved and both combined to form a new knowledge base? (p. 8)

He observed that PCK developed in stages from the pre-service teacher, to a novice teacher, and to the experienced teacher. However, this does not suggest that this process is a smooth and well-defined pattern of transition because the process itself is context dependent. He noted that there are two kinds of knowledge, which teachers develop and use in their classrooms. First, I will discuss what Shulman meant by content knowledge, which “refers to the amount and organization of knowledge per se in the mind of the teacher” (p. 9). Thus, Shulman contended that content knowledge is not just knowing facts, but also explaining various propositions of the representation of knowledge. He, however, observed that in most cases teachers acquire this form of knowledge in their areas of specialization.

The second kind of PCK is what Shulman called pedagogical knowledge. He observed that this knowledge, “…goes beyond knowledge of subject matter per se to the dimension of subject matter knowledge for teaching” (p. 9; emphasis in original). In essence, therefore, content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge are two sides of the same coin. Indeed, as Shulman observed, pedagogies are the most useful ways of representing subject matter in a
manner that is comprehensible to students. He contended that teachers gain the PCK through their college preparation, but this improves as they gain experience in their classrooms. Fenstermacher (1994), one of the researchers inspired by Shulman, articulated very well the process of teachers’ gaining of knowledge from their college preparation through to experience.

Fenstermacher’s (1994) conceptualization of this process is what he called teacher knowledge formal (hereafter referred to as TK/F) and teacher knowledge practical (hereafter referred to as TK/P). The TK/F are the types of knowledge teachers gain from their formal training, and these include subject matter, curriculum theories, instructional techniques, and classroom management skills (Fenstermacher, 1994). He argued that university researchers and professors produce this kind of knowledge largely based on theories of teaching and learning. The expectation from researchers and professors is that training in these types of TK/F determines the effectiveness of the teachers in planning and implementation of any curriculum. He also observed that education policy-makers consider TK/F as the essential base of knowledge for teachers’ classroom practices. As a result, curriculum development processes are largely dependent on this type of knowledge.

On the other hand, TK/P are the types of knowledge that teachers produce and use through practice in their classrooms. Indeed, through trying out things in the classrooms, teachers come to know what works for them in the context of their social environment (Thornton, 1994). Sadly though, curriculum developers hardly take into account the practical knowledge that teachers produce and use in their classrooms (McLaughlin & Talbert, 1990). This is why one of the goals of this study was to investigate the TK/P from the perspectives of primary school social studies teachers. While teachers’ gaining of TK/F seems straightforward to understand, the gaining of TK/P is not. As Fenstermacher rightly argued, we can understand the development of TK/P by engaging teachers in a dialogue of how they implement the intended curriculum.

From the explanation of both Shulman (1991) and Fenstermacher (1994), it becomes clear that teacher preparation programs are critical for understanding teachers’ content knowledge and pedagogical classroom practices. The two authors also alluded to the fact that teachers gain knowledge from other sources as they gain experience in the classrooms. However, neither of the two researchers mentioned socio-cultural histories as one of the major sources of knowledge for teachers. I find this problematic because they both consider pre-service training as the beginning point from which teachers gain knowledge. On the contrary, studies indicate that
socio-cultural beliefs and perspectives are important sources of knowledge that influence teachers during their preparation and professional career (see arguments by Adler & Goodman, 1983; Grant, 2003; Murry, 1997; Rios, 1996). As shall be explained later in this section, teachers’ as well as students’ socio-cultural histories also influence classroom practices. It, therefore, follows as a logical conclusion that cultural histories play a pivotal role in shaping the teachers’ TK/P. Teacher preparation is the starting point to understand Shulman’s and Fenstermacher’s arguments about how teachers gain knowledge.

**Teacher Preparation Programs**

Robbins, Francis, and Elliot, (2003) noted that initial education and training courses are important in equipping teachers with the necessary competence and skills for handling a citizenship curriculum at both local and global levels. Yeager and Wilson (1997) shared the same viewpoint that pre-service and in-service programs help in shaping teachers’ knowledge and classroom practices. Indeed, since the implementation of a citizenship curriculum requires great skills, preparation of teachers in both content and pedagogical knowledge is critical (Thornton, 2005a).

Studies show that poor preparation of teachers and employment of unqualified teachers are some of the problems affecting effective implementation of school curricula (Passe, 2006; Stuart, 2002; Thornton, 2005a). In this connection, Passe (2006) remarked that teachers feel uncomfortable in handling content that was inadequately addressed during their preparation. He further noted that under such circumstances, some of the teachers resort to the use of textbook-based instructions as a cover up to their academic deficiencies (Passe, 2006). Thornton (1994) agreed that undergraduate social studies and history courses rarely involve students in active participation. He also observed that many teacher preparation programs have limited transformative effects on beginning teachers. Thornton (1994) attributed the failure of some social studies teachers to plan and implement critical thinking pedagogies to this kind of professional background. Indeed, most classroom life in teacher preparation classrooms is one sided, with professors monopolizing learning processes (Giroux & McLaren, 1999). As a result, the new graduate teachers practice the same techniques and strategies as their professors the moment they begin their teaching career.

In Malawi, teacher preparation faces several challenges, which have a bearing on participatory classroom practices (Hauya, 1993; Kunje, 2002). First, teacher-training programs
attract candidates of low qualifications (Hauya, 1993; Kunje & Chimombo, 1999). While this is a problem worldwide, recruitment of even lowly qualified candidates has its gravity in developing countries like Malawi. For example, evidence from a comparative study in Ghana, Zimbabwe, Lesotho, Malawi, and Trinidad and Tobago showed that only Malawi recruited candidates with junior secondary certificates (Stuart, 1999; Stuart, 2002; Kunje, 2002). Junior secondary certificate holders are an equivalent of grade ten students. The reason for this recruitment is that the pool of well-qualified teachers in Malawi is small. However, the problem with this recruitment is that most of such candidates fail to grasp the theoretical understandings and application of various teaching methods, including the use of participatory pedagogies (Stuart, 1999). Indeed, some decisions teachers make in classrooms are a reflection of their incapability to articulate well the curriculum.

In this regard, Kunje’s (2002) findings on the implementation of the Malawi integrated in-service teacher education programme (MIITEP) provided insights to my study because two of the three teacher participants I used in the study were prepared through this program. MIITEP was introduced in 1997 because of the acute shortage of teachers following the adoption of free primary education in 1994. To address the shortfall, the government recruited 18,000 untrained teachers (Kunje, 2002). MIITEP was introduced to provide a mixed-mode of preparing teachers with taught-courses at teacher training colleges and school-based activities (Kunje, 2002). The program was for 24 months, with three months in college, 23 months in schools, and one month of residential activities for certifying examinations (Kunje, 2002). As such, the implementation of this program required the services of college tutors, Primary Education Advisors (PEAs), head teachers, and cooperating teachers in schools. College-based activities involved college tutors using handbooks in the training of the trainees, whereas school-based activities placed the trainees under the tutelage of head teachers, cooperating teachers, and PEAs.

Kunje (2002) noted that the success of MIITEP was in terms of the great output of teachers for the primary school sector, which could not have been possible with the traditional pre-career full time teacher preparation program. However, he found some major flaws with this program. First, he noted that, although in theory the program emphasized participatory classroom pedagogies, what occurred in college classrooms were basically teacher-centered approaches. He attributed the problem to both large class sizes and the under qualifications of the tutors. Second, he found that the majority of teachers in the schools where the MIITEP trainees were attached to
for the school-based activities were not certified. For this reason, school-based activities for the MIITEP program proved difficult when it came to attaching the trainees to certified teachers in the schools. Third, he also found that the design of the curriculum, which was tailored to residential courses rather than the intended mixed-mode approach, affected the school-based activities. Last, Kunje observed that many of the schools where the MIITEP trainees were allocated to were very poor in terms of the availability of teaching resources and classrooms. Therefore, although preparation programs are thought to be the major sources of teachers’ content and pedagogical knowledge, the success in this endeavor is dependent on the organization of the programs.

Teacher preparation is only one of the sources of teachers’ pedagogical and content knowledge. As already mentioned in the preceding sub-section, socio-cultural background is another important source of teachers’ socially constructed knowledge. Thus, the next sub-section is an attempt to explain the influence of teachers’ socio-cultural histories on their selection of content and pedagogies in their classrooms.

**Socio-cultural Influence on Teachers’ Classroom Practices**

Research on teachers’ cognition has failed to vigorously explore how teachers gain knowledge from their socio-cultural histories and also how those forms of knowledge influence their decisions in the classrooms (Rios, 1996). This does not suggest that there are virtually no research works on culture and learning. In fact, there is a significant amount of research works on culture, race, and schooling (Nasir & Hand, 2006). These research works have, however, concentrated on the influence of race and culture on students’ classroom achievements (Nasir & Hand, 2006). What the research studies have not investigated critically is on how culture contributes to teachers’ decisions in organizing classroom activities for citizenship learning (Hamilton, 1993; Rios, 1996). Indeed, “what teachers tell us about their practice is, most fundamentally, a reflection of their culture, and cannot be properly understood without reference to that culture” (Hamilton, 1993, p. 87). This implies that teachers, too, hold socially constructed knowledge, beliefs, values, and perspectives that are shaped by their own cultural histories.

Grant (2003) defined belief as “a proposition among things accepted as true, including axioms, rules of practice and perspectives” (p. 153). Such beliefs manifest themselves into perspectives or stances, and these may influence teachers’ decisions in the planning and implementation of lessons. Adler and Goodman (1983) defined perspectives as meanings and
interpretations teachers give to classroom practices. Perspectives are set in the teachers’ real
world of everyday experiences. Thus, the manifestation of classroom behaviors is a result of
teachers’ background experiences, experiential beliefs, and assumptions made from those beliefs
(Adler & Goodman, 1983). This view contradicts the arguments of critical theorists of schooling
who simply take teachers as servants of the state who enact the curriculum exactly the same way
the developers planned it to achieve (Carlson, 1999). Actually “teachers work and speak from
within historically and socially determined relations of power and privilege that are based on
their race, ethnicity, class and gender” (Leistyna & Woodrum, 1996, p. 4). This means teachers’
own perspectives determine their decisions in the planning and teaching of controversial issues
of the citizenship curriculum (Oulton, Day, Dillon, & Grace, 2004).

Some studies have confirmed that teachers’ perspectives influence them in the
implementation of the social studies curriculum. For example, in Canada teachers are often
reluctant to teach what they consider as controversial issues especially those that are
contemporary or related to their local community (Sears & Hughes, 1996). In this connection, a
survey study was conducted with Manitoba upper elementary teachers on how they worked with
curriculum materials designed for the preparation of competent and efficient citizens (Sears &
Hughes, 1996). The results of the survey showed that “although teachers like studying issues in
the abstract, they did not follow suggestions in the material to involve students in studying a
local issue” (p. 135). This study reveals a considerable discrepancy between the intentions and
practice of citizenship education. Much as the study illuminates this discrepancy, it does not
reveal the underlying reasons for teachers’ fears.

Similar studies in the United States indicated that social studies’ teachers were reluctant
to teach controversial issues unless they were far removed in time and space (Sears & Hughes,
1996). For example, Dilworth (2004) conducted a study on multicultural citizenship in the
United States using two grade seven social studies teachers and their students as case studies.
The findings showed that teachers did not cover many of the multicultural issues included in the
textbooks. Studies in the United Kingdom showed the same pattern. For example, Robbins,
Francis, and Elliot (2003) carried out a research study with 200 teachers in the U.K. to explore
the teachers’ attitudes towards global citizenship education. The results showed that 59% of the
teachers gave global citizenship education a priority in the primary school curriculum, but only
35% of the teachers dealt with global issues in their teaching. Oulton et al. (2004) also conducted
a similar study in the UK to investigate teachers’ opinions and readiness in using controversial topics in their classrooms. The study showed that teachers felt constrained to handle controversial issues in the curriculum. These findings show that taking curriculum documents alone like textbooks and syllabi cannot reveal much on teachers’ implementation of the curriculum in their classrooms (Dilworth, 2004).

Indeed, citizenship is a value-laden subject whose interpretation largely depends on individuals’ socio-cultural histories. Most of the research works on this topic are in the form of surveys. However, as Grant (2003) correctly observed, the limitation of survey results is that they do not adequately describe the exact nature of relationship between teachers’ beliefs and classroom practices. Croft, (2002) and Dilworth (2004) made an interesting suggestion that interviews and classroom observations with teachers could provide better sources of data. I find this relevant to my study. Students, too, have their background knowledge that they bring to class, most of which reflect their socio-cultural affiliations. The next sub-section is a discussion of how teachers’ knowledge of students’ background experiences influences classroom practices.

**Teachers’ Understanding of Students’ Backgrounds**

Teachers’ understanding of their students is important for the planning of critical pedagogical strategies that are necessary for students’ active participation in class (Giroux & McLaren, 1999). The students come from communities represented by class, gender, race, ethnicity or religion, and they are expected to learn from the same national curriculum. Under such circumstances, students bring to class competing conceptions of the everyday life experiences based on the socially constructed knowledge prevailing in their communities (Nieto, 2005). In fact, Barton and Levstik, (2004) cautioned that in a multicultural society, students enter classrooms with different and potentially conflicting conceptions of citizenship. Thus, teachers’ understanding of such diversities helps them in the creation of participatory learning that are appropriate for the preparation of active citizens in a multicultural democracy.

Some research studies have confirmed the importance of students’ prior experiences for citizenship preparation. For example, Levstik and Groth (2005) conducted a study in Ghana to investigate how junior secondary school students used their prior knowledge to understand the meaning of national unity in a democracy. The researchers engaged 150 students from ten different ethnic groups to complete tasks, which were followed with interviews. Areas of focus were stories about struggle and sacrifice, self-rule, and unity in the country. The findings of this
research were that students knew about their own ethnic histories as well as the national history. The students also demonstrated some understanding of unity among people of different ethnic groups. Interestingly, the students also had some knowledge of their future roles as citizens of the country, not only in political affairs, but also in economic, education, and international affairs. This shows that teachers’ understanding of students’ experiential world they bring to class could help in engaging them to critically view their social, political, and economic issues for effective citizenship learning.

Martin and Chiodo (2007) also carried out a research study in the United States to investigate the beliefs and attitudes of eighth and eleventh grade students of rural schools about citizenship knowledge they brought to class. The researchers conducted a survey study with a total of 695 students from five school districts to test students’ conceptions of good citizenship, obeying of laws and anticipation of their adult citizenship life. The findings of the research study are quite interesting because the students associated good citizenship with helping one another in their rural communities because this is the kind of prior knowledge the students brought with them to the classroom. The researchers made a strong case relevant to the discussion in this paper, as they stated “We need to know how these students view good citizenship if we are to improve the civic education curriculum--and the teaching strategies that go along with it--in our schools (p. 113). Indeed, knowledge of students’ beliefs about citizenship is critical because it provides a better framework for planning classroom practices necessary for citizenship learning.

The Center for Research (CRC) at Stanford University also conducted research in California and Michigan during 1987-1992, to find out the contexts that influence teaching in secondary schools (McLaughlin & Talbert, 1993). Interestingly, this research found that teachers’ knowledge about the students they taught influenced them in the selection of pedagogies they used in the classrooms. The researchers found that instead of using students’ prior knowledge as a stepping-stone to teach what was covered in the curriculum, some teachers used teacher-centered pedagogies. The researchers concluded that, “regardless of teachers’ rationale, both teachers and students in classrooms of this stripe find themselves bored and disengaged from teaching and learning” (p. 6). However, for those teachers who changed their classroom practices from the traditional approach to active and cooperative teaching-learning pedagogies, students used their prior knowledge to critically analyze their understanding of the everyday life (McLaughlin & Talbert, 1993). This is the kind of classroom practice required of a
citizenship curriculum because it prepares students in decision-making and active participation necessary for living in a shared political community.

So far I have discussed what literature reveals about how teachers’ knowledge gained through various sources influence their classroom practices. However, although the teacher may have better knowledge in these areas, availability of resources also contributes to effective classroom practices for the preparation of active participatory citizens. In this context, the term “resources” refers to both human and material.

**Availability of Teaching and Learning Resources**

McLaughlin and Talbert (1990) observed that material resources are one of the major factors that influence teachers’ effective organization of classroom practices. Indeed, availability of both human and material resources is a big challenge that influences classroom practices especially in developing countries like Malawi. Therefore, the first part of this section is a discussion of the shortage of human resources.

Although Malawi enrolls candidates of low qualifications in the teacher preparation programs, the problem itself is compounded with a serious shortage of teachers. There were about 32,876 qualified and 16,252 unqualified teachers in the primary school sector in 1999 (Kunje & Chimombo, 1999). Enrollment in primary school rose from 1.9 million to about 3 million pupils as a result of the introduction of free primary school education in 1994. The government addressed the shortfall of teachers with a recruitment of untrained teachers. However, even with the recruitment of untrained teachers, there is still a shortage of teachers in the primary school sector resulting in large class sizes. For example, the teacher-student ratio is as high as 1:118 based on the total labor force of qualified teachers (EMAS, 2005; Nsapato, 2005). The ratio drops to 1:60 with the inclusion of unqualified teachers to the total teacher labor force (Nsapato, 2005). Both ratios are far too high to meet the government’s target of 1:35 (Kunje & Chimombo, 1999). How then do social studies teachers organize classroom practices that aim at the preparation of active and critically minded citizens? This was one of the major areas for this study because there seem to be no research based findings in Malawi that link large class sizes with teachers’ choice of pedagogies in the classrooms.

The second and last discussion is on the availability of material resources. In this connection, Adeyinka, (2000) agreed that once teachers know their content area to teach, the next stage is the selection of resources for effective organization of classroom practices.
Unfortunately, material resources are not readily available in developing countries (UNESCO, 2000). For example, Luykx (1999) noted that Bolivian schools faced serious shortages of material resources. Just like Bolivia, teachers in Malawi face various resource constraints that affect the effective implementation of the school curricula, including social studies (Chimombo, 2005; EMAS, 2005; Nsapato, 2005). For example, Malawi has the lowest percentage of the availability of textbooks for both teachers and pupils in the sub-Saharan region (EMAS, 2005).

Inadequate resources influence teachers’ decisions in the implementation of active participatory approaches. For example, Kaambakadzanja (2001), based on the findings of the University of Malawi’s Center for Educational Research and Training, noted that lack of resources is a hindrance to the preparation of effective lessons. Research studies elsewhere in the world indicate that lack of resources forces teachers to use direct methods like lecturing most of their classroom time (Chapin & Messick, 2002; Hooghoff, 1993). For example, Luykx (1999) noted that lack of resources in Bolivia made teachers dependent on lecture, with students copying notes and reciting facts. Yet as already noted, citizenship education requires students’ active participation in their own learning. Under such conditions, implementation of citizenship education could be more of a lip service than anything else (Parker, 2003). Indeed, teachers’ effective implementation of even the most well structured citizenship curriculum is dependent on enough professional support (Correira, 1997).

However, mandated testing also has a negative impact on teachers’ classroom practices. The next sub-section is a discussion of the impact of testing on teachers’ decisions in the planning and implementation of lessons.

Influence of Mandated Examinations

Scott (1998) gave a metaphor of “seeing like a state,” which describes why certain well-intended schemes to improve human conditions have gone tragically awry because of state’s control over national issues. The lesson we get from this metaphor is that states sometimes make educational policies without the consultation of stakeholders like teachers. The end result of this is what literature reveals: that there is a discrepancy between the intended goals of curricula and classroom practices.

There is a close link between curriculum issues and standardized testing. Curriculum developers usually view teachers as primarily implementers, and not as active partners in the curriculum development processes (Ross, 1997b). Thus, state prepares teachers with the faith...
that they will implement the ideals of the curricula developers (Ross, 1997b). For example, studies in Malawi illuminate about the state’s monopoly over curriculum development processes (Croft, 2002; Kadzamira & Rose, 2003). Kadzamira and Rose (2003) observed that, “the education policy formulation process in Malawi does not have the tradition of consulting with stakeholders including teachers, parents, communities, local leaders and NGOs involved in education” (p. 505). They wondered if, under such circumstances, education policies met the expectations of the citizens. Croft (2002) concurred that donor-driven education reforms in Malawi hardly considered teacher’s active participation in the development of learner-centered pedagogies. These observations justify why this research study aims at investigating the teachers’ views about the social studies citizenship curriculum and how that perception affects their classroom practices.

Elsewhere in the world, states control their curricula through standardized testing, which they regard in high esteem although there is no comprehensive research evidence that suggests that tests contribute to students’ effective learning (Grant, 2003). What seems obvious, though, is that mandated tests influence both teachers and students to rely heavily on textbooks that cover the content of the tests (Myers & Savage, 2005). As a result, tests influence teachers to emphasize only those parts of the curricula that are likely to be covered on the tests (Grant, 2003). For example, research studies conducted in the United States to investigate the impact of tests on classroom practices showed that mandated tests had a negative impact on teaching and learning (Kornblith & Lasser, 2004; Myers & Savage, 2005). Myers and Savage found that tests forced teachers to rely heavily on textbooks for classroom instructions because the textbooks were aligned closely to the curricula.

Passe (2006) also concurred that high-stakes examinations in secondary schools made social studies teachers to shift their emphasis from higher order concepts associated with critical thinking to lower level concepts that emphasize recall of facts. In Malawi, the available literature also suggests that the educational system leans towards examinations. For example, Kadzamira and Rose (2003) observed that, “an important reason for lower standards being most affected by low level resources is due to the examination orientation of the education system, which places emphasis on upper standards” (p. 511). However, although this is the case, the various research studies all over the world do not clearly show the connection between tests and participatory classroom practices (Grant, 2003).
**Summary**

Teachers make final decisions in the implementation of a citizenship curriculum, but they do so under various constraints. Some of the constraints are individual, for example, their beliefs and perspectives. Others are external such as the use of mandated tests, inadequate resources, and large classes. Literature reveals that the various constraints that teachers face in their classrooms cause a discrepancy between the “intended curriculum” and the “enacted curriculum” (Dilworth, 2004; Ross, 1991b). As classroom managers, teachers gain full control of the enacted curriculum, but they have little influence over the intended curriculum, which is state controlled. This explains why various systematic problems influence teachers to enact the intended curriculum in various ways based on what works for them (Ross, 1997b; Thornton, 1994). In Canada, for example, educational reform policy had emphasized student active participation in their learning, but the teachers continued with direct pedagogical strategies (Sears & Hughes, 1996). A similar study in primary schools in Malawi showed inconsistency between the state’s recommended practice in the English teacher’s guide, and the actual classroom practices (Croft, 2002).

**Conclusion**

The goal in this chapter was to explore the ongoing conversations about citizenship, especially in a democratic system of government, and the sort of education associated with that cause. The review of literature in this area sheds some light on a number of important areas worth our attention.

Firstly, although citizenship remains a highly contested concept, modern democratic nation-states use the public education system for the preparation of active participatory citizens. Many of these nation-states use the whole-curriculum approach for citizenship education with social studies taking the lead for that cause (Torney-Purta, 2004; Kerr, 2002). Secondly, the review of literature illuminates that an appropriate social studies curriculum for the preparation of effective citizens must help students in the acquisition of knowledge and development of skills and positive attitudes necessary for active participation in a democracy. Thus, social studies educators recommend a humanistic curriculum that promotes students’ critical thinking and rational decision-making about human affairs (Barton & Levstik, 2004). The implication of this is that a humanistic approach to social studies must help students take an active role in their own learning about issues that affect people at various societal levels. Lastly, the review of literature
indicates that the role of teachers, as classroom gatekeepers, is critical because they make final decisions in the implementation of a citizenship curriculum (Thornton, 2005a).

The research studies on the preparation of citizens for their adult life only indicate the discrepancy between the intended curriculum and the enacted curriculum and not much about the constraints that teachers face in the classroom for that discrepancy to occur. For example, eight years after the government emphasized the use of participatory learning in Malawi, Kadzamira and Rose (2003) indicated that, “teachers are observed to continue to use traditional teacher-centered approaches with a large proportion of class time spent on pupils doing exercises which teachers check or mark during the lesson” (p. 512). However, such literature does not shed light as to why and how teachers resort to teacher-centered pedagogies. This is where I agree with Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) that sometimes we take for granted certain events, which can be problematic to the people that experience them. Thus, discussions with teachers and classroom observations provided better avenues for this study in the exploration of how primary school teachers in Malawi made decisions in the planning and implementation of the social studies citizenship curriculum. From this perspective, the next chapter details the research design and methods that were used in this study for the exploration of how three primary school teachers enacted the social studies citizenship curriculum.
CHAPTER THREE
DESIGN AND METHODS

Introduction

The goal of this study was to investigate how primary school teachers in Malawi planned and implemented social studies lessons for the preparation of competent citizens. The research questions that guided the collection of the data were as follows:

1. How are the content and pedagogical strategies of the social studies primary school curriculum in Malawi organized for the preparation of active participatory citizens in a democracy?

2. How do teachers’ conceptions of participatory classroom practices influence their planning of lessons for the preparation of effective citizenry in a democratic society?

3. How do teachers’ conceptions of participatory classroom practices influence their decisions in the implementation of the social studies citizenship curriculum?

4. How do the state’s policies on language and grade eight public examinations influence teachers in the organization of classroom practices for the preparation of active participatory citizens?

These research questions provided the framework for data gathering using various sources that included curriculum documents, classroom observations, and interviews with teachers and curriculum developers. Discussion in this chapter focuses on researcher’s autobiography, genre and rationale of the study, setting of the study, selection of participants, sources of data, data collection procedures, and data management and analysis procedures. The beginning point is the researcher’s autobiography, which acted as the lens for the design of the study, collection of data, and the interpretation of research results.

Researcher’s Autobiography

As Rossman and Rallies (2003) correctly observed, “from early curiosity all the way to writing the final report, the researcher’s personal biography is the lens through which he sees the world (p. 10).” For instance, my personal background provided the platform for learning about other people’s experiential worlds. In addition, my socio-cultural experiences also helped me in the understanding of what occurred in the three case study classrooms. In this regard, Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) rightly observed that personal or other people’s experiences might provide motives for doing research. Indeed, interest for research begins with some
problems or set of issues, which Hammersley and Atkinson referred to as “overshadowed problems.” They explicated that overshadowed problems are a set of challenges that researchers use as conduits for learning the taken for granted social events, which could be problematic to the people who experience the events.

Hence, what sparked my interest to study participatory learning for the preparation of effective citizens in the social studies classrooms was the paradigm shift that occurred in the Malawi classrooms after the re-introduction of democracy in 1994. I view this shift from my own perspective as a social studies classroom teacher, teacher educator, and my participation in curriculum development processes. In addition to this are my own socio-cultural experiences because learning in schools takes place in the context of both the teachers’ and students’ socio-cultural backgrounds (Hamilton, 1993; Hamilton, 1996; Rios 1996).

I was trained as a social studies secondary school teacher and started teaching in 1985. At that time, the term “social studies” was used loosely when referring to history, geography, and moral education. Although my majors were history and geography, I taught more of history because of shortages of teachers in the discipline. One of the objectives of teaching history as stated in the old syllabi we used was preparation of good citizens. However, I really did not understand this goal because I also did not understand the meaning of citizenship in the context of the then dictatorship government from 1964 to 1994. My weak understanding of the goal of the “social studies” partly influenced the way I planned and taught my students.

I noticed that the history curriculum was not pluralistic in nature to reflect the different ethnic and religious groups in the country. All the students I taught in different schools were culturally diversified in terms of ethnicity and religion. It became clear to me that the students did not like learning about other people’s ethnic or religious histories when their own perspectives were not reflected in the curriculum. The students reacted in various forms to some parts of the history courses like demonstrating a passive kind of resistance, not writing homework assignments on topics they did not like, or even voicing out their opinions about what they disliked. However, I still had to teach all topics whether the students liked them or not because they were subjected to the same mandated examinations. My main concern was getting students to pass examinations and not preparation for citizenship responsibilities, the concept I hardly understood.
My own perception of teaching history as well as the various constraints I faced influenced my classroom practices. Participatory teaching and learning pedagogies were not new to me because we learned about them during pre-service training. However, the Ministry of Education did not compel teachers in the use of such pedagogies during the pre-democratic era. As such, I used a mixture of teacher-centered and learner-centered approaches, although I used more of the former because I viewed my major goal of teaching as preparing students for examinations. I found teacher-centered approaches necessary to drill students for examinations. Interestingly, I noted that students liked active participation in class during the few occasions I used such approaches.

In as far as I can remember, the use of the term “participation” became popular in the post-democratic era because of people’s involvement in political, social, and economic affairs in the new democratic society. Thus, during a series of education reforms for secondary school education in the post-democratic era, government emphasized the use of participatory classroom practices. Teachers were now compelled to use such type of approaches. It was also after the re-establishment of democracy in 1994 that I came to understand better the meaning of citizenship and its link to active participatory learning in the classroom. The reason for this was that the ushering in of a new democratic form of government revitalized the social, economic, and political roles of citizens in the country. This was unlike in the dictatorship government in which citizenship was associated with only the civil rights. However, I still failed to use most of the suggested participatory classroom pedagogies in the reformed curriculum because of numerous problems I faced like inadequate resources, large class size, and public examinations pressure.

While I was still grappling with the paradigm shift in my secondary school classroom, I joined Domasi College of Education in 1997 as a social studies teacher educator. The lesson I learned from my secondary school teaching experience made me believe that the state, policy makers, and curriculum developers design curricula based on what they see as a desirable but ignored the actual classroom challenges that teachers face for the achievement of the desired goal.

My role as a social studies teacher educator helped me learn more about classroom experiences from a different perspective. The government’s requirement on the use of participatory learning pedagogies reminded me of the various constraints I faced as a secondary school teacher. The question I kept on asking myself was: “How best can I prepare pre-service
teachers to use interactive pedagogies under the various constraints in their schools?” I made a lot of effort in training pre-service teachers on the use of participatory learning approaches based on what I found practical during the time I taught in secondary schools.

However, I noticed during field experiences that some of the pre-service teachers resorted to teacher-centered pedagogies, just as I did during my time. I was also impressed with other pre-service teachers who adapted the techniques and skills they learned during their teacher preparation. Some creative pre-service teachers devised interactive learning strategies that were appropriate for large classes. For example, some of them used hand-copied notes to engage students in a jigsaw technique. Others organized students to compose short poems based on what they had learned in the lessons.

From 1998, while still teaching at Domasi College, I also had a rare opportunity of being involved in a series of curriculum reform processes, which the Ministry of Education had organized. I was involved in the development of the social studies syllabi for primary and secondary schools, and teacher’s guides and textbooks for primary schools. I was also involved in the Primary Curriculum Assessment Reforms (PCAR) from 2002, but on an ad hoc basis. Such experiences helped to widen my understanding of curriculum development processes. One important issue I learned during such reforms was that subject-based curricula teams were bloated with “experts” that included officials from the Ministry of Education, curriculum specialists, officials from the Malawi National Examinations Board, college professors, and teacher educators. Paradoxically, teachers who actually enacted the curriculum were represented occasionally.

However, whenever I shifted my mental image to that of a classroom teacher to reflect on what we did to the curriculum, I always felt that as curriculum developers we did not heed much about the practical knowledge that teachers generate in their classrooms. Hence, remembering my own classroom experiences, I developed a keen interest in pursuing how primary school teachers implemented the social studies curriculum considering that we neglected their classroom practical knowledge when developing the curriculum.

Three mini-research projects I carried out in primary school classrooms through a master’s degree program I pursued between 2001 and 2004 offered me the first opportunity to test my line of thinking. The mini-projects provided me the opportunity of close interactions with primary school teachers. Through such interactions, I learned some of the teachers’ perceptions about the
school curricula and how the perceptions influenced their decisions in the classrooms. I also found that in the process of enacting any curriculum, some teachers devised effective classroom practices that promoted students’ active participation even when the teachers worked under enormous constraints. Such practical knowledge was one of the initial impetuses for my investigation of how primary school teachers implemented the social studies citizenship curriculum.

In addition to the professional background was my socio-cultural experience in the understanding of classroom practices. My own experience as a student and secondary school teacher made me believe that socio-cultural factors influence classroom practices especially as regard to value laden subjects like social studies. My socio-cultural background leans heavily on the Yao matrilineal society; this is my mother’s cultural group in which I was born and raised. The two schools I studied also happened to be in a predominantly Yao society. However, many aspects that are true about the Yao culture also apply to other cultures in Malawi, especially the matrilineal societies.

I noted as a learner and secondary school teacher that both students and teachers enter their classrooms with prior knowledge that was largely based on their socio-cultural histories. In the Yao culture children undergo initiation rites, which can be described as traditional forms of schooling. In these initiation rites children undergo instructions, which promote them into adulthood. As young adults, the initiates are taught about discipline, unity, cooperation, duties and responsibilities, leadership positions in the families and societies, and respect of each other’s rights. Such instructions are done by special elders in the villages and are largely elder-centered. The learning is through folklores, riddles, expressions, simulations, songs, and dances. To date, initiation rites remain a powerful tool among the Yao and other cultural groups in Malawi as a tool for keeping alive cultural traditions. Most of the students are initiated when they are about nine years old. This means students undergo initiation rites during their early years of school life.

I have never taught at primary school to experience what it takes to teach students who have prior knowledge based on their cultures. However, the truth about some elements of traditional practices is that some of their methods of teaching are contradictory to participatory learning that is currently promoted in the Malawi schools. For example, traditional teaching reduces children to mere listeners, and yet when they go to school they are expected to take active roles in the classroom. Furthermore, traditional teaching takes place in exclusive “schools”
for all boys or all girls with emphasis on social distance between sexes. Yet the same children go
to co-education schools where they are expected to mix and participate as equals in all classroom
activities. However, there are also some common features between traditional teachings and
classroom practices. For example, both promote citizenship learning through the teaching of
aspects like unity, duties, responsibilities, respect to each other’s rights, and conflict resolutions.
In addition, both use some common tools of teaching like songs, folklores, dances, and
simulation although these are more emphasized in the cultural traditions than in schools.

Thus, my own experiences as a teacher, teacher educator, and curriculum developer
influenced my desire to study how primary school teachers used interactive approaches in social
studies lessons for the preparation of active participatory citizens. The next section looks at why
I chose a case study genre of qualitative research for this investigation.

Overall Genre and Rationale

The case study genre of qualitative research aims at learning the complexity of cases
using multiple sources of data (Rossman & Rallies, 2003). Hence, this study was conducted
within the paradigm of a qualitative research method of inquiry using three primary school
teachers from two schools and their classrooms as the subjects of case studies. In this regard,
case study was the choice of teachers and their classrooms as the subjects for investigation rather
than the methods for data collection (Rossman & Rallies, 2003).

The case study approach was appropriate for this research because it gives detailed
accounts and deeper understanding of events and processes of a phenomenon under investigation
(Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Thus, the overall goal of the case study is not for making
generalizations, but to offer a critical inquiry that raises consciousness for possible steps for
decision-making (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Primary schools in Malawi were the best setting for
this study because the government’s goal for preparing active and effective citizens mainly
focuses on this sector (Ministry of Education, Science & Technology, 2001). However, as
already discussed in the previous chapter, literature illuminates that primary school teachers in
Malawi face enormous constrains in the implementation of the various curricula.

Setting of the Study

This study was conducted in two primary schools that were about a mile apart in the
rural part of Zomba district in Malawi. The Ministry of Education classifies primary schools in
two categories. These categories are local educational authority (LEA) and government assisted
schools. The LEA schools are fully government owned schools that the government runs through local assemblies. The other category consists of schools that are largely owned by religious institutions, but get financial aid from government. Both categories are public schools and government is responsible for the deployment of teachers and their wages. In addition, government provides some teaching and learning resources to LEA schools, but not to the assisted schools, which are expected to buy their own with the grants they get from the government. In addition, both categories of schools use the same national curricula.

Being LEA schools, the two schools in this study used the same national curricula, received some teaching and learning resources from government, and had the same “cadre of teachers.” In this case, the term cadre of teachers refers to a group of teachers that went through similar kinds of teacher preparation programs. While these similarities make a comparative study of the three case study teachers from the two schools possible, it is the differences in the social setting of the schools that make it enlightening. In this study, one of the schools is referred to as “government school” and the other as “community school,” essentially because of their social settings. The only difference between these schools is that government schools are constructed by the government, whereas community schools are constructed by local communities.

In terms of their social settings, the two schools are located in an area, which is predominantly of the Yao ethnic group. The government school had a more ethnically heterogeneous group of students than the community school, although the larger proportion of the students were Yao from the villages around the school. The school also had other groups of ethnic groups like Tumbuka, Ngoni, and Chewa because their parents came from other parts of Malawi to work for the governmental and non-governmental organizations around the school. The situation was slightly different with the community school, which was more culturally homogenous because all students came from the villages around the school.

Teachers in both schools represented various ethnic groups of Malawi, but the majority of them were Yao from the same communities of the two schools. Thus, the striking difference of the two schools was not much about their teaching and learning resources or cadre of teachers, but the cultural differences both teachers and students brought to class. This element was very important in the exploration of how culture influenced citizenship learning in the three case study classrooms.
Selection of Participants for the Study

The focus of this study was classroom practices from the perspective of the teachers. Therefore, three teachers from a total of 11 senior grade classes of the two primary schools formed the core for the investigation. There were six senior grade teachers from the government school and five from the community school. Two males and one female teachers were selected from the total of 11 teachers. From government school, I selected one female teacher from grade five and one male teacher from grade eight, and from the community school I selected one male teacher from grade six. This study also treated the classrooms of the three case study teachers as cases. Selection of case study teachers from the senior grades was ideal for this kind of study because students in these grades had a couple of years before they graduated back into their communities where they were expected to exhibit active participation in public life.

The selection of the three teacher participants as a sample for this study was concept driven in the sense that my interest was in what they did rather than about the specific attributes that made them represent the parent population. As already indicated, all teachers had similar qualifications and went through similar teacher preparation programs. This is where the criteria of concepts were ideal for the selection of teachers for this kind of study. The concepts that I used for the selection included teaching experiences, gender, involvement in citizenship duties, socio-cultural backgrounds, and willingness to share their lived experiences in and outside the classroom. Such attributes were important for understanding how teachers’ professional backgrounds and their lived experiences influenced their perceptions of the citizenship curriculum and its associated participatory learning pedagogies. Such perceptions were an integral part of exploring how the teachers made their decisions in the planning and implementation of lessons for the preparation of effective citizens.

Since the post-democratic paradigm shift in classroom practices formed the premise of this study, teachers who had experienced both the old and new social studies citizenship curricula were better placed to explain more about the classroom practices before and after this shift. There were only two teachers in the senior grades one from each school that had served that long. I selected the one from the community school because the other from the government school also served as a head teacher. However, the study also took into consideration teachers who were not influenced by the old curriculum for purposes of making comparisons. There were a total of eight teachers at senior grade levels of the two schools, from which I selected two
teachers, bearing in mind the criteria that I have already described. It was through this process that I selected two teachers from the government school, and the third participant from the community school. Thus, the goal during the seven-week period of data collection was an investigation of how the teachers planned and facilitated students’ learning.

Two curriculum developers formed another group of participants. Unlike the teachers, the curriculum developers were not subjects of the case studies. Their inclusion in the study was to understand the development processes of the social studies citizenship curriculum. The idea was to learn from them the state’s expectations about teachers’ implementation of the curriculum. The curriculum developers’ insights were critical in understanding of the difference between the state’s intended curriculum and the teachers’ enacted curriculum. The criterion for their selection was essentially their willingness to share their views about curriculum issues and the state’s expectations of teachers in the implementation of the curriculum.

Sources of Data

This research study used a triangulation of data collection procedures involving various sources of data that included documents, interviews, and classroom observations. This section details the three data sources used in this study.

Documents

Documents were an important source for data because an exploration of classroom practices ought to begin with what the teachers used for planning their lessons. The documents that were used included the social studies curriculum (that is, the syllabus, teacher’s guides, and prescribed textbooks); teachers’ plans (that is, scheme and record of work and lesson plans). The analysis of the syllabus was important because it represented the kind of content and pedagogies the state, through curriculum developers, selected for the preparation of active citizens. Teachers used the syllabus and teacher’s guides to prepare their schemes and records of work and lesson plans. A scheme of work is a unit plan of lessons for each week usually planned for the whole school term. A lesson plan is a detailed account of the scheme of work indicating classroom events and activities a teacher intends to cover in each lesson. Both these documents indicated how teachers planned events that unfolded in their classrooms through a series of lesson activities. The study of the teachers’ planning artifacts was important because they represented decisions that the teachers made in the translation of the intended citizenship curriculum into their enacted curriculum.
Interviews

Dilworth (2004) conducted a study on how social studies teachers implemented a multicultural citizenship curriculum in the United States, and noted that the teachers did not always enact the curriculum wholesale. For this reason, the author proposed that dialogues with teachers and classroom observations provided better avenues for understanding classroom practices. In this connection, I conducted interviews with the three teacher participants and two curriculum developers in order to learn about classroom practices for the preparation of active citizens. The goal in interviewing teacher participants was to unravel some valuable hidden data about their beliefs and perceptions regarding the citizenship curriculum, and how such beliefs influenced their decisions in the enactment of the intended curriculum. By the same token, the goal of the interviews with curriculum developers was to understand the views of the state in citizenship education, especially regarding choice of content and pedagogies for the preparation of active citizens. Interviews brought the participants and I in deep interactive processes. Indeed, qualitative research is quintessentially interactive because the researcher is involved in face to face dialogues with the participants in the study (Emerson, et al., 1995; Rossman & Rallies, 2003).

Participant Classroom Observations

Classroom observations provided data to complement data that were obtained through other sources. This source helped me in the understanding of how the teachers translated their decisions from the state’s intended curriculum into their teaching plans, and from the teaching plans into actions in the classrooms. The classroom observations also helped me in getting insights for pre-lesson and post-lesson interviews with the teachers. Thus, interviews and classroom observations offered me the reflexivity to react to the participants as I collected data. In this regard, my personal autobiography already described earlier in this chapter was essential in understanding the participants in the context of their social world (Emerson, et al., 1995; Rossman & Rallies, 2003).

Having outlined the various sources of data, the next section details how I collected data from the various sources that I have described above.
Data Collection Procedures

Data collection began on May 28, 2007, for the next seven weeks. A number of stages were fulfilled before the beginning of the actual data collection process. This subsection details the procedural arrangements made before the commencement of data collection. The subsection also details what was involved in the actual data collection processes from the various data sources. Arrangements made for this study is the beginning point for discussion in this section.

Making Arrangements for the Study

Arrangements for data collection began with getting an approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (see Appendix A). The IRB issued the approval certificate on May 10, 2007, (see Appendix B). This was followed by seeking permission from education authorities in the South East Education Division (SEED) in Malawi because the two schools I used for data collection were in this education division. I wrote a letter on May 14, 2007, to the Educational Manager of the division seeking permission to get into the schools (see Appendix C). I made a follow up visit to the division offices on May 21. The division office gave me the permission the same day together with a letter of authorization to collect data from the two schools (see Appendix D). On May 22, I visited the two schools to deliver copies of the authorization letter to the head teachers of the schools. I had fruitful discussions with head teachers of the two schools who promised to facilitate the arrangements for data collection at their schools. On the same day, I met potential teacher participants from the two schools. The purpose of meeting the teachers was to brief them about my study and to make arrangements for more detailed discussions the following day. All 11 teachers from grade five through eight of the two schools expressed their willingness to participate. However, on technical reasons, I could not involve three teachers who also served in the positions of head teacher and deputy head teacher at the two schools. This means I was left with eight teachers from the total, from which I selected the three teacher participants as already described in the preceding section.

After the final selection of the three teachers, I proceeded to meet the administrators of the two schools to brief them about the teachers who were selected from their schools and how I intended to collect the data. Since, students in the three case study classrooms were not part of the participants of this study, consent from them was not a requirement. However, special
permission was sought from the teacher participants and head teachers for video-taping some of the lessons for purposes of data analysis. Most parents in Malawi are illiterate and consent for involving students is sought from the school administrators. Traditionally, this is also the custom in Malawi that permission is sought from the elders who are directly responsible for the children.

I explained to the three teacher participants how I intended to collect data through analysis of their teaching plans, interviews, and classroom observations. I planned schedules with each of the teacher participants on the dates for interviews and days for classroom observations. The teacher participants’ flexibility in scheduling their social studies lessons helped me to observe all their lessons on each day and three times per week.

On May 24 and 25, I piloted the teacher interview questions with grades five and six teachers from a different school in the same area of the two study schools. The goal of this pilot study was mainly to find out the difficulties the questions might have posed to the teacher participants. The interview questions contained terms like citizenship, democracy, pedagogies, critical thinking, informed decisions, techniques, and strategies, which I wanted to find out from the teachers in the pilot study if they fully understood them. The study showed that teachers were not quite sure of these terms. As such, in the actual interview episodes with the three teacher participants I used the term “methods” to refer to techniques. Similarly, I explained some of the terms like critical thinking and informed decision-making before asking the teacher participants to describe what they did in their classrooms.

On the very first day of data collection, I started with reading a consent form together with each teacher participant, and upon their final agreement to participate in the study, each teacher participant signed two copies of the forms (see Appendix E). I kept one copy and each of the teacher participants kept the other copies. The three teacher participants consented that I could interview them and observe them as they teach. In addition, they consented to have their interviews audio and video taped for purposes of data analysis. They also agreed to have some of their lessons videotaped. After making all these arrangements, data collection began with document analysis and classroom observations on May 28, 2007.

As regard to selection of curriculum developers, I first met the social studies curriculum specialist at the Malawi Institute of Education (MIE) to get the names of the people who actively participated in the development of the social studies citizenship curriculum. The MIE is a government institution based in Zomba, which deals with curriculum issues and in-service
training for teachers in Malawi. There were three people in Zomba who participated at all stages of the social studies citizenship curriculum development process. One of them was the curriculum specialist himself, and the other two were university professors. I selected the curriculum specialist and a female university professor. The specialist represented the interests of the state, whereas the professor represented the views of teacher educators. I explained to them about the study and how I intended to collect data from them. Both of them agreed to take part in the study. I made arrangements with each of the curriculum developers on the dates for interviews. On the actual days of the interviews, I began by reading a consent form together with each of the participants, and upon their final agreement to participate in the study, each one of them signed the consent forms (see Appendix F). I kept one copy and each of the participants kept the other copies. The interviews were audio taped for purposes of data analysis.

After making all these necessary preparations, the actual data collection procedures involved the analysis of curriculum documents and teachers’ plans, interviews, and classroom observations. The subsequent subsections details how data were collected from each source.

**Collection of Data**

Data collection involved a number of sources and these were analysis of curriculum documents and teaching plans, interviews with three teacher participants and curriculum developers, and classroom observations. Discussion will follow this order of data sources.

**Document Analysis**

The analysis of curriculum documents such as the syllabus, teacher’s guide, and textbooks focused on the state’s selection of content and pedagogies for the preparation of active participatory citizens. In this context, the analysis focused on suggestions made to teachers on the use of various techniques, strategies, resources, learning activities, and assessment procedures. This analysis helped in the examination of teachers’ alignment or deviation of their schemes and records of work and lesson plans from the suggestions in the curriculum documents. I compiled field notes based on what I observed from this data analysis process.

**Interviews**

There were two types of interviews: one with the three teacher participants and the other with the two curriculum developers.

*Interviews with teacher participants.* There were two kinds of interviews with teacher participants. The first type consisted of semi-structured dialogues on a wide array of issues such
as the teachers’ preparation program(s), their socio-cultural backgrounds, and also their beliefs and perceptions about citizenship and democracy. In addition, the dialogues sought to understand how the teachers planned and implemented lessons, how they positioned students in their planning and how they connected classroom practices to the everyday life events. The interviews also explored the kind of constraints teachers faced in the implementation of the intended curriculum and how they managed those kinds of constraints. Further than this, the interviews explored the teacher participants’ conceptions of the social studies citizenship curriculum and participatory learning.

There were three interviews with each of the teacher participants and each one of them was about one hour long. The first of the three semi-structured interviews was on the teachers’ cultural and historical backgrounds (see Appendix G). Discussions in this interview focused on the teachers’ lived experiences such as socio-cultural practices in their ethnic groups and how these helped in the preparation of children for adult responsibilities. The interviews also sought to learn the teachers’ social roles in their communities. The goal of this interaction was to learn how socio-cultural practices influenced the teachers’ (and their students) beliefs, perspectives, and stances about traditional forms of citizenship life.

The first semi-structured interview acted as a harbinger for the second semi-structured interview, which was on classroom practices. In this second interview, I engaged the teachers in a dialogue to understand how their preparation programs helped them in handling the current social studies curriculum (see Appendix G). The core of the interview was classroom practices in terms of how they used various techniques and strategies, teaching and learning resources, lesson activities, and assessment of students’ learning. The goal in this interview was to learn from the teacher participants how their lessons helped in the preparation of students with critical thinking and decision-making skills that are required for the preparation of active participatory citizens. In this regard, the discussion also focused on how teacher participants used traditional knowledge about citizenship and governance they (and their students) brought to class.

The last semi-structured interview sought to learn from teacher participants their understanding about the goals of the social studies citizenship curriculum (see Appendix G). In addition, discussion in this interview focused on the teachers’ views about the effectiveness of the content and pedagogies in the curriculum for the preparation of active participatory citizenry.
Furthermore, the interview sought to learn from teacher participants the constraints they faced in the implementation of the curriculum and what they did to overcome the challenges.

The three semi-structured interviews were conducted at the beginning, middle, and end of the seven-week data collection period. The interviews were conducted outside the normal lesson times to avoid distracting the teachers from their routine classroom work. I used semi-structured open-ended questions to get detailed accounts from the teacher. The interviews were video and audio recorded for purposes of getting more accurate data through a replay of the episodes.

The second type of interviews consisted of pre-lesson and post-lesson observation episodes. I studied the lesson plans before each lesson observation in order to get a synopsis view of how the teachers intended to teach a particular lesson. The pre-lesson observation interviews helped me to understand teacher participants’ decisions in the organization of classroom practices. Where I was not sure about the teacher’s planning, I asked clarifying questions before the beginning of the actual classroom observation. The post-lesson observation interviews gave me opportunities of asking the teacher participants about some issues I noted during the classroom observations. Both the pre-lesson and post-lesson observation interviews were short and sporadic. The reason for this was that the necessity of such interviews were dependent on my examination of the teachers’ plans as well as what I had observed in the classrooms. I made field notes of these short interviews, which became part of the overall field notes I compiled for each lesson observation.

*Interviews with curriculum developers.* I interviewed two curriculum developers using semi-structured questions in a face-to-face dialogue (see Appendix H). The areas of focus were the goals of the citizenship curriculum, the curriculum development processes, and decisions made on the inclusion (or exclusion) of some content and pedagogical approaches. In addition, the interview sought to understand the state’s expectations of the roles of students in the classroom, expectation of teachers’ role in the accomplishment of the curriculum, and challenges that were envisaged in the implementation of the curriculum. The interview with each of the curriculum developer lasted about one hour. The conversations were audio taped for purposes of data analysis.

*Participant Classroom Observations*

The focus on classroom observations was on the actual events and processes of how teacher participants enacted the planning documents into practice. Such events included the activities teachers and students were engaged in, use of various techniques and strategies,
sequencing of classroom activities, use of various resources (including those made by teachers or manufactured), and teachers assessment of students’ learning. In addition, I made special attention on how the teacher participants engaged students in critical thinking and rational decision-making processes through the lesson activities that the teachers organized for the students.

Both schools under study scheduled social studies lessons three times per week in grades five through eight. Each lesson was officially 35 minutes long although in practice they fluctuated between 34 and 41 minutes. The goal was to observe all three lessons in each week for each teacher participant in order to get a better picture of how each of them planned and implemented lessons vis-à-vis what was contained in the syllabus, teacher’s guides, and students’ textbooks. In practice, I observed all three lessons per week for the grade five teacher participant during the entire seven-week period of data collection. However, due to absenteeism on the part of the grades six and eight teacher participants, I observed 19 lessons from each one of them during the seven-week period. Thus, there were a total of 59 observed lessons among the three teacher participants.

I video-recorded two full lessons from each of the three teacher participants. These lessons were randomly selected based on the teachers’ schemes and records of work. I made the first recordings during the second week of data collection and the last recordings during the fifth and sixth weeks. The purpose of video recording was to review the lessons in order to understand how the teachers accomplished the social studies curriculum. I used a detailed classroom observation protocol to guide data collection during each of the classroom observation occurrences (see Appendix I).

I analyzed and interpreted these data from the various sources in order to draw lessons of what I learned through this study. The next section details how I used the data for coming up with major findings of the study.

Data Management and Analysis Procedures

By the end of the data collection period, there was a substantial amount of data that were generated from the analysis of curriculum documents, exhaustive interviews with teachers and curriculum developers, and in-depth classroom observations. This chapter ends with a discussion of how these data were managed, analyzed, and interpreted for coming up with results that are discussed in Chapters Four and Five.
Data Management

Data obtained from various sources were in form of field notes and transcripts. I made field notes from the analysis curriculum documents and teachers’ teaching plans. I also made fields notes of the lessons I observed. There were 59 lessons that I observed during the seven-week period, six of which were video-recorded. I made field notes of the 53 lessons that were not video recorded. I replayed three of the six video-recorded lessons for purposes of writing detailed accounts of field notes that are presented as lesson vignettes in Chapter Four. I also made field notes through a replay of the other three video-recorded lessons. In addition to this, I made field notes based on the pre-lesson and post-lesson classroom observation interviews.

There were a total of nine video and audio-recorded interviews with teacher participants, and two audio-recorded interviews with curriculum developers. I made verbatim transcriptions of all 11 interviews through a replay of the audio-recorded dialogues. Thus, by the end of the whole data management process, data were in form of field notes, interview transcripts, and lesson vignettes.

Preserving Confidentiality

All names of teacher participants and those of their schools are represented with pseudonyms throughout this paper in accordance to the standard requirement of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University for all research studies involving human subjects.

Credibility and Trustworthiness of the Study

Data that were collected during the seven-week period came from prolonged engagement in interviews with the three case study teachers and curriculum developers, and also persistent observations in their classrooms. For this reason, the goal when analyzing the data was to achieve accuracy and precision between the data and the teachers’ classroom practices that the data represented (see Emerson, et al., 1995). I achieved this goal through a number of steps. The first step involved rigorous reading of the data in order to familiarize myself with them. The second step was construction of an analytical route to capture issues, categories, and themes that emerged from the data. “Issues” refer to individual-based concerns or actual words spoken by individuals (Ritchie &Lewis, 2003). In this study, issues refer to the key topics the three teachers and two curriculum developers emphasized during the semi-structured interviews. Categories are
words or phrases that give clear intended meaning from data, whereas themes are major lessons that are implied through connecting threads and patterns of various categories (Rossman & Rallies, 2003; Seidman, 2006).

The third step involved labeling the data using issues and categories to come up with a coding scheme. I used words and short phrases to represent the issues and categories. While maintaining a higher degree of accuracy, I made the labeling across data sources, depending on their relevance and valid conceptualization to the research questions. It is through this process that I constructed a coding scheme. This kind of coding ensured the credibility of results because it was derived from data that were obtained from a triangulation of data sources.

The last step was drawing a category and theme chart that was used for the discussion of research findings. With the guide of the four research questions, I used the coding scheme for the analysis of the data that represented what occurred in each of the classrooms of the three case study teachers. Such an approach helped in coming up with broader categories for a cross-case analysis of the three teachers. In order to achieve maximum results from the cross-case analysis, I interpreted the data based on the similarities, differences, and patterns that emerged from various data sources. In this way, exhaustive, but not fully comprehensible broader meanings, emerged from the data. These broader meanings formed the basis for drawing categories of what occurred in the three classrooms of the three case study teachers. Through this process, I connected threads of the categories for the generation of broader meanings of what occurred in the three classrooms. In this way, themes emerged as I interpreted the broader meanings to draw serendipitous lessons of how the teachers planned and implemented social studies lessons for the preparation of active participatory citizens. It was through this process that I came up with a category and theme chart that was used for discussing research findings in Chapter Four (see table 1 in chapter four).

Throughout the discussion of research findings, key issues and perspectives of the teacher participants and curriculum developers are represented by their own voices to reflect the authenticity and trustworthiness of the findings. Some of the research findings are presented graphically to supplement the detailed descriptions.

Confirmability and Dependability of Research Findings

The credibility and trustworthiness in data analysis determine the confirmability and dependability of research findings. Dependability deals with exhaustive and comprehensive
procedural analysis of issues, categories, and themes that are close enough to represent the studied group, whereas confirmability relates to closeness of the generated data to the parent population (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). In this regard, I rigorously and consistently analyzed the data in this study using a coding scheme that was generated from various sources. The coding scheme helped in the interpretation of data leading to conclusions about classroom practices for the preparation of active citizens. What this implies is that if the same methods of interviews, classroom observations, and data analysis were applied to a different sample of the same parent population, the research results would, most likely, lead to similar conclusions of this study.

**Generalizability and Transferability of the Study**

Generalizations are conclusions that are accepted as truths in a study and these truths influence people’s thinking (Rossman & Rallies, 2003). Some researchers have argued that findings from a case study approach cannot be generalized and applied to a different social setting (Flyvbjerg, 2004). However, as Flyvbjerg rightly noted, this is one of the misconceptions about a case study approach. Indeed, what is crucial in qualitative research is not much about the standard generalization from a study, but what is learned from a thick description and interpretation of a study (Becker, 1998; Emerson, et al., 1995; Rossman & Rallies, 2003). In this regard, Gobo (2004) noted two kinds of generalizations: based on specific population and that of nature of process. Generalization based on nature of process is ideal for field research because it interprets the social significance of samples and not much about how the sample relates to the parent population (Gobo, 2004). Many qualitative researchers refer to this generalization as “transferability” because of its practicability of learning from a thick description of a small sample and then applying what has been learned to a different setting of the same population. Indeed, while studies that involve large samples have advantage of breadth, they have a limitation in terms of depth. But, the case study provides the necessary depth from a small sample.

Therefore, the case study approach in this study provided the depth and complexity of learning how social studies primary school teachers in Malawi planned and implemented lessons for the preparation of active participatory citizens. This is why the various sources used in this study yielded thick data that were rigorously analyzed and interpreted to give a portrait picture of classroom practices that aim at the preparation of active citizens in a democratic civil society. For that reason, by analogy, the findings from this study provide valid lessons for other studies in
settings that are sufficiently similar. Importantly, if the same concepts that determined the selection of the sample population for this study is prevalent in the parent population, the likelihood of getting similar findings would be high.

Conclusion

Four generic research questions guided data collection of classroom practices from three case study teachers of two rural setting primary schools. Data collection was through a triangulation of sources that included document analysis, interviews with the three case study teachers and two curriculum developers, and classrooms observations. These data were analyzed and interpreted using categories and themes. The next chapter is a discussion of the themes and categories that emerged from the analysis and interpretation of the data that were obtained from a triangulation of data sources.
CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

Introduction

The overall goal of this study was an exploration of how primary school teachers implemented the social studies curriculum for the preparation of active participatory citizens in the Malawi democratic society. Four generic research questions guided the collection of data from a triangulation of sources for the narration of a story about what occurs in the social studies classrooms. The first question was about the organization of the social studies content and participatory pedagogies for the preparation of active participatory citizens. This question acted as a preamble to the learning of how teachers used the curriculum documents for planning their lessons. The second question aimed at learning the teachers’ conceptions of participatory classroom practices as stipulated in the curriculum documents, and how those conceptions influenced their planning of lessons for the preparation of competent citizens. The last two questions aimed at learning how the teachers implemented their planned lessons in the actual classrooms. The intended purpose for these two questions was to learn the teachers’ organization of classroom practices from different perspectives. For example, the third question was an endeavor to learn the classroom practices from the perspective of the teachers’ conceptions of participatory classroom practices. However, the last question aimed at learning the same teachers’ enactment of the curriculum, but from the perspective of external classroom constraints that the teachers had no control. Based on each of these questions, the data that were collected from various sources were transformed into categories that cut across the three case study teachers. The categories were transformed further into themes that describe serendipitous lessons that are learned from each of the questions, as shown in table 1 below.

Therefore, this chapter is organized into four sections based on each of the research questions. Each section is divided further into subsections based on the themes for each of the research questions. The categories, as indicated in table 1, are used as headings for the discussion of research evidence under each of their corresponding themes. As already stated in Chapter One, the term “classroom practices” is used in this paper to refer to the teachers’ organization of various techniques, lesson activities, and resources for involving students in the classrooms.

The four research questions are follows:
1. How are the content and pedagogical strategies of the social studies primary school curriculum in Malawi organized for the preparation of active participatory citizens in a democracy?

2. How do the teachers’ conceptions of participatory classroom practices influence their planning of lessons for the preparation of effective citizenry in a democratic society?

3. How do the teachers’ conceptions of participatory classroom practices influence their decisions in the implementation of the social studies citizenship curriculum?

4. How do the state’s policies on language and grade eight public examinations influence teachers in the organization of classroom practices for the preparation of active participatory citizens?

Based on these questions, categories and themes were derived from the data as shown in table 1 below.
Table 1

**Category and Theme Chart**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Question. 1</strong>&lt;br&gt;&lt;br&gt;<strong>Theme 1.</strong> The social studies curriculum is organized with a broad spectrum of content for the preparation of competent citizens at various societal levels</td>
<td>The organization of the social studies citizenship curriculum&lt;br&gt;1) The organization of the social studies content&lt;br&gt;• The spiralling social studies curriculum&lt;br&gt;• Multidisciplinary content&lt;br&gt;• Multicultural content</td>
<td>• Document analysis: syllabus, teacher’s guides: grade five and six&lt;br&gt;• Interview: curriculum developers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theme 2.</strong> The social studies curriculum contains participatory classroom practices for the preparation of competent citizens in a democracy.</td>
<td>2) The organization of the social studies classroom practices&lt;br&gt;• Elements of participatory classroom practices&lt;br&gt;• The organization of participatory classroom practices</td>
<td>• Interview: curriculum developers&lt;br&gt;• Document analysis: teacher’s guide for grade five and six</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Question. 2</strong>&lt;br&gt;&lt;br&gt;<strong>Theme 3.</strong> Teachers demonstrated limited conceptions of participatory classroom practices.</td>
<td>Teachers’ conceptions of active participatory classroom practices&lt;br&gt;1) Teachers’ limited conceptions of participatory classroom practices&lt;br&gt;• Teachers’ understanding of the goal of social studies&lt;br&gt;• Teachers’ conceptions of citizenship and democracy&lt;br&gt;• Teachers’ conceptions of critical thinking and problem solving</td>
<td>• Semi-structured interview 1: all teachers&lt;br&gt;• Semi-structured interview 2: all teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theme 4.</strong> Teachers’ limited conceptions of participatory classroom practices were reflected in their teaching plans.</td>
<td>2) Influence of teachers’ conceptions of participatory learning on lesson planning&lt;br&gt;• Organization of schemes and records of work&lt;br&gt;• Organization of lesson plans</td>
<td>• Semi-structured interview 2: all teachers&lt;br&gt;• Schemes of work: Mwase&lt;br&gt;• Lesson plan: Mwase&lt;br&gt;• Grade six teacher’s guide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Themes</td>
<td>Categories</td>
<td>Evidence</td>
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<td><strong>Question 3 Theme 5.</strong> Teachers’ limited conceptions of active participatory learning were reflected in their organization of teacher-centered classroom practices.</td>
<td>Teachers’ organization of classroom practices 1) Impact of teachers’ conceptions of participatory learning on classroom practices • Evidence from use of lesson activities • Evidence from use of teaching and learning resources • Evidence from the use of written assessment activities • Evidence from weak integration of concepts</td>
<td>• Semi-structured interview 2: All teachers • Semi-structured interview 3: All teachers • Semi-structured interview: curriculum developers • Lesson vignette on Human rights: Mwase • Classroom observations • Pre-lesson and post-lesson interviews • Grade five teacher’s guide</td>
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<td><strong>Theme 6.</strong> Teachers’ socio-cultural histories contributed to their limited implementation of interactive classroom practices</td>
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<td><strong>Theme 8.</strong> Grade eight national examinations influenced the teachers’ use of teacher-centered classroom practices</td>
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The Organization of the Social Studies Citizenship Curriculum

Research question 1. How are the content and pedagogical strategies of the social studies primary school curriculum in Malawi organized for the preparation of active participatory citizens in a democracy?

Theme 1. The social studies curriculum is organized with a broad spectrum of content for the preparation of competent citizens at various societal levels.

Theme 2. The social studies curriculum has active participatory classroom practices for the preparation of competent citizens in a democracy.

Curricula documents for each subject in the Malawi primary school sector are in the form of syllabi, teacher’s guides, and students’ textbooks. A syllabus is a document that informs teachers about the organization of content and some suggested teaching and learning pedagogies for delivering the content to students. Teacher’s guides give detailed information to teachers on how they can plan their lessons. These documents represent what the state sees as appropriate content and classroom teaching and learning pedagogies for the preparation of active participatory citizens in a democracy. Since teachers use these documents for planning their lessons, the documents represented a starting point for learning about the teachers’ perceptions of their roles in the preparation of active participatory citizens in a democracy. The analysis of the social studies curriculum is in two parts. The first part looks at the organization of content and the second part is the discussion of lesson activities that are proposed to teachers for the effective delivery of the content to students. Views of two curriculum developers that participated in the development of the current social studies curriculum were very critical for understanding the organization of the curriculum. One of the curriculum developers represented the state and the other represented teacher educators. Discussion begins with the proposed content in the curriculum.

The Organization of the Social Studies Content

Theme 1. The social studies curriculum is organized with a broad spectrum of content for the preparation of competent citizens at various societal levels.

Document analysis shows that three issues guided the development of the social studies curriculum content. The first is the organization of content using a spiralling structure for the preparation of citizens at various societal levels. The second is the organization of multidisciplinary content for the preparation of citizens with broad knowledge that would enable
them to participate actively at various societal levels. The last is the organization of multicultural content for enhancing fairness among people in a shared political community. Therefore, discussion in this section will use the three factors that determined the selection of content.

*The Spiralling Social Studies Curriculum*

The eight national goals of education in Malawi guide the organization of content for every subject in the primary school curricula. The goals are:

1. Citizenship skills.
2. Ethical and socio-cultural skills.
3. Economic development and environment management skills.
4. Occupational and entrepreneurship skills.
5. Practical skills.
6. Creativity and resourcefulness skills.
7. Scientific and technological development skills.
8. Contemporary issues and coping skills.

Curriculum developers organize their subject curricula around these goals, but much is dependent on the philosophical foundations of the subjects. For example, as regard to the rationale of social studies, Malawi Institute of Education (2003) states that:

> The goal of the new social studies curriculum, therefore, is to help students to develop knowledge, skills and positive attitudes to function in the civic life of their communities, the nation and the world, and to develop a culture of responsible citizenship. It also aims at developing an understanding of the socio-economic and political systems of other communities in the world as well as the need for proper utilization and conservation of the environment. (p. ix)

This rationale implies that the goal of social studies is the preparation of active citizens at various societal levels. Social studies achieves this goal through a “spiralling curriculum.” A spiralling curriculum is the idea of teaching the same concept at all grade levels. This idea is based on the educational theory of learning, which assumes that children understand concepts based on their cognitive development (Department of Curriculum Development and Evaluation, 1990). For example, the theory helps us understand that children learn things around them through concrete sensory ways during their early ages and begin to learn abstract concepts of the world beyond their own, as they grow older. The implication of this theory is that children can do different
things at different succeeding grade levels depending on their cognitive development. With this theory in mind, the social studies primary school curriculum in Malawi uses the expanding horizons or what Griffith and Barth (2006) call “expanding environment” from the family level through to the global society. The idea is teaching the same concept of civic duties and responsibilities at various societal levels as the students move from one grade to the other. The following diagram demonstrates the Malawi primary school social studies spiralling curriculum:
Figure 1. The Spiralling Social Studies Curriculum

Source: Tlou (1998)
As shown in this diagram, the children in grade one begin to learn the concept of good citizenship at family level because this is their immediate concrete world. At this level the children are familiar with relationships in their families as well as duties and responsibilities of all family members. In grade two they learn about good citizenship at school level because at this stage the students begin to interact more with individuals who are not members of their families. Similarly, at this stage students learn more about duties and responsibilities of individuals at their schools. This kind of organization of citizenship responsibilities continues into the senior grades where students learn about the abstract social worlds. The implication of this is that the spiralling social studies curriculum achieves the preparation of active participatory citizens at various societal levels.

The spiralling curriculum uses the “scope” and “sequence” for the preparation of active participatory citizens at various societal levels. Scope refers to the depth of knowledge, skills, and attitudes to be developed at each grade level, whereas sequence refers to the arrangements of topics from known to unknown (Griffith & Barth, 2006). Therefore, the intention of the scope and sequence is teaching the concept of citizenship at all grade levels, but with differences in depth and complexity.

The importance of this spiralling structure is twofold. The first one is that it helps students in the learning of concepts from the known to the unknown or from the familiar to the unfamiliar. For instance, in the lower classes students learn more about traditional forms of governance and citizenship because these are concepts, which they are familiar with from their homes. However, at succeeding grade levels the students learn the same concepts of citizenship and governance, but from the perspectives of what is borrowed from other parts of the world including the West. The second importance of the spiralling curriculum is that the expanding horizons give students opportunities in handling complex and more demanding citizenship responsibilities at various societal levels. For example, in grade one, students learn about their duties and responsibilities at family level, but in the succeeding grade levels they acquire knowledge of active civic life of more complex societies than their own. The expectations are that knowledge of their own society will help the students to appreciate some valuable aspects of civic life and forms of political governance from other cultures in the world.
However, the sequencing of topics in the Malawi primary school social studies curriculum seems problematic because topics depicting traditional conceptions of governance and citizenship and similar concepts adopted from other societies in the world largely appear as separate entities. The few instances where Traditional and Western forms of governance or citizenship are integrated are like in the grade six topic on “Prominent leaders.” Otherwise, lesson activities in the teacher’s guides rarely make such connections. As shall be discussed in theme 5, such loose sequencing of topics affected the teachers’ implementation of the curriculum.

The scope and sequence chart determined the selection of multidisciplinary and multicultural content for the preparation of active participatory citizens at various societal levels. The next section is a discussion of the multidisciplinary dimension.

*Multidisciplinary Content*

In terms of the appropriateness of the curriculum, interviews with the two curriculum developers illuminated that one of the issues that guided the selection of content for the curriculum was getting a broad spectrum of content for the preparation of active participatory citizens in various spheres of human interactions. In this connection, the curriculum developer representing the state explained:

> We were trying to include topics that will prepare an effective citizen; we are talking of a citizen who must participate well in democratic practices such as voting. But not only political, we are talking of issues of making the citizens competent in social, economic, and cultural areas. This is why we included various topics on culture, economy, human rights, and democracy; and also gender, conservation of the environment, and so on.

Analysis of the curriculum documents showed that the content was drawn from various disciplines, but organized using seven “strands.” Strands are main themes that guide the selection of appropriate content for the preparation of effective citizens at various societal levels.

The strands for the Malawian primary school social studies curriculum are:

1. Population, past and present events.
2. Physical environment.
3. Resource management and development.
4. Civic rights and responsibilities.
5. Social environment.
Emerging issues.

Safety.

All grade levels use the same strands, but with a variation in content coverage across the grades. These strands draw their content from various disciplines such as history, geography, civics economics, anthropology, sociology, and other social sciences. At this juncture, an example of how a strand is covered in the curriculum will help in the clarification of the importance of the spiralling curriculum in determining appropriate content for citizenship learning at various grade levels.

Taking an example of the strand of “Civic rights and responsibilities,” the content topics are as follows:

- Grade five: Social institutions, district administration, representative government, courts, and rights and responsibilities.
- Grade six: Chieftaincy, social services, and Malawi Constitution.
- Grade seven: Rights, freedoms and responsibilities, constitution, and social institutions.
- Grade eight: Government, organizations, and human rights.

Students at each grade level learn the content of these topics of the strand, but basically in the context of the societal levels of the spiralling curriculum. For instance, at grade five they learn these topics in the context of what occurs at the level of their own district, and in grade six in the context of national level, and so on up to the last grade. Thus, the content of this strand at all grades levels give the students the knowledge of their expected roles and responsibilities at all the societal levels represented in the spiralling structure. This shows that the selection of multidisciplinary content was geared at the preparation of multi-faceted individuals that can actively participate in the political, social, and economic affairs affecting their lives.

Multicultural content was another dimension for the organization of the curriculum.

*Multicultural Content*

The goal of multicultural content was to represent a cross section of people based on race, ethnicity, gender, religion, and region. According to the curriculum developer representing the state, the goal of this kind of multicultural content was to prepare effective citizens with broad knowledge of various cultures. However, the curriculum developer acknowledged that coming up with a multicultural content was not an easy task because of the heterogeneous nature of the Malawi population. In this regard, he stated that:
It’s problematic because here is a very heterogeneous nation; should we take all these cultural groups into consideration. It’s a bit difficult. Although our emphasis was on human rights and democracy, we had other geographical topics, historical topics as well, but for culture it became very difficult for us to consider each and every cultural group into details. Of course that has a negative implication, though I think in the suggested activities we emphasized that teachers should begin with the cultures of local environments of their schools before moving on to national topics, which we have mentioned in the syllabus.

Analysis of the curriculum illuminated that the content was, indeed, more representative in terms of ethnic groups, gender, and region. For example, the content includes the Chewa, Ngoni, Tumbuka, Lomwe, and Yao ethnic groups of Malawi. The old curriculum focused on the Chewa and Ngoni. Teachers are also encouraged to use examples of other small ethnic groups that are not stated in the curriculum, but in the socio-cultural context of their schools. The content also goes beyond Malawi because other groups of people included in the curriculum are the Bantus, Negroes, Nilotes, Hamites, Europeans, and Asians. This shows that the content of the curriculum allows students to understand their forms of citizenship and governance in the context of other people outside their immediate environments.

In terms of religion, the curriculum content features much of Christianity and Islam. The students also learn about traditional forms of religions, but in the context of pre-colonial kingdoms and states. This also shows that the content is representative in terms of religion. Equally true is that gender issues are well presented, especially under the strands of “Social environment” and “Emerging issues.” All in all, the curriculum is well balanced with content for preparing active participatory citizens at various societal levels.

The two curriculum developers also explained that the content of the curriculum was dovetailed with interactive participatory classroom practices with the goal of preparing competent citizens in a democratic community. Therefore, the last sub-section is a discussion of the participatory classroom practices that the curriculum developers designed for the preparation of active citizens in a democracy.

The Organization of the Social Studies Classroom Practices

Theme 2. The social studies curriculum contains participatory classroom practices for the preparation of competent citizens in a democracy.
The curriculum documents, especially the teacher’s guides, provide suggestions to teachers in the ways they can organize effective participatory classroom practices for preparing students for civic duties and responsibilities. Therefore, discussion in this subsection is in two parts. The first part is a discussion of the actual elements that define participatory classroom activities. The second part is a discussion of pedagogical strategies for the organization of effective classroom practices.

*Elements of Participatory Classroom Practices*

The curriculum developer representing the state emphasized that the aim of including suggested teaching and learning pedagogies in the curriculum was to make teachers conversant with participatory or innovative approaches for developing effective citizens. The curriculum developer representing teacher educators echoed the importance of the suggested teaching and learning pedagogies as she elucidated that:

The content of citizenship education is not enough because you can have it and fail to deliver. As curriculum developers our emphasis was on participatory strategies and techniques, with the aim of producing that good citizen. The aim was that in the democratic society people should participate in community activities, in decision-making in different ways. If you deny a person participation in classroom that person cannot participate outside. This is because if the person is participating in classroom, that person is going to change his or her attitude towards certain things because you are sharing ideas, getting to know what others are doing; getting to know the pros and the cons, which may not even come out from the teacher’s lecture.

What comes clearly from the explanations of the two curriculum developers is that classroom practices aimed at the preparation of effective citizens must be participatory in approach. In their explanations they emphasized that the goal of participatory classroom practices must be to help students gain knowledge and develop skills and positive attitudes necessary for civic duties and responsibilities. For this reason, the two curriculum developers stressed that critical thinking, problem solving, and decision-making were key elements of participatory classroom practices. But, do the curriculum documents contain elements of participatory classroom practices as the two curriculum developers described? The next subsection is a discussion of the organization of participatory classroom practices for the preparation of competent citizens.
The Organization of Participatory Classroom Practices

The organization of lessons for the preparation of active citizens is presented in the teacher’s guides, which teachers use for planning their lessons. Therefore, teacher’s guides represented the best curriculum documents for learning the state’s idealism of active participatory classroom practices. The organization of the teacher’s guides is in the form of units. A unit is a set of lessons for a particular topic in the syllabus. The unit also has suggested strategies for presenting the lessons in the classrooms. The presentation of the social studies unit below is a combination of examples from various units for the purposes of getting a more representative picture of the organization of the units in the teacher’s guides. Each unit has the same segments that guide teachers on the organization of effective participatory classroom practices. The segments are as follows:

Why teach this unit. This section gives a brief background to the topic and ends with the need for students to learn about issues in the unit. For example, the topic on “Types of courts and their functions” in grade five reads as follows:

This unit will discuss courts and their functions. It is important for pupils to know the various types of courts and their functions. This knowledge can assist pupils to understand the roles of courts in a democratic society.

Thus, right away from the beginning, each unit tells the teacher why their students must learn about issues covered in the unit. This section helps the teachers in the organization of lesson activities for the creation of an enduring understanding of the topic.

Objectives. This section guides the teachers on what students should be able to demonstrate after covering each unit. For example, the topic on “The Constitution of the Republic of Malawi” for grade six has the following objectives:

By the end of this unit, pupils should be able to:

- Explain the term “Constitution.”
- Describe the main features of the Constitution of the Republic of Malawi.
- Examine the functions of the Constitution.
- Describe the branches of the government in Malawi.
- Explain the functions of national symbols of Malawi.
These objectives tell the teachers the learning outcomes after covering each unit. Based on these unit objectives, teachers are expected to come up with lesson activities that must help students in the acquisition of knowledge and development of skills, values, and attitudes that are associated with active participatory life in a democratic community.

**Skills to be learned.** This section guides teachers on the kinds of skills they must develop in their students based on the issues that are covered in the unit. For instance, the unit of “Peaceful conflict resolution” for grade six reads as follows:

Ensure that pupils practice and develop the following skills: negotiation, effective communication, critical thinking, problem-solving, decision-making, conflict resolution or prevention and summarizing.

What this implies is that the teachers’ organization of lesson activities must help students develop these various skills after covering the topic. These are some of the skills necessary for competent and responsible civic life in a democracy.

**Values and attitudes to be learned.** This section covers another important tenet of citizenship learning. For example, based on the same topic on “Peaceful conflict resolution,” this section reads as follows:

Ensure that pupils acquire the following values and attitudes: respect for others, justice and fairness, tolerance, cooperation, unity, impartiality, non-violence, peacemaking, patience, empathy, and human dignity.

Again, the essence of this section is to guide teachers on the kinds of values and attitudes they must develop in students through lesson activities that are participatory in approach.

**Suggested teaching and learning resources.** Active participatory classroom practices are best promoted with the use of various teaching and learning resources. Thus, this section makes suggestions to teachers about the kind of resources they could use in the promotion of students’ active involvement in lesson activities. In this connection, the teacher’s guides make suggestions of an array of teaching and learning resources for teachers’ use in their classrooms. For example, a unit on “The environment” for grade five reads as follows:

The following resources may be used:

- The local environment.
- Chart showing components of the environment.
- Photographs, magazines and newspaper articles on the environment.
• Maps of the district.
• Resource persons.

The state encourages teachers to use a variety of resources that fall into three broad categories. The categories are already-made resources, the social and physical environments, and the teacher-made resources. In the example above, the first and last bullets represent the physical and social environments, respectively. Physical environment includes such features as mountains, rivers, valleys, and vegetation, whereas social environment includes resource persons and social institutions like courts and hospitals. As regard to resource persons, the teacher’s guides make suggestions to teachers on the use of elders and experts in various socio-economic and political fields that represent topics that are included in the curriculum. Thus, the physical and social environment encourages teachers to go beyond the indoor classroom activities. The second bullet could be an example of a teacher-made resource. The third and fourth bullets represent the already-made resources.

*Suggested teaching and learning activities.* This section of the unit is the focal point of all other sections that have been discussed this far. The section gives teachers suggestions of how they could organize participatory lesson activities. For instance, a topic about “Gender equity” in grade six has activities that read as follows:

*Activity 1 (1 period)*

1. The following is a list of some tasks that men/women, boys and girls do in the home.
   Ask pupils to show who does what task more by ticking in the appropriate column

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Who does what</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Males</td>
<td>Females</td>
<td>Both</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparing meals</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fetching water</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gardening</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washing dishes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweeping the house</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeding a baby</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shopping</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pounding maize</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planting crops</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building a house</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Let pupils answer the following questions:
   a. Is one sex group performing more tasks than the other?
b. Do you think there is fairness in the distribution of tasks in the home? Explain.
c. Suggest ways on how to achieve equality in sharing tasks in the home.

Activity 2 (1 period)
1. In groups, let the pupils identify cultural beliefs and practices that lead to discriminate people based on sex.
2. Let group leaders report their findings to the class.

Activity 3 (1 period)
Study the picture below and answer the questions that follow (the picture depicts a man and wife going home from their garden. The woman has a baby at her back, but is also carrying a bundle of firewood and two hoes. The man is not carrying anything).
1. Let the pupils individually study the picture above. Let them identify cultural practices that affect the roles of males and females in a society.
2. Let them debate on what is depicted; whether it is fair or not.
3. Let them suggest ways of improving the situation.

Activity 4 (2 periods)
1. Divide your pupils into groups.
2. Let them prepare poems, jingles, posters and placards for sensitization campaigns on prejudice and discrimination based on sex.
3. Let them conduct sensitizations during morning assemblies.

There are several essential aspects in these activities that could help teachers in the organization of lesson activities for the preparation of active citizens. The first aspect is that the overall goal of the activities is about fairness between males and females. This aspect is one of the most important elements of active participation of all people in the political, social, and economic spheres of human interactions. The second aspect is that the activities are based on cultural practices, beliefs, perspectives, and stances that students bring to class from home. Thus, the activities allow teachers to engage students in a critical analysis of cultural issues that hamper equal active participation by all citizens in a democratic community. The last aspect is that the activities aim at developing students’ skills in problem solving and making rational decisions based on issues they already know.

Pupil assessment. This section guides teachers on how they could find out what students learned through the unit. The suggested pupils’ assessment tasks in the teacher’s guides are in
form of written work or teachers’ observing the students as they perform assigned tasks. For example, the grade five assessment task on the topic “The use and abuse of power” reads as follows:

1. Role-play the use of authority in a positive way at home and school.
2. Compose songs or poems on the use and abuse of power.
3. Suggest what can be done at the following levels to stop the abuse of power:
   - family
   - community
   - district

In these tasks, the students are expected to perform and teachers observe them as they perform. Such tasks are important for assessing the students’ development of skills, values, and attitudes, which cannot be best achieved through written tasks.

**Summary**

Discussion in this section has focused on the organization of the social studies content and classroom pedagogies for the preparation of active participatory citizens. Theme 1 focused on the organization of the curriculum content, whereas theme 2 focused on suggested interactive classroom practices. Interviews with two curriculum developers and the analysis of the curriculum documents has illuminated that the social studies curriculum has appropriate content that can help students have broad knowledge about responsible civic life at various societal levels. In addition, the curriculum has appropriate classroom practices for the preparation of interactive participatory citizens in a democratic society. But, do primary school teachers hold the same conceptions of active participatory classroom practices as those presented in the curriculum documents, which they use for the planning of their lessons? The next section is a discussion of the teachers’ conceptions of active participatory approaches, and how such conceptions affected their planning of lessons.

**Teachers’ Conceptions of Participatory Classroom Practices**

*Research question 2.* How do the teachers’ conceptions of participatory classroom practices influence their planning of lessons for the preparation of effective citizenry in a democratic society?

*Theme 3.* Teachers demonstrated limited conceptions of participatory classroom practices.
Theme 4. Teachers’ limited conceptions of participatory classroom practices were reflected in their teaching plans.

Most of the limited conceptions of active participatory classroom practices that the three case study teachers held were a reflection of their socio-cultural and professional backgrounds. Therefore, the first subsection deals with the backgrounds of the teachers and the other subsections link directly with themes 3 and 4.

Backgrounds of the Three Case Study Teachers

The focus of this study was active participatory classroom practices for the preparation of active citizens in a democracy, but from the perspective of classroom teachers. Since all research questions lean on the teachers’ decisions in the organization of classroom practices, it is vital to begin this discussion with the backgrounds of the teachers. Their socio-cultural and professional backgrounds are critical because, among others, these two factors influence decisions that teachers make in classrooms.

Case Study Teacher 1: Mrs. Kasinja

Mrs. Kasinja, of the Yao ethnic group, was 36 at the time of this research study. Her home village was about a mile away from the school where she was teaching. As a result, she played significant roles of a teacher at school, and an elder in her society.

Mrs. Kasinja explained that oral traditions in her society trace the origins of the Yao to Mozambique. She added that this history is passed down orally from one generation to the other. In this connection, she hinted that elders are responsible for teaching children using cultural tools like folklores, songs, proverbs, and riddles. In this way, elders are responsible for teaching their children duties and responsibilities expected of them in the communities. She further narrated the importance of traditional initiation rites in teaching the children about the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of active adulthood life among the Yao people. Such traditional practices include msondo, litiwo, and chiputu for girls, and jando, simba, and mazoma for boys. Asked on what initiates learn during such ceremonies, Mrs. Kasinja replied:

We practice chiputu and nsondo where we take the girls to teach them how we live, and how they can live as grownups. Mainly the ages are about 8 to 12 years when they are about to reach the elderly stage. And to boys we practice jando where the boys from 8 to 12 are taken to jando. Boys and girls are taught about adult life in a family as well as contributing to unity and cooperation in their communities.
She further added that these initiation practices are traditional forms of education that ensure that both boys and girls are prepared for adulthood. However, she observed that this kind of teaching is one-sided in the sense that elders, like her, do the teaching and the children have to listen. She further stated that through such teachings, boys are taught their dominant roles in the society, whereas girls are taught to display a submissive kind of life to their male counterparts.

Mrs. Kasinja added that as an elder in her village, her main role was that of teaching girls about their adult roles in the family as well as in their society. In this connection, she stated that:

I play more part especially in advising children. And I as a mother, I participate in advising children including my own children, sending them to initiations to receive some knowledge from elders. And I also participate in advising the children during initiation ceremonies. I also play part in some activities like development work in the village and so on.

While Mrs. Kasinja played a crucial role in her village as an elder, she switched roles to that of a teacher at her school. I wanted to learn what this meant to her especially from the perspective of the influence of the socio-cultural experiences on her classroom practices. She replied that “these cultural practices influence me when I am teaching in the classroom because I use my own experience when teaching in some topics. Sometimes I add some ideas to the children using my own experience.” From this perspective, I wanted to learn more about her teaching profession in order to understand her duo roles in the society.

Mrs. Kasinja started teaching as a temporary teacher in 1994. In Malawi, the term “temporary teacher” refers to untrained teachers. She went for a two-year pre-service training in 1997 and became a qualified teacher in 1999. She acknowledged that during pre-service training, she learned a lot about citizenship and appropriate classroom practices for promoting citizenship learning. Asked how she was taught, Mrs. Kasinja replied, “We were participating. Sometimes we were using discussion methods. We were discussing with the lecturer. After discussion or during discussions we were also using books for references.” She also attended a couple of in-service training since 1999. In general Mrs. Kasinja showed satisfaction with her teacher preparation.

Mrs. Kasinja was responsible for teaching students in grade five at the time of this study. The class had 68 students of which 37 were girls and the rest were boys. Out of the 68 students, 41 were Yao, and the remaining 27 were a combination of the Nyanja, Chewa, Lomwe, and
Tumbuka ethnic groups. In addition, there were 46 Christians of mixed denominations and the rest were Moslems. This shows that the class was culturally heterogeneous although it was predominantly Yao. The students were of the age range of between 11 and 15. According to Mrs. Kasinja, many of the students had already gone through initiation ceremonies based on their cultural groups. The class had a total of nine social studies textbooks. Some few students had personal copies of the textbook.

Case Study Teacher 2: Mr. Chiwisa

Mr. Chiwisa, a Yao by ethnicity, was 67 at the time of this study. His home village was about two miles away from the school, in which he also served as a traditional village chief. However, as a teacher in school, he taught citizenship topics that were both indigenous and those adopted and adapted from other parts of the world.

As regard to the cultural background of his ethnic group, Mr. Chiwisa explained during the first semi-structured interview that:

The truth about this is that we all came from Mozambique and we are truly Yaos that is not a hidden thing because as the Yaos we migrated from Mozambique to Malawi and went on fighting on the way, capturing other people. And things did not end there; as they entered Malawi I have the belief that not all of the Yaos entered Malawi but, some were people captured on the way.

He further added that this kind of history is passed down orally from one generation to other. Asked on how the Yao prepare children for adulthood virtues, duties, and responsibilities, Mr. Chiwisa explained:

You know tribes have different cultures and they have to be practiced according to their tribes. And these cultures are passed from one generation to another generation through many things. Through stories, initiation ceremonies, funeral ceremonies or rites, marriage customs. These can be done orally and some of them practically. For example, initiation ceremonies boys or girls are taken out of the village and they have some instructors in the name of anankungwi. They stay there for a number of days according to the type initiation ceremony.

“Anankungwi” are traditional teachers that the community accepts as having the experience, skills, and competence of teaching children in various spheres of life. He strongly believed that
some aspects of initiation rites were important in teaching children about their civic responsibilities.

In terms of his education qualifications, Mr. Chiwisa started teaching in 1958 after undergoing a two-year teacher-training program. He worked as a primary school teacher until his retirement in 1982, but re-joined the service in 1986. This means that Mr. Chiwisa has worked in three different political regimes: colonial era, authoritarian rule, and the democratic period. Asked about how citizenship was taught during the colonial era, he explained, “It was rather instructional but, we were taught that a citizen must perform certain duties and has some rights.” He further explained that during the colonial times, the then government did not emphasize learner-centered approaches in the classrooms. He added that this conception continued well after Malawi gained its political independence in 1964. He added that it was after the introduction of democracy in 1994 that the government began to emphasize participatory approaches. In this connection, Mr. Chiwisa explained that the knowledge of participatory learning pedagogies he possessed was largely from his long practical experience in class.

At the time of this study, Mr. Chiwisa was responsible for a grade six class. The class was composed of 62 students of which 33 were girls and the rest were boys. There were 51 Yao students in class, and the rest was a combination of Nyanja and Lomwe. In addition, 48 of the students were Christians and the rest were Moslems. Students were of the age range between 12 and 17. The class had a total of six social studies pupils’ textbooks, which students shared during book-based lesson activities.

*Case Study Teacher 3: Mr. Mwase*

Mr. Mwase, a Nyanja, was 37 years at the time of this research study. He came from Mangochi district, which is to the north east of Zomba district. About the origins of the Nyanja, he stated that:

Well these Chewa people, after leaving Katanga in Zaire, they migrated and settled in central region in Malawi. After some time they moved so that they could do some fishing in Lake Malawi. That is why some groups left central region and settled in this area, which is known as Monkey Bay along the lakeshore of Lake Malawi. So very early we settled there and changed our name from Chewa to become Nyanja tribe because we are living along the lakeshore.
He further explained that the customs of the Chewa and Nyanja are similar since the latter is a variant of the former. For example, he stated that both the Chewa and Nyanja practice *mgulewamkulu*; a traditional mask cult that is engraved with rich cultural spiritual myths and beliefs.

Mr. Mwase further explained that such traditions and practices help in the preparation of children for adult roles, as he stated:

There are quite a number of traditions that are practiced there. For example we have what is known as initiation ceremonies. When we talk of initiation ceremonies we are talking of a child when he is coming of age or at a certain level. These little ones are sent to certain places whereby they are sent to learn duties and responsibilities as they are growing up. And apart from that, these little ones are told how to conduct themselves in their families and their village.

He added that the Chewa and Nyanja initiate their boys through *gulewamkulu*, while girls attend *thimbwiza* initiation rites when they both reach the ages of between seven and twelve. Mr. Mwase himself underwent this form of initiation rite and he emphasized that the teaching about civic responsibilities is one-sided with elders performing the role of instructors while children are expected to display the discipline of listening.

As regard to his professional career, Mr. Mwase started teaching in 1994 as a temporary teacher. He went for a one-year pre-service training between 1995 and 1996, which changed his status to that of a qualified teacher. He explained that in social studies, they learned about citizenship at both national and global levels. He also claimed that tutors in the teacher training colleges emphasized the use of participatory learning approaches. Mr. Mwase added that he attended a couple of in-service programs including those for social studies. He further stated that through such short programs he learned a lot about social studies content and participatory classroom pedagogies.

Mr. Mwase was responsible for a grade eight class, which had a total of 96 students; 43 girls and 53 boys. There were 54 Yao students in the class, and the rest were a combination of other ethnic groups like the Chewa, Nyanja, Mang’anja, Tumbuka, Lomwe, and Ngoni. In terms of their religion, 64% were Christians and the rest were Moslems. The students were of the age range between 12 and 18. Mr. Mwase also hinted that the majority of the students had undergone
initiations rites based on their cultural groups. The class had a total of 66 social studies textbooks, and few students also had their own personal copies of the book.

Having considered the backgrounds of the three case study teachers, the next subsection is a discussion on theme 3, which is about the teachers’ conceptions of active participatory learning.

**Teachers’ Limited Conceptions of Participatory Classroom Practices**

**Theme 3.** Teachers demonstrated limited conceptions of active participatory classroom practices.

The concept of participatory learning in social studies entails that teachers ought to fully understand its ingredients like citizenship, democracy, critical thinking, problem solving, or decision-making. A good understanding of these concepts is likely to help teachers in the planning and implementation of lessons for the preparation of active participatory citizens. Thus, this subsection is a discussion of the teachers’ understanding of these concepts. However, the teachers’ understanding of the goal of the social studies curriculum was a prelude to their conceptions of participatory practices for the preparation of competent citizens in a democracy.

**Teachers’ Understanding of the Goal of Social Studies**

All three case study teachers had a fair understanding of the goal of social studies. For instance, during the first semi-structured interview, Mr. Mwase stated that:

> My understanding of our social studies subject is to make sure that students at early stage have the knowledge of their country and also they should have knowledge of taking care of the environment. And apart from that, they should also know and have respect to one another. And social studies syllabus also makes or develops an attitude in students so that they should change for the better and also they should learn to be good leaders of our nation.

Although the teachers had a fair understanding of the goal of social studies, none of them seemed to understand the concept of the spiralling curriculum in relation to the organization of interactive classroom activities. The concept and purpose of the spiralling curriculum has been discussed in full under theme 1. However, one important aspect worth repeating here is that the lower grades of the spiralling curriculum learn more of traditional forms of governance and citizenship, where as the senior grades learn the same concepts, but mostly from the perspective of other countries. Teachers are expected to use traditional concepts that students acquire from their home experiences or from the lower grades as a springboard for organizing interactive
classroom practices for learning similar concepts from other parts of the world, including the West. Yet during the second and third semi-structured interviews, none of the three teachers competently described the concept and purpose of the spiralling curriculum.

However, when asked to describe how they linked the traditional concepts of citizenship and governance to related concepts from other parts of the world for the organization of learner-centered activities, Mrs. Kasinja stated that:

Sometimes I use songs, traditional songs, for helping students understand their cultures and then they also learn what happen in some other countries in the world. And I also in addition use traditional stories. These children learn a lot of stories from their parents, especially the mothers tell stories about their culture.

In response to the same question, Mr Chiwisa explained that:

At school they learn about discipline; in the initiation practices they also instruct about discipline and hardworking. In the initiation ceremonies people learn to work in harmony in order to develop their areas; this is what we also do here at school. So these things are one.

Thus, although the teachers could not define the spiralling curriculum, they understood one of its ingredients as blending Traditional and Western concepts of governance and citizenship. They did not understand the goal of the spiralling curriculum as a continuous process for preparing citizens at various societal levels. Furthermore, none of the three teachers directly mentioned the concepts of citizenship and democracy in their descriptions of the role of social studies. For that reason, the two concepts became the focus of discussions during the first semi-structured interviews.

*Teachers’ Conceptions of Citizenship and Democracy*

Since the spiralling curriculum includes both traditional concepts of citizenship and governance and similar concepts from other parts of the world, interviews with teachers were intended to learn the teachers’ understanding of these concepts. As regard to Western democracy, Mrs. Kasinja described it as follows:

I understand it as people in a country having power in ruling a country or helping each other in ruling the country; helping their leaders in ruling the country. Everybody has got the power as a citizen to helping each other ruling the country.
In this description, Mrs. Kasinja connected the concepts of democracy and citizenship. Right of participation for all citizens in a country was an important element she mentioned in her description. The descriptions of the other two teachers, although varied, also made connections between democracy and citizenship.

The three teachers also described their views about Traditional citizenship. For example, Mr. Chiwisa explained that:

In Yao culture citizenship is understood informally. Of course most people don’t know that it is being practiced. I have already mentioned that people work together. When they have their leaders, they know the kind of respect to their village head. That is also part of citizenship.

In their explanations, the teachers indicated that in their cultural groups, Traditional citizenship is practiced and promoted through different activities like dances, songs, folklores, and initiation rites. They clarified that such cultural tools promote the virtues of duties, responsibilities, and unity and cooperation among people.

Thus far, discussion has shown that the three teachers demonstrated fair knowledge of the goal of social studies, democracy, and citizenship. However, they all described the appropriateness of the curriculum in terms of its content and not in terms of presenting the content to students. For that reason, I engaged the teachers in dialogues to learn more about their conceptions of participatory classroom practices.

Teachets’ Conceptions of Critical Thinking and Problem Solving

During the second semi-structured interviews, the three teachers neither defined the concept of interactive participatory lesson activities, nor its associated elements of critical thinking, problem-solving, and making informed decisions. Thus, the only way for learning their understanding of these concepts was through asking them to describe what they did in the classrooms. For example, as regard to active participatory practices, Mrs. Kasinja responded:

When I am using these participatory methods, for example, let’s take question and answer; this I use it in order to find the prior knowledge of the students. So I first have to pose questions to them so that when they are answering, there then, I am able to follow them. To understand them that the knowledge they have are still remembering what they learned or not. When I talk of demonstration I like to use this demonstration so that maybe I can show what I mean. I can show the students what I am expecting of them to
follow or to do as I am demonstrating the activity to them. So I use these different methods so that the aim behind is to find out that the students are able to acquire the knowledge when I try to teach them and they are able to practice it.

In response to the same question, Mr. Mwase stated:

These participatory are the methods we need each and every pupils to participate during the lesson like group work. When we tell the pupils to go into groups so that we know that during discussions everyone is participating; or during pair work each and every child is participating. Or sometimes we use discussion method. Sometimes we use songs. That singing is also used as participatory method.

There are a couple of elements from these descriptions of participatory lesson activities that indicate that the teachers had limited understanding of the concept. The first element is that the teachers seemed to imply that the mere involvement of students in lesson activities was participatory learning. For example, Mr. Mwase’s description shows that his understanding of participatory learning was the mere involvement of students in lesson activities regardless of the purpose for such activities.

The second element that comes clearly from Mrs. Kasinja’s description is that she understood participatory learning as involving students in activities like answering oral questions to find out if they were still remembering what they had learned in the previous lessons. The third element is that the teachers seemed to imply that their leading roles in participatory lesson activities were paramount. They did not seem to consider their roles as facilitators of students’ learning. Rather, their assumption was that they were the main actors of active participatory classroom practices. For example, both teachers generally described participatory lesson activities based on what they did and not much of what the students did.

In addition, the teachers seemed to have understood participatory learning as a means of enhancing the students’ acquisition of knowledge. None of the three teachers described their organization of participatory classroom activities in terms of the development of students’ skills in critical thinking, problem solving, and making informed decisions. For that reason, I further asked the teachers to describe what they did in the promotion of these elements in students. All three teachers did not make connections between participatory learning and elements like critical thinking, problem solving, and making informed decisions. For example, Mr. Chiwisa described
how he used various lesson activities, including traditional songs, for promoting students’ participation in class. Asked why he used the songs, he responded:

I want pupils to master knowledge so that I know where they stand. I remember one day when I was teaching about landslides, one pupil had to recall about napolo. We have a song that was done by someone meaning that the landslide had taken a European down the stream and dumped him in Lake Chilwa. So the children had to remember the consequences of persistent rainfall.

“Napolo” is a local name for flashfloods and there is a popular song among the people of Zomba that describes the traditional myths and beliefs about this phenomenon that occurred on Zomba Mountain in the 1940s. Just like what other two teachers had said, Mr. Chiwisa implied that the inclination of participatory learning is knowledge acquisition, and not much about critical thinking and problem solving.

Discussion in the preceding paragraphs has revealed that teachers had limited conceptions of active participatory classroom practices. Therefore, the next subsection is a discussion of how the teachers’ limited understanding of the concept of participatory learning influenced their decisions in the planning of lessons.

**Teachers’ Planning of Lessons**

*Theme 4.* Teachers’ limited conceptions of participatory classroom practices were reflected in their teaching plans.

Teachers planned their lessons through schemes and records of work and lesson plans. Analysis of both these planning documents revealed that the teachers had inadequate understanding of the meaning of active participatory learning. The schemes and records of work represented how the teachers planned and taught a series of lessons in the whole school term, whereas lesson plans were daily detailed plans that were extracted from the schemes and records of work. Therefore, discussion in this section uses these two documents as pieces of evidence that the teachers’ limited conceptions of participatory learning influenced their decisions in the planning of teacher-centered lessons.

*Organization of Schemes and Records of Work*

During the second semi-structured interviews, the teachers explained that their lesson planning was participatory in approach. For instance, asked on what he took into consideration when planning his lessons in the schemes of work, Mr. Mwase replied:
What I actually want the students to learn is how they should understand themselves and they should know their roles and responsibilities that they have as citizens of our nation. So they have to know what they are and their duties; and the life they have themselves, the responsibilities they have and what roles they are supposed to play as citizens.

Asked further on what he hoped to achieve from this sort of organization, Mr. Mwase responded:

When planning a lesson for the students to teach in a citizenship, what I consider first is the age of the students and the ability and the methods for involving the students fully. The students must be involved in everything for them to learn well. So I need to consider resources to fully make students participate. The lessons will not bring something to the students if they don’t participate. So I consider the resources I am going to use this and if I have the resources I include in the lesson that at this stage I am going to use this resources so that the students can learn more.

The implication of what Mr. Mwase said was that his organization of lessons in the schemes of work was meant for the engagement of students in lesson activities for civic responsibilities. The explanations of Mrs. Kasinja and Mr. Chiwisa about how they planned their lessons were similar to that of Mr. Mwase.

However, analysis of the schemes and records of work of all three teachers showed that their lesson planning was generally teacher-centered. A good example is Mr. Mwase’s schemes on the topic of “Human rights,” which was as follows:
### Table 2

**Mr. Mwase's Schemes and Records of Work**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week and Date</th>
<th>Work Planned</th>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>Methods</th>
<th>Work done</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 6 4-06-07 to 8-06-07 | Human Rights
i. Meaning of the term “human rights”
ii. Some basic rights of individuals
iii. Some rights of family members
iv. Appropriate ways of exercising one’s rights
v. Why there are limitations to rights and freedoms | -Social studies teacher’s guide for standard 8
-Pupils’ book for standard 8 | -Question and answer
-Group work
-Discussion | -Pupils learnt that Human right is the standard universal of every human being to be respected to avoid abusing.
-They also learnt the basic right to marry, right to education.
-They also learnt different ways or factors of one’s to exercise rights for example, am I entitled to this right? If so, to what extent? | Most pupils participated in the lessons, and they found it very interesting as they were learning their rights and also ways of respecting each others’ rights. However, some had difficulties to understand them. |
This planning only shows 1 of the 15 weeks of Mr. Mwase’s scheme and record of work for the entire school term. At a glance, the organization of this scheme looks as if the students were actively involved in lesson activities. In reality it turned out to be that the teacher had an “illusion” of active participatory learning. The term, “illusion” is used in this paper to imply that teachers had false conceptions of participatory learning. For example, in the work done section Mr. Mwase wrote, “Pupils learnt…,” but did not indicate how that was done. Similarly, in the evaluation section the teacher described students’ participation in lessons, but did not indicate the forms of participation. The teacher also indicated only three techniques for the organization of classroom practices. This was a general picture across the three teachers. They did not include in their schemes most of the techniques and activities that were suggested in the curriculum documents. In general, the schemes and records of work did not reveal much about the teachers’ organization of classroom practices. However, what appeared hard to fathom from the schemes became apparent in lesson plans. Discussion in the next subsection will use an example of Mr. Mwase’s lesson plan that was based on his scheme and record of work that I have described above.

Organization of Lesson Plans

All three teachers had indicated during the second semi-structure interviews that they planned various activities for students’ interactive learning in the classrooms. For example, asked to describe how she had intended to implement the planned lessons, Mrs. Kasinja explained:

Project method where we take the students, we find a topic and we tell the students to write something on that topic or, for example, when we are talking about, we can say culture; Malawian culture. You can ask the students to explain more about Malawian culture. That is the project. They are going to write more than three or four pages about Malawian culture. So we call that a project. And other methods were some participatory methods like future’s wheel, where we draw on a chart, for example, effects of HIV/AIDS we draw on the chart causes of AIDS and effects. On top we draw causes then downwards we draw results of HIV-AIDS. We call that the future’s wheel.

The impression derived from this interview is that the teacher had a fair understanding of the use of various teaching and learning techniques for the promotion of students’ active participation in classroom activities. The other two teachers also showed a fair understanding of some techniques and activities for engaging students in the classroom.
However, analysis of their lesson plans showed that there were not many interactive lesson activities. Explanation, question and answer, and group discussions were the most common techniques and lesson activities that the three teachers indicated in their teaching plans. Although the syllabus and teacher’s guides make suggestions on the use of a variety of teaching and learning techniques, the three teachers used only a few of those techniques and their associated lesson activities. Suffice it to say that the teachers occasionally planned learner-centered activities, especially in the case of Mr. Chiwisa. He included techniques like debate, role-play, singing, and storytelling, but not on a regular basis.

In addition, the teachers did not indicate clearly students’ roles in the planned activities. Many of the activities focused on what the teachers intended to do. Yet as already discussed under theme 2, analysis of the teacher’s guides showed that there were a variety of suggestions to teachers on how they could organize effective engagement of students in lesson activities. At this juncture, an example of how Mr. Mwase planned one of his lessons will help in the illustration of how the teacher’s lesson planning was void of interactive classroom practices. The lesson plan was as follows:

**Topic.** Human rights

**Specific objectives.** By the end of this lesson, pupils should be able to:
- Explain the meaning of the term “human rights.”
- Identify some of the rights of family members.
- Explain as to why there are limitations to rights of freedoms.

**Teaching and learning resources.** Chalkboard, pupils’ books.

**Introduction.** Ask children if they were whipped by parents. Ask them if they felt their rights were violated.

**Presentation.** The following steps will be used:

*Step 1.* - Discuss with pupils the meaning of the term “rights” as a universal standard, which aims at protecting the individual citizen from abuses: A right is an entitlement.

*Step 2.* - In groups ask pupils to identify rights, which pertain to every individual.
- Ask pupils to identify rights that apply to family members.
- Pupils should report to whole class.

*Step 3.* Explain to pupils the factors to consider when exercising one’s rights.
- Am I entitled to these rights? If so, to what extent should I exercise it?
- As I exercise my right, will I not violate other peoples’ rights?
- What does right mean to me?

**Conclusion.** Ask pupils questions--the meaning of rights; which rights pertain to family members?

**Self Evaluation.** -The lesson was taught; pupils participated.
-Everything was covered.

This lesson plan has evidence of teacher-centered techniques because while the specific objectives indicate what the students were expected to do, the presentation of the lesson shows that the teacher took leading roles in performing tasks. For example, the teacher assumed in step 1 and 2 that he was the main actor of participatory learning. The “self-evaluation” section also shows evidence that classroom action centered on the teacher. This kind of self-evaluation does not show the students’ forms of participation possibly because their participation in the classroom was limited. In fact, the teacher’s evaluation of the lesson is not in line with the lesson objectives possibly because of what occurred in the classroom was largely rote learning. As shall be discussed in theme 5, this lesson turned out to be teacher-centered just like the lesson plan had illuminated. I will make reference to this lesson plan in the next section in which I present a lesson vignette on how Mr. Mwase presented his planned lesson in class.

The analysis of the same lesson in the teacher’s guide showed that there were various suggestions made to teachers about the engagement of students in lesson activities. For example, some of the activities in the teacher’s guide are as follows:

**Activity 2 (2 periods)**
1. In groups, let pupils discuss whether they agree or disagree with the following statements. They should give reasons for their answers:
   a. The police should beat up people and use teargas during riots at football matches.
   b. Schools should use corporal punishments.
   c. Heads and teachers should give severe punishments to pupils who break school rules.
2. Let them report their answers to class.

**Activity 3 (1 period)**
1. Let pupils brainstorm the meaning of the term responsibility.
2. Ask pupils to make a chart on the responsibilities they have:
• at home.
• at school
• in their communities.

3. Ask pupils to display their charts on the classroom walls for others to see.

Activity 7 (1 period)
1. Ask pupils to brainstorm minority groups in their communities.
2. Let pupils work in groups to discuss the need to safeguard and protect rights of the minority.
3. Ask group representatives to report their findings during plenary.

Unlike Mr. Mwase’s activities, the suggested activities in the teacher’s guide are organized from the perspective of students as main actors with teacher’s role as a facilitator. In addition, the teacher’s guide activities are intended for critical analysis of issues. Yet Mr. Mwase’s activities were largely focused on knowledge.

In a post-lesson interview, I wanted to learn what he thought about the activities in the teacher’s guide in comparison to what he had planned and used in class. His argument was that he was only revising this topic because the students had already learned more about the topic in the lower grades. He further stated that he did not want to repeat the same activities the students covered in the lower grades. As shall be discussed under theme 8, Mr. Mwase also covered content from the lower grades because he was preparing students for the grade eight public examinations.

Mrs. Kasinja’s and Mr. Chiwisa’s teaching plans were not much different from those of Mr. Mwase. For example, in the “Self-evaluation” section, Mr. Chiwisa’s comments included: “The work was successfully carried out,” “Work was covered with success,” and “Every work was covered according to plan.” These comments show that the teacher was the one who performed the planned lesson activities. However, he also wrote remarks that showed students’ roles such as the following: “Pupils were able to trace migration routes and settlements,” “Pupils fully participated in the work,” and “Most of the pupils took part in the lessons.” In general terms, there were more comments that focused on the teacher’s roles than the students’ roles in the classroom.

I mostly used pre-lesson observation interviews for probing the teachers on how they had intended to involve students in lesson activities since their teaching plans did not fully indicate
this dimension. Such interviews provided the best avenues for learning the teachers’ understanding of active participation as reflected in their lesson plans. It looked very likely that the teachers had limited understanding of the concept of active participatory learning. To them, the mere involvement of students in lesson activities was what counted most as active participation. None of them indicated how they planned their lessons for the engagement of students in critical thinking, problem solving, and rational decision-making. Yet these elements are the pinnacles for active participation in democratic society.

Summary

Discussion in this section focused on research question 2, which was about the teachers’ conceptions of active participatory learning. Theme 3 has illustrated that the three teachers had a good understanding of the role of social studies in the preparation of good citizens, although they did not fully understand the concept of the spiralling curriculum. They also had some good understanding of the concepts of democracy and citizenship. However, their understanding of participatory learning was mediocre. They all described participatory classroom practices largely from the perspectives of their roles and not much about what they intended the students to do. In addition, they seemed to suggest that the intent of active participatory classroom practices was for the enhancement of students’ acquisition of knowledge. Theme 4 was a discussion of how the teachers’ feeble understandings of active participatory classroom practices were reflected in their teaching plans. The teachers planned lessons largely from the perspective of their roles and not much about the students’ roles. Therefore, the next section is a discussion of how the teachers implemented their planned lessons in the classrooms.

Teachers’ Organization of Classroom Practices

Research question 3. How do the teachers’ conceptions of participatory classroom practices influence their decisions in the implementation of the social studies citizenship curriculum?

Theme 5. Teachers’ limited conceptions of active participatory learning were reflected in their organization of teacher-centered classroom practices.

Theme 6. Teachers’ socio-cultural histories contributed to their limited implementation of interactive classroom practices.

Two factors influenced the teachers’ decisions as they implemented their planned lessons in the classrooms. The first factor is that the teachers’ illusion of participatory practices influenced their organization of classroom practices that were largely teacher-centered. The
second factor is that the teachers’ social cultural experiences “blindfolded” their perceptions of
the organization of classroom practices. Discussion in this section begins with how the teachers’
inadequate understanding of participatory learning affected their implementation of the social
studies curriculum in their classrooms.

*Impact of Teachers’ Conceptions of Participatory Learning on Classroom Practices*

**Theme 5.** Teachers’ limited conceptions of active participatory learning were reflected in
their organization of teacher-centered classroom practices.

As already discussed under theme 2, the philosophical foundation of the preparation of
active citizens revolves around participatory classroom practices. What this implies is that lesson
activities must help students in the acquisition of knowledge and development of skills, values,
and attitudes that are associated with civic duties and responsibilities. Therefore, this section uses
various pieces of evidence that illuminated that the teachers’ organization of classroom practices
caused a lot of missed opportunities for students’ development of skills in critical thinking,
problem solving, and decision-making. Evidence comes from teachers’ organization of lesson
activities, use of teaching and learning resources, procedure in students’ assessment, and the
integration between traditional concepts of governance and citizenship with similar concepts
from other parts of the world.

*Evidence from the Use of Lesson Activities*

As regard to the implementation of the social studies citizenship curriculum, the
curriculum developer representing the state explained what the team of social studies curriculum
developers envisaged as appropriate classroom practices for the preparation of active
participatory citizens. He stated that:

What we wanted was that pupils should be exposed to active participation affecting their
lives. We are talking of issues like human rights, democracy, gender, environment, and
also socio-cultural issues. Our intension was that teachers should use methods like
discussion, case study, field studies, resource persons or even projects. That is what we
intended to do in the curriculum; allowing pupils to take full participation in their
learning.

The curriculum developer representing teacher educators agreed that the whole essence of the
new curriculum was the use of techniques that encourages students to express their opinions and
also practice the essential citizenship skills.
As already indicated in the preceding section, all three teachers embraced learner-centered classroom practices for the preparation of competent citizens. However, classroom observations revealed that what the teachers had said during interviews was not what generally occurred in their classrooms. The general picture from classroom observations showed that the teachers largely depended on lecture, explanation, discussion, and question and answer techniques. However, there were some variations among the teachers in the usage of these techniques. The most common lesson activities that went along with these techniques were students answering oral questions, recitations, and note copying. This was just a general picture because occasionally the three teachers showed some flashes of brilliance in the organization of active participatory classroom practices, especially in the case of Mr. Chiwisa.

At this juncture, a lesson vignette based on one of Mr. Mwase’s lessons gives a good representation of the teacher-centered classroom practices that generally occurred in all the social studies lessons of the three case study teachers. This lesson vignette is based on the same lesson plan that has been discussed under the preceding theme.

*Mr. Mwase’s Lesson Vignette on Human Rights*

Mr. Mwase planned and taught a lesson on “Human rights” on June 6, 2007. The lesson started at 1.20 in the afternoon. Upon making the usual salutations, the teacher faced the chalkboard and wrote “Social Studies,” and underneath it he wrote “Human rights.” There were 79 students in the classroom of which 38 were females and the rest were males. All students sat on chairs with desks, facing the direction of the teacher. They sat generally mixed with some clear patterns of all-boys and all-girls.

The teacher faced the class after writing on the chalkboard and said, “This afternoon we are going to discuss about human rights. You might have heard on the radio people talking about human rights. You also heard this in your own communities. You may have questions in your heads that ‘rights’, ‘rights’, what is it?” He then explained to students that the lesson would be on human rights. He wrote on the chalkboard “rights” and asked all students to recite the word, which they did. He then stated that this word was different from “light,” but he did not explain the difference. He lectured for about four minutes and then said, “Right is an entitlement, a what?” Students recited in a chorus, “An entitlement.” The teacher wrote the definition on the chalkboard, “Right is an entitlement.” He resumed lecturing on the rights of individuals for about three minutes, and said, “Now let’s go back to our topic, human rights. We have seen that right is
an entitlement. Human means a person. So we are going to look at entitlements, but belonging to humans.” Then he asked, “Who has a question?” None of the students asked a question.

Thus far, the students watched attentively as the teacher was lecturing. After lecturing for another four minutes the teacher asked, “Is it clear?” The students responded in a chorus, “Yes.” He asked again, “Are you following?” The students again said, “Yes.” So the teacher continued lecturing that human rights are universal standards aimed at protecting individual citizens from abuse. He wrote what he had said on the chalkboard. There were some accumulation of notes on the chalkboard and one by one the students pulled out their notebooks and began to copy teacher-made notes. The teacher repeated twice what he had just written on the chalkboard stressing the words “standard,” “citizens,” and “abuse.” He explained to students that they were all citizens in their own country and that they are protected from abuse.

After 19 minutes of lesson time, the teacher continued with lecturing, and moments later he said, “Now let’s go to see the examples of human rights. You may have participated in different activities where human rights were mentioned. Can you give us examples?” Nobody responded, since some students continued copying notes and others who had finished copying the notes just watched their teacher. Then the teacher re-explained in Chichewa what he had just lectured. He then repeated the question asking students to give examples. At this point in time, about few students raised their hands, mostly boys. The teacher wrote on the chalkboard, “examples of human rights.” He pointed at one student at a time to respond to the question. The students’ responses were as follows: “right to education,” “freedom of expression,” and “freedom of school.” The teacher wrote students’ responses on the chalkboard. He continued with questions, and further contributions from students included: “right to marry,” and “right to slavery.” Teacher hesitated to write the last response on the chalkboard and asked the student who had said it, “But, do you know the meaning of slavery?” The student hesitatingly said, “Yes.” The teacher moved on without clarifying. Additional contributions included “state to stay alive” (but, the teacher wrote “right to life” without any explanation), “right to freedom,” “freedom of religion,” and “freedom of dressing.”

After the teacher noticed that there were no more responses from students, he read aloud the list of students’ responses from the chalkboard. He continued, “Now I want you to compare what you have mentioned here and what I have here with me.” He opened his notebook and copied alongside the students’ responses on the chalkboard the following: “Freedom from
torture,” “equal protection by law,” “freedom of thought and expression,” “right to a fair trial,” “freedom from arbitrary arrest,” and “right to shelter.” Students busied themselves copying what the teacher wrote on the chalkboard. He briefly lectured based on what he had just written on the chalkboard and then re-explained in Chichewa. He switched back to English and asked, “Are you following?” Students answered in a chorus, “Yes.” The teacher continued, “I want you to pay attention to these human rights,” as he pointed to the list, which he came up with. The teacher continued to lecture based on the list of universal rights he had written on the chalkboard.

After 22 minutes of lesson time, which was dominated with lecturing and asking questions, the teacher moved on to basic rights of citizens. He explained that these were special rights for individuals. He re-explained this in Chichewa, then wrote on the chalkboard as he read aloud what he was writing: “right to life,” “right to land ownership,” “right to protection by law,” “right to education,” “right to worship,” “right to ownership of property,” “right to expression,” and “right to personal liberty.” Students continued to copy teacher-made notes from the chalkboard. The teacher lectured by going through each one of the rights he had written on the chalkboard.

After 29 minutes of lesson time, the teacher said, “Let us look at the right of expression; I have got something for you to do.” He then explained that every individual had rights, which he wanted the students to discuss in groups. He explained that before they did that, he wanted students to point at themselves and say, “I have got the rights.” The students recited what the teacher had said while pointing at themselves. He then explained to the students about a case study activity he wanted them to discuss in groups. He read aloud from a piece of paper he was holding in his hands, and it was as follows:

In a crowded video show, somebody shouted, “Fire, fire!” Yet there was no fire. People run out of the hall in a panicking way and some got injured. The person who shouted “Fire” was exercising his right of freedom of expression. But, the court arrested him.

Explain why this person was arrested when he was exercising his rights?

The teacher distributed copies of the case study to group leaders as students quickly formed groups. He asked the students to discuss why the individual who shouted at the video show was arrested when he was exercising his rights.

There were eight groups with each group having between six to eleven students. Five groups were fairly gender mixed, but the others were gender skewed. The teacher went around
monitoring and emphasized as he did so, “Why was this person arrested since he was exercising his right?” Students discussed in their groups, but some students could not contribute effectively because some of the groups were too big. Group leaders wrote summaries of what was discussed in each group. After four minutes of group discussion, the teacher asked each group leader to report their findings. The leader for the first group reported, “Because for violating others rights by he or she shouted others feared and run some injured.” Then the teacher asked, “What do you mean when you say violate? What do you want to tell us?” The group leader responded, “By fear others.”

The second group leader said, “He must be arrested because not respect other people rights.” Then the other group leader said, “Because other people get injured.” Group reporting continued until all the group leaders reported back to the whole class. Their contributions were in form of reading aloud a sentence. After all groups reported their work, the teacher went back to the chalkboard and concluded the lesson by going through the list he had written down about basic rights of individuals. That marked the end of the 38 minute-lesson.

This lesson vignette gives a picture of what generally occurred in Mr. Mwase’s classroom. In this lesson, Mr. Mwase used techniques and lesson activities that included lecturing, explanation, question and answer, brainstorming, recitation, and group discussion. However, the teacher dominated in these activities, just like the way he had planned the lesson. As such, the lesson had little impact in the engagement of students in critical thinking and making informed decisions about real life situations. A good example is when he used a case study for students’ discussion in groups. This activity was potentially good for enhancing rational thinking in students. Yet the teacher did not give students adequate time to discuss the activity in their groups. In fact, the students’ responses on the group work activity were basically reporting back to the teacher the notes that they had copied down in their copybooks. There were no real discussions in the groups. What the students did in the groups was search for answers from their teacher-made notes that were largely produced through rote learning processes. In addition, the teacher did not engage students in critical analyses of similar incidents that the students might have encountered in their lives.

In fact, the teacher used lecture and question and answer in every lesson, although he did not include the lecture technique in any of the 19 lesson plans that he presented during the study
period. He hardly used other techniques like case study, role play, jigsaw, simulation, debate, future’s wheel, simulation, jig-saw, field trip, and project study. Students’ participation in lesson activities was largely in form of answering oral questions, reciting, and copying down notes in their notebooks. Yet during post-lesson interviews Mr. Mwase often expressed satisfaction with active involvement of students in lesson activities of this nature. It looked like the mere involvement of students in answering oral questions, recitations, and sitting in groups were what he called students’ active participation in the classroom. Although all three teachers generally used teacher-centered approaches, Mr. Mwase used such practices the most. The following table is a summary of how Mr. Mwase used or did not use various teaching and learning techniques or their associated lesson activities in his classroom.
### Table 3

**Mr. Mwase's Usage of Techniques and Activities**

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<tr>
<th>Lesson Activities</th>
<th>Week 1</th>
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**Key**

- √ Activity used
- Video recorded lesson that was transcribed into a vignette
- Video recorded lesson that was used for writing fields notes
- A Teacher’s absenteeism
In this table, the left hand column is a list of techniques and lesson activities that are recommended in the social studies curriculum documents except lecturing and note copying. As can be seen in the table, lecturing and explaining dominated the teacher’s classroom practices. The overdependence on these techniques left the students with the simple tasks of answering oral questions, reciting, copying notes, and listening to their teacher.

Mrs. Kasinja, too, frequently used lecture, question and answer, and recitations, and yet, she did not include the lecture technique in any of her teaching plans. This aroused my curiosity as to why all three teachers did not indicate the lecture technique in their plans, and yet, this was the most common technique they used in their classrooms. For this reason, I engaged the three teachers in post-lesson interviews for purposes of learning their perceptions of the lecture technique. For instance, Mrs. Kasinja had planned and taught a lesson on “Aspects of culture” in which she relied heavily on lecture technique. Part of our conversation in the post-lesson interview went as follows:

Researcher: What methods did you use in this lesson?
Mrs. Kasinja: I used question and answer, explanation, and picture study.
Researcher: What could have happened if you used lecture method in that lesson today?
Mrs. Kasinja: No, that method it’s not good, I don’t use it. That method students cannot be involved in the lesson; that is why I am saying I don’t use it. I use other methods like discussion, and also asking questions to find out if the students have implemented what I teach them.

Through such post-lesson interviews, I came to learn that the teacher could not differentiate lecture and explanation techniques. In her narration, what she did in class was not lecturing, but explaining. Lecture technique involves transmission of knowledge through telling the students whether the students have some prior knowledge of the topic or not. On the other hand, explanation is done to help students understand a particular element they fail to figure out on their own as they perform activities.

In many cases the three case study teachers used more teacher-centered classroom practices, which denied students an active involvement in lesson activities. For example, students’ main activities in class were in the form of answering oral questions, listening to their teachers’ lecturing, and writing down notes. Yet all three case study teachers maintained that the organization of all their lessons were participatory in approach.
Furthermore, it also seemed that the teachers’ weak understanding of the concept of participatory learning affected their conceptions of some of the teaching and learning techniques they used or did not use in class. For instance, to them lecture technique implied teachers’ telling the students during the entire lesson period. Thus, their conceptions of a lecture technique were in terms of amount of time used, and not the procedure in using it. For example, in reference to lecture technique, which Mr. Chiwisa referred to as the “pulpit” technique, he said:

Pulpit method is the type of method that a teacher uses to teach the pupils from the first minute to the last minute. I don’t use that one mostly because this type of strategy brings most of the children to sleep. They cannot just tolerate one just barking at them the whole period.

In this case, Mr. Chiwisa’s perception of the lecture technique was largely in terms of time. Possibly this explains why all teachers used the lecture technique frequently, but referred to it as explanation.

Similarly, the teachers often included the discussion technique in their lesson plans for which they wrote statements like, “discussing with students….” Yet what transpired in the classrooms was that what the teachers referred to as discussion with students was actually telling the students about issues and then asking them oral questions based on what they had lectured on. When the students responded in one-word or simple sentences what they got through rote learning, the teachers referred to that process as discussing with the students.

In addition, the teachers did not use some teaching and learning techniques suggested in the curriculum documents probably because their limited understanding of participatory learning also affected their perceptions of some of the techniques. For example, during the second semi-structured interview, Mrs. Kasinja indicated that:

I don’t use these methods because according to stage of the pupils, it is not suitable. And mainly when we are teaching using project method, it is tough time to the students and at the age of the pupils they cannot get enough information to write the project. We teach them to do something or they have to see it.

Thus, the teacher’s perception of a project study was in terms of writing lengthy papers and not the involvement of students in hands-on lesson activities that could help them in the development of skills and attitudes necessary for citizenship learning.
Similarly, all teachers also associated field trips with hiring a vehicle to carry students to distant places, and not what the students would learn from such trips. Walking with students to places of citizenship interest within the schools’ environments did not seem to constitute a field trip to the three case study teachers. For example, about the field trip Mr. Chiwisa had said the following during the second semi-structured interview:

This is the right time to teach about the preservation of wild vegetation because this is the time people set fire on bushes. So, it would be easy for them to see what has happened to the area after it has been burnt. Does it look beautiful in comparison to the time when the vegetation was there?

However, he never used this technique although he frequently mentioned in his lessons about the importance of conserving the environment. Yet the areas around the community school had burned down bushes, which he frequently referred to in his lessons. Probably, he did not use this technique because of the same misconception of associating field trips with long distances.

So far, discussion has illuminated that all three case study teachers seemed to have associated active participatory classroom practices with mere involvement of students in lesson activities regardless of the purposes for such activities. Based on this perception, many of their lessons were teacher-centered and that crippled the students’ development of skills in critical thinking, problem solving, and making informed decisions. In spite of these pitfalls, however, classroom observations revealed that the teachers occasionally used learner-centered classroom practices than what their lesson plans had indicated, especially in the case of Mr. Chiwisa. He used both teacher and learner-centered approaches in almost equal proportions. However, he did not use the learner-centered techniques as frequently as he had alluded to during both semi-structured and post-lesson interviews. Some of the techniques he had mentioned during the interviews were hardly used during the entire period of data collection.

Probably because of his long cultural and professional experiences, Mr. Chiwisa demonstrated some practical knowledge, which he used in the classroom for the enhancement of students’ active participation. In this paper, the term “practical knowledge” refers to the knowledge that teachers gain and use in classrooms based on their own life experiences. For example, Mr. Chiwisa used cultural knowledge that was expressed in form of folklores, songs, traditional dances, and proverbs for the engagement of students in lesson activities. Theme 6 gives a more detailed account of how Mr. Chiwisa organized such activities.
Mr. Chiwisa also used practical knowledge gained through his long classroom experiences. For instance, he used the ground as a resource twice when he taught lessons under the topic of “Population migration.” The first time was when he was introducing the topic and wanted his students to learn the concepts of “emigration” and “immigration.” He defined the concepts and asked the students to recite them. He also explained to students that immigration was also referred to as “internal migration,” whereas emigration was also called “external migration.” At this juncture, he asked the students to define the four terms, which they did, but with some difficulties. A little while later, he took the whole class outside. He asked each student to pick an object like a piece of brick. He drew a circle on the ground, which was about five yards in diameter and asked the students to stand just outside the circle. He then drew a sketch map of the community around the school and demarcated it to show village boundaries. After drawing the sketch map, he explained to students that the objects they had picked would represent their dwelling houses in their villages. He then mentioned a village and asked students from that village to place their objects in an area that represented the location of the village on the sketch map.

After all students placed their objects on the sketch map, the teacher demonstrated by physically walking from one village to the other and asked the students what that meant. He then asked one student at a time to take their objects from one village to another to symbolize their movements. Some of the questions he asked the students in this activity were as follows:

1. If James moves from Sale village to Mangasi village, what does that mean to both villages?
2. When a lot of people in Sale village decided to follow what James did, what is going to happen to both villages?
3. What are the reasons that made people of Sale village move to Mangasi village?

The questions were in Chichewa, and discussion was also largely in Chichewa although the teacher still mentioned the concepts of migration using their English terms.

After this activity, the teacher informed the students that large numbers of people also move from one area to another for different reasons. He explained that migration referred to the movements of large numbers of people and not just a few individuals as was demonstrated in the activity. At this juncture, the teacher introduced a topic on the migration of the Ngoni, Yao, Lomwe, and Ngonde into Malawi. He then informed the students that this was the topic they
would cover in the subsequent lessons. The whole activity using the ground lasted about 22 minutes.

In this lesson, the students learned the concepts associated with migration through practicing. This was one of the rare activities in which the teacher involved students in a critical analysis of issues. The questions he asked as the students physically demonstrated their “migrations” from one village to the other helped them to think critically about the effects of migration. For example, on the question about why people move from one area to settle into another area, the students mentioned factors like shortage of land, witchcraft accusation, civil war, and job opportunities.

The second time Mr. Chiwisa used the ground as a resource is when he took students outside to draw sketch maps. The teacher had just finished covering a topic on the migration of the Ngoni from South Africa into Malawi. In the last lesson, he asked students to form six groups and draw a map of Southern Africa on the ground. The students used pieces of chalk of various colors to draw Ngoni migratory routes on the map. They used maps in their textbooks for reference as they drew their own maps on the ground.

After the lesson, I engaged the teacher in a short post-lesson-interview to learn more of why he used the ground as a resource. He explained that his major goal was to help students develop skills in drawing maps. He added that he wanted the students to practice on the ground before they could individually do the same activity in their notebooks. Indeed, this activity was mainly for the development of students’ skills in drawing. However, what also came out from the activity was that students developed the spirit of cooperation, negotiations, and tolerance as they worked together in the groups. For example, the students in each group collaboratively made decisions on issues like assigning each other tasks, deciding the size of the map and the type of chalk colors to use. It was in such activities that students were observed practicing various skills such as talking, listening, cooperating, tolerating, critical thinking, and decision-making.

Mrs. Kasinja, too, occasionally organized lesson activities that helped students’ development of skills in critical thinking, problem solving, and decision-making. Owing to acute shortages of already-made teaching and learning resources, she relied heavily on maps and illustrations in pupils’ books for such activities. The teacher asked questions, which guided students in critical analyses of the illustrations. In many cases the teacher used group work to do such activities largely because of the inadequate number of pupils’ books. For example, on the
topic of “Road users,” the teacher asked students to study an illustration in their textbooks that depicted different road users like pedestrians, motorists, people driving ox carts, and cyclists on a crowded market place. The teacher asked thought provoking questions, which required students to discuss in groups and then respond orally. Some of the questions she asked were like:

1. Which side of the road are cyclists using?
2. Suppose they were pushing their bicycles, which side of the road will they use? Why will they use that side?
3. Explain why the car in the picture has hit a pedestrian?
4. Why is the ox-cart using the right hand side of the road?

The teacher asked these questions in Chichewa and also allowed students to discuss in Chichewa, which generally increased students’ participation.

However, inadequate availability of textbooks was visibly the major challenge to such tasks as witnessed by the inactivity of students who were on the peripheries of the inner circles. Some students also struggled to study the illustrations because the activity depended on the orientation of the textbook placed at the center of each group. In addition, the teacher did not give students adequate time to perform such activities. As a result of these two factors, students’ active participation was reduced. In fact, the students did not really make critical analysis of the illustration based on their lived experiences. Connecting classroom activities to students’ life experiences was largely missing in all three classrooms. This factor also contributed to the inactivity of students in the classrooms because the vast prior knowledge the students brought to class from home was hardly used.

Discussion this far has focused on the use of teaching and learning techniques and their associated lesson activities as evidence of teacher-centered classroom practices that closed opportunities for students’ active participation in the classrooms. However, the teachers’ limited understanding of active participatory classroom practices seemed to have also influenced their decisions in the use of teaching and learning resources.

Evidence from the Use of Teaching and Learning Resources

Teaching and learning resources are an integral component for effective classroom practices meant for the preparation of competent citizens. Such resources include already-made materials, teacher-made materials, or the physical and social environments. In connection to the
importance of using teaching and learning resources in the classrooms, the curriculum developer representing teacher educators remarked:

Teaching resources were also thought of during curriculum development because if you are teaching without resources a student may not participate. But you need to have materials that would force the students to participate otherwise they will just listen to you and will not be able to participate fully. The emphasis was on local resources because we discovered that some of these resources it’s easy to mention them like the use of the computer, which is not available in most schools. So the emphasis was put on TALULAR, which the teachers wherever they are teaching, whether in rural or urban can still find something from the local environment and use as teaching aids.

In Malawi the term “TALULAR” is an acronym for teaching and learning using locally available resources.

Classroom observations showed that the teachers rarely used resources for the engagement of students in interactive activities. Two reasons might have influenced this state of affairs. The first reason was the limited availability of already-made materials. A deflated model globe, one wall map of Malawi, and one wall map of the world were the only available already-made teaching and learning resources at the government school. The community school had similar resources save for the globe. The problem on shortages of already-made materials was compounded with the large class sizes. For example, grades five, six, and eight had 68, 62, and 96 students, respectively. Although these numbers represented normal average class sizes in Malawi, teachers failed to use the limited already-made resources for the effective organization of classroom activities. For instance, classroom observations showed that Mrs. Kasinja frequently used illustrations in the textbooks to engage students in lesson activities largely because of the inadequacy of the already-made materials. Much of how she used the illustrations in the books has already been discussed in the preceding subsection. It was evident that the shortages of pupils’ books affected active students’ participation in her classroom. For example, as many as 12 students shared one book, which effectively reduced students’ participation.

Another example is when Mr. Chiwisa organized group work activities using wall maps on the topic about “Yao settlements in Southern Malawi.” He brought into class three wall maps of Malawi. One of the maps was already-made and the other two were teacher-made. The teacher asked students to form three groups for them to draw the map in their copybooks. The three
groups were composed of 14, 17, and 19 students. Students struggled to do the activity although the teacher allowed some 15 minutes for the activity.

The second, and possibly the most serious issue, was that the teachers’ limited understanding of participatory learning seemed to have influenced their perceptions of the use of teaching and learning resources. In many cases it was the teachers who used the few available resources while the students watched. For example, on the lesson about “Conservation of natural resources in Malawi,” Mr. Mwase brought to class an already-made wall map of Malawi. He hung the map against the chalkboard in front of the class. He used the map when making reference to the places he mentioned as he lectured. The only way the students were involved is when he asked them oral questions based on the map.

In addition, the teachers’ limited understanding of participatory learning seemed to have affected their perceptions of the TALULAR concept. As the curriculum developer representing teacher educators had alluded to, the inclusion of TALULAR concept in the curriculum was intended to help teachers in the organization of effective interactive lesson activities. In this connection, the analysis of curriculum documents, as has been discussed under theme 2, shows that teacher’s guides make a lot of suggestions on how teachers could make use of the physical and social environment for instilling in students civic duties and responsibilities. However, the teachers did not seem to hold the same views of the curriculum developers as regard to the use of the TALULAR concept. For example, in relation to this concept, Mr. Chiwisa, lamented that:

You know we are told that every lesson requires use of locally available resources; but that is against one teacher. Science lessons use TALULAR, social studies lessons use TALULAR, agriculture use TALULAR. What a wonderful scavenger you will be? Materials should be provided first. And teachers fully trained for what they are going to deliver.

This shows that while the state expected teachers to use the TALULAR concept in the organization of effective classroom practices, the teachers themselves thought that it was the responsibility of the state to provide them with teaching and learning resources. Considering that the teachers faced a lot of constraints, what Mr. Chiwisa said might have been a sign of frustration with the state’s lack of commitment. However, this does not rule out the possibility that teachers’ limited understanding of active participatory approaches might have influenced their perceptions of the TALULAR concept that is suggested to them in the teacher’s guides.
For example, almost all topics that the three teachers covered during the period of data collection touched on some aspects of everyday life experiences. Such topics included “Accidents in work places,” “Human rights,” “Civic life and responsibilities,” “Aspects of culture,” and “Taking care of natural resources.” The vicinities of the two study schools had institutions, physical features, burned down forests, and active deforested areas that the three teachers frequently mentioned in their lessons. In terms of the physical features, the two schools were well endowed with rivers, valleys, and mountains. As regard to social environment, the area had both government and non-governmental organizations that deal with many issues mentioned in the curriculum. This implies that engaging students in activities outside the classrooms was very possible.

In addition, both the governmental and non-governmental organizations around the two schools’ community had experts in various fields like health, natural conservations, legal affairs, and human rights issues. In the same way, the elders in the nearby villages had the traditional forms of knowledge on topics like “Aspects of culture” and “Migration of the Yao into Malawi.” Yet none of the teachers invited these experts or elders to classroom as resource persons, although the curriculum urges them to take that approach.

Thus, in general, the limited use of the social and physical environment closed students’ avenues in connecting classroom experiences with real life situations. In post-lesson interviews, all teachers admitted that they never had enough practice on the use of TALULAR concept during teacher preparation programs. What was surprising was that even the use of assessment activities revealed the teachers’ limited understanding of the concept of critical thinking and problem solving. The next subsection is a discussion of how the teachers used assessment procedures.

Evidence from the Use of Written Assessment Activities

During the third semi-structured interviews, the three teachers showed some good understanding of the purposes of assessment in citizenship learning. For instance, in response to a question on assessment procedures, Mrs. Kasinja stated:

When I am assessing the children, I know that they have achieved the goals in the way they are answering questions in the way I have asked them. When they are coming up to 60% of the questions answering correctly, I know that they have achieved the goals. And then some skills, I know that they have implemented by observing them. Some
implement the skills quickly than others. So when I see that some have implemented their skills I ask them to help their friends who are below to teach them or discuss with them so that they too implement. In the attitude, I know that they implemented at the end of the term by observing them. Many pupils change as they go.

In response to a similar question Mr. Mwase said:

There, I can say, two ways. First, you observe them without giving them a test. The way they are conducting themselves; you can conclude that they are getting what they are learning. Apart from that you can set examinations towards the students so that you can just find out if at all they are able to express what they have learned. Then you can conclude that the students are acquiring what you have taught, they have got knowledge.

They also have to use the skills that they know.

These responses indicate that the teachers had good knowledge of the purposes of assessment in class, although Mr. Mwase’s description of written assessment was more of an evaluation process.

Classroom observations showed that the written assessment tasks were merely aimed at recall of facts. For instance, Mr. Chiwisa gave his students a written exercise for students to discuss in groups. The activity was based on the migration of the Ngoni and Lomwe ethnic groups into Malawi during the ninetieth century. This was an assessment activity that marked the end of covering the topic. In this activity, the teacher wrote questions on the chalkboard for the students to complete, and the questions were as follows:

1. The Northern Ngoni were led by ____________ and the Ngoni of Ntchewu and Dedza were led by ________________.

2. The Lomwe migrated to Malawi because of the following reasons ______ they were searching for land for ______ and ________, harsh rule of the__________

The teacher organized students into five groups and each group consisted of between 8 to 19 students. This activity was based on simple recall of knowledge that was learned in the previous couple of lessons. In a post-lesson interview, the teacher indicated that he wanted the students to help each other in groups to come up with responses to the questions. He also claimed that the assignment tested both lower and higher forms of knowledge. The lessons he had taught prior to this assignment included issues about cultural similarities and differences between the Ngoni and Lomwe ethnic groups. Students might have had prior knowledge about these issues based on
what is orally passed down from one generation to the other. Yet this assignment did not engage students to think critically about such issues.

Similarly, Mrs. Kasinja’s lessons generally lacked activities that could have instilled in students the critical thinking skills and positive attitudes for effective civic life. For example, she organized three lessons on the topic about “HIV and AIDS.” In the first lesson, the teacher organized an activity that involved students to merely recall definitions of HIV and AIDS and how the disease is spread. In the second lesson, she concentrated more on the cultural practices that promote the spread of HIV and the misconceptions associated with the disease. The last lesson was about caring for AIDS patients. The assessment activity she gave the students to discuss in groups after covering the topic was as follows:

1. What is HIV and AIDS?
2. HIV is spread through:
   a. Blood.
   b. Sexual intercourse.
   c. Shaking hands.
   d. Sharing the same plates.
3. The cultural practices that promote the spread of HIV are:
   a. Traditional dances.
   b. Chokolo.
   c. Lobola.
   d. Fisi.

Thus, this assessment was merely based on students’ recall of facts that they had acquired largely through rote learning. Mrs. Kasinja’s assessment activity was different from that of the teacher’s guide. For example, the grade five teacher’s guide, which she used, suggested to teachers the following assessment tasks for students:

1. What is the difference between HIV and AIDS?
2. How is HIV transmitted?
3. What are the signs and symptoms of AIDS?
4. How can HIV infection be prevented?
5. Explain the impact of HIV and AIDS in the family and community
While Mrs. Kasinja’s task only involved students to recall facts, the same task in the teacher’s guide goes beyond simple recalling of facts. For example, the last question of the task in the teacher’s guide makes connections to students’ lived experiences. Yet the teacher’s assessment task did not make such connections. The lack of such connections made many of her assessment activities lose the rhythm of critical thinking, problem solving, and rational decision-making that are associated with citizenship learning.

In a post-lesson observation interview, the teacher indicated that she did not use the suggested assessment task in the teacher’s guide because many of the students did not possess the abilities of answering the questions. However, since she largely used lecturing, explaining, and question and answer to cover this topic, she might have realized that students could not effectively tackle the task in the teacher’s guide. All teachers used assessment tasks that only focused on the knowledge domain and not on the skills and attitudes domains.

Thus far, this subsection has discussed three pieces of evidence that portrayed how the teachers’ limited understanding of the concept of participatory learning affected their planning and implementation of lessons for the preparation of effective citizens. However, the teachers’ limited understanding of the purposes of the spiralling social studies curriculum also hindered their organization of participatory classroom practices. The spiralling curriculum provides the links between traditional forms of citizenship and governance and similar forms from other parts of the world. Yet the teachers generally failed to organize classroom activities that used the traditional forms of knowledge as a starting point for the students to understand concepts from other parts of the world. The next section is a discussion in this dimension.

Evidence from Weak Integration of Concepts

Mrs. Kasinja and Mr. Mwase hardly blended traditional concepts of governance and citizenship with similar concepts from other parts of the world especially the West. Mr. Chiwisa, on the other hand, made some attempts in making such connections. As shall be discussed in greater details under theme 6, the teacher used cultural tools like songs, folktales, and dances for bringing traditional knowledge into the classrooms. Although he brought into the classroom these cultural tools, he did not actually use them for students’ engagement in critical analysis of their lived experiences and then make connections to the forms of citizenship and democracy from other parts of the world. Rather, he seemed to have used the cultural tools essentially for promoting mere involvement of students in the activities.
A good example is when Mr. Chiwisa engaged students in a role-play activity on conflict resolution through the traditional government machinery. He had taught a series of lessons on traditional forms of governance of the Yao, Lomwe, Ngoni, and Ngonde ethnic groups. For each of these groups, he illustrated on the chalkboard their political bureaucratic structures that represented their traditional forms of governance. For instance, he drew the following Ngoni political system:

*Figure 2. The Ngoni Traditional System of Governance*

```
Paramount chief (Inkosi ya makosi)

→

Traditional Authority (Inkosi)

→

Group Village Head
Group Village Head

→

Villager Head
Villagers Head
Villagers Head

→

Villagers
Villagers
Villagers
```

As he drew the structure on the chalkboard, the teacher explained the roles of traditional officials at each level of the political structure. Among other things, he explained the role of such traditional forms of governance for settling disputes among people and for the maintenance of law and order at local governmental level.

Midway in the lesson, he asked volunteers to simulate how the Ngoni people settled their disputes using this form of government structure. At first the students hesitated, but later six students volunteered of which two were girls. The teacher began by asking the students to choose any dispute they wanted to use in the role-play. The six students discussed for about a minute and informed the class that they chose an issue about cattle rustling. The six students organized themselves and four of them represented each step of the political structure. Among the four, one girl represented the Traditional Authority. Three boys role played the positions of paramount chief, group village headman, and village headman. One other boy represented a cattle rustler and the remaining girl represented the owner of the stolen cattle.
The teacher asked for three more volunteers to represent a butcher man who bought the stolen cattle, another to represent the witness of the rustler, and the last to represent the witness of the owner of the cattle. All the three volunteers were boys, and the teacher didn’t seem to have noticed the gender imbalance (this issue of gender insensitivity is discussed in greater details in theme 6). Then the teacher asked the rest of the class to represent villagers. The nine students organized themselves for about four minutes and began to role play.

In the role-play, the matter was first referred to the village head who upon hearing the case he referred the matter to the next level of the political structure. The group head also referred the matter to the next level after hearing the case. This continued up to the paramount chief who made the ruling against the cattle rustler and the butcher man, amidst clapping of hands from the “villagers.” The activity took relatively long for the students to organize themselves, but its impact on students’ learning was far reaching.

In a post-lesson observation interview, I wanted to learn from the teacher why he used the role-play. His explanation was that he wanted the students to appreciate the role of traditional forms of governance as well as how different groups settled their disputes. I also noticed that students gained skills in problem solving. However, the teacher neither engaged the students in critical thinking processes of the role of traditional governments in resolving conflicts vis-à-vis the court systems that have been adopted and adapted in Malawi from other parts of the world. The students had already learned about types of such court systems and their functions at grade five level. One of the activities under this topic in the grade five teacher’s guide reads as follows:

*Activity 4 (5 periods)*

1. Arrange a field trip with your pupils to a nearby court to observe a court session.
2. Ask pupils to role play a court session. Some of the roles that can be played are: Judge/chairperson, Court clerk, Court Messenger, Accused, Witnesses, Public prosecutor, Audience, Police officers.
3. Summarize the main points from the role-play.

This activity has some similarities with the role-play Mr. Chiwisa organized on the traditional forms of settling disputes. When covering this topic, the teacher made no reference at all to the court systems that are adopted from other parts of the world. In fact, students come to class with rich knowledge of traditional ways of settling disputes, but very little about the court systems that were adopted from other parts of the world.
This weak integration of concepts or topics was common among all three teachers. They taught each topic in the curriculum as an entity on its own. In this way, the teachers did not use the students’ prior knowledge that they had learned in the lower grades or, which they brought to class from home as a launch pad for understanding forms of citizenship and democracy that are adopted from other parts of the world. Thus, teachers generally failed to help students make critical analyses of issues that cut across the traditional forms of governance and citizenship with similar concepts from other parts of the world. Such issues include people’s identities, human rights, gender, conflict resolutions, and duties and responsibilities. In pre-lesson and post-lesson interviews the teachers blamed the organization of the curriculum. Their arguments were that the topics about traditional forms of governance and citizenship with similar forms from other parts of the world were presented in the curriculum as separate topics. For that reason, they covered the topics as they appeared in the curriculum.

The teachers’ arguments clearly showed that they did not understand the concept of the spiralling curriculum. They did not take the spiralling structure as a continuous process of preparing effective citizens at various societal levels. As a result, the teachers’ use of traditional forms of governance and citizenship as a platform for the organization of lesson activities for students to learn about similar concepts from other parts of the world was appallingly weak. Hence, the teachers’ organization of lesson activities generally failed to make connections between the students’ immediate world, which they already knew about and the new concepts they were expected to learn from other parts of the world, especially the West. Theme 6 gives examples of how students failed to make such connections because of the way the teachers organized lesson activities.

Discussion under this theme has shown that the teachers’ limited understanding of the concept of participatory learning negatively affected their classroom practices for the preparation of active participatory citizens in a democracy. However, this was only one dimension of how teachers failed to engage students in activities that promote the acquisition of knowledge and the development of skills, values, and attitudes associated with citizenship learning. Socio-cultural experiences that both teachers and students brought to class formed another dimension of challenges that negatively affected the teachers’ organization of active classroom practices for the molding of competent citizens. The next theme is a discussion of this dimension.
Influence of Socio-cultural Experiences on Classroom Practices

Theme 6. Teachers’ socio-cultural histories influenced their decisions in the implementation of interactive classroom activities.

Classroom observations in all three classrooms showed that socio-cultural experiences influenced the teachers’ conceptions and organization of participatory classroom practices. The conceptions had both positive and negative impact on interactive participatory practices, although the latter outweighed the former. The first section under this theme is a discussion of the positive influence of socio-cultural experiences on teachers’ organization of interactive classroom activities.

Positive Influence of Socio-cultural Experiences

Cultural tools like songs, dances, and folklores are conduits of indigenous forms of knowledge that both teachers and students brought to the classrooms. Of the three teachers, Mr. Chiwisa demonstrated some individual brilliance in the use of these cultural tools for the involvement of students in lesson activities. During the first semi-structured interview, he explained that:

Sometimes there are activities like role-plays of a story or conducting a play about the work of a village headman. Sometimes even using songs, traditional stories, or even proverbs. Pupils know these things from their elders at their homes.

He further explained that some of the songs he used in class were common cultural tools among the Yao people for teaching their children about some aspects of duties and responsibilities in their communities. Mr. Chiwisa further elucidated that, “sometimes the song can be composed by the teacher himself, but sometimes some children are crafty enough to bring the songs they know about certain things.”

Classroom observations showed that the teacher engaged students in activities that involved singing or storytelling and it was the teacher or students who introduced such activities spontaneously. Often times the teacher took advantage of the ethnic homogeneity of his class because the majority of the students were Yao from villages around the school. He, therefore, used songs, folklores, and traditional dances that the students were familiar with for the organization of participatory classroom activities. For example, on the lessons about the Yao, Lomwe, and Ngoni migrations into Malawi, the teacher organized a series of activities for engaging students based on the prior cultural experiences they brought to class. He asked students about the contributions that
these ethnic groups made to the Malawian culture. Students mentioned various contributions, one of which was types of traditional dances. The teacher listed down on the chalkboard all traditional dances that the students mentioned. He asked the students to choose from the list the traditional dances they wanted to perform in class. He also asked the students to explain the significance of the dances to the Malawian culture. There were 14 traditional dances that were listed on the chalkboard, the majority of which were from the Yao and Lomwe cultural groups. The students chose five of the dances. Three were Yao dances, and one each from the Ngoni and the Lomwe. All students in class took turns to perform the dances. One dance (masewe) was all boys; and two dances (likwata and chiwoda) were all girls, and the rest (ngoma, and tchopa) were a mixture. The students performed the dances based on how they are performed in the traditional setup.

Undoubtedly, such activities helped students’ involvement in class, but in most cases it was mere involvement and not much of critical analysis of the issues that were embedded in those cultural tools. For instance, after the students performed the dances, the teacher asked them about the significance of such dances. The students mentioned issues like entertainment and promotion of unity and cooperation among people within and among ethnic groups. However, the teacher did not actually engage the students deeply in a critical analysis of what they meant by unity and cooperation. The students just mentioned the issues without making explanations of their thoughts. Yet cultural tools like the traditional songs used in the dances have messages, which are very important in the promotion of traditional core values. Such core values include those pertaining to equal justice, unity and cooperation among people, respect among people, gender, conflict resolution, and taking care of the environment. In some cases, these cultural tools have purposely hidden messages. Yet Mr. Chiwisa’s use of such cultural tools did not engage students in a critical analysis of issues in such messages.

Mrs. Kasinja also used some of the cultural tools, but not as frequently as Mr. Chiwisa did. A good example is when she used traditional songs in a topic about “Aspects of culture.” She organized four lessons on this topic. Initiation practices, funeral customs, marriage customs, and beliefs and misconceptions were the major issues discussed in these lessons. The lessons were largely presented in form of lecturing and question and answer. In one of the lessons, Mrs. Kasinja organized song-based activities that are used in the initiation ceremonies for the promotion of traditional core virtues. Almost all students in the class had already undergone
initiation rites in their cultural groups. The teacher asked volunteers from different ethnic groups to lead in various songs that are performed in the initiation rites.

In a post-lesson interview Mrs. Kasinja said she used the cultural tools to help students from different ethnic groups to appreciate each other’s cultures. She also stated that she wanted to promote the spirit of working together among the students regardless of their cultural backgrounds. However, just like Mr. Chiwisa, the way she used such cultural tools was for mere students’ involvement rather than for their engagement in critical analyses of the messages conveyed in the cultural tools.

The examples illustrated in the preceding paragraphs show that teachers took advantage of the value-laden cultural tools for the involvement of students in lesson activities. However, it seemed like the socio-cultural experiences had more negative than positive impacts on students’ active participation in lesson activities. The next section is a discussion of this dimension.

*Negative Influence of Socio-cultural Experiences*

On the negative side, socio-cultural background seemed to have influenced the teachers’ organization of interactive lesson activities. In this regard, both teachers and students seemed to have held some socio-cultural beliefs, perspectives, and stances that might have jointly influenced classroom behaviours. There were three pieces of evidence that seemed to suggest that the socio-cultural experiences that both teachers and students brought to class had negative influence on classroom practices. The first evidence was that socio-cultural experiences seemed to have blindfolded teachers in the organization of lesson activities for promoting students’ critical thinking and rational decision-making of the everyday life issues. The second evidence was girls’ subordinate positions in class. The last evidence was that the social distance between teachers and students might have contributed to students’ failure in asking their teachers questions. Discussion of the impact of these factors begins with how socio-cultural experiences blindfolded the teachers’ organization of classroom practices. Mr. Chiwisa’s lesson vignette on “Types of leaderships” will act a prelude to this discussion.

*Mr. Chiwisa’s Lesson Vignette on Types of Leadership*

On Thursday morning of June 28, 2007, Mr. Chiwisa presented a lesson on “Types of leadership.” The class was held under a huge gmelina tree that was some forty yards away from the grade six “classroom.” Normally from mid-morning the teacher moved the class from the dilapidated and roofless classroom to the shade under the tree. There were 54 students in the
class consisting of 29 girls and 25 boys. They sat generally mixed, but with some few clear patterns of boys-only and girls-only sitting close to each other. All students sat on chairs that were in six rows, facing the direction of the teacher.

The lesson started at 9.41 in the morning, six minutes behind the scheduled time. The teacher began the lesson with greeting the students, and then wrote on a portable chalkboard, “Social Studies.” He proceeded with a recap of the previous lesson, “Yesterday we talked about leaders in southern region of Malawi. Can you tell me the types of leaders you know?” One boy stood up and said, “Chiefs.” The teacher gave him a positive reinforcement by asking the class to clap hands for him. The teacher continued with questions for students to state other types of leaders. There were more hands raised, but mostly boys. The students’ responses included “father,” “mother,” “president,” “members of parliament,” and “councilor.” He wrote students’ correct responses on the chalkboard.

He proceeded, “Now that we have these types of leaders, today I would like you to learn how leaders are selected. How are leaders chosen, be it political leaders or chiefs? Let’s begin with chiefs.” There were a couple of hands including two girls. The teacher pointed at one of the girls to respond and she said, “Vote.” The teacher asked while looking at the girl who had responded, “You vote? Can you vote for Mr. Sadiki?” (referring to one of the village chiefs around the community school). A boy responded in Chichewa “Zimachokera ku mtundu” (meaning that chieftaincy is inherited through blood relations). The teacher commented that indeed chieftaincy is based on blood relationships.

The teacher continued, “Okay, now what is the other way of selecting leaders?” One boy stood up and said, “Timavota”, meaning “we vote.” The teacher commented that indeed voting was one of the ways for selecting leaders. At this point the teacher asked the students to recite the word “voting”, and they all responded in a chorus, “Voting.” The teacher asked the students about the types of leaders who are selected through voting. A girl mentioned president and a boy mentioned members of parliament. The teacher explained briefly in Chichewa and Yao how political leaders are chosen through the use of votes. He continued, “Any question on this?” None of the students asked questions.

The teacher went on with questions on other ways of selecting leaders. A boy responded, “Councilors.” The teacher commented, “Yes, councilors! Very good. Clap hands for him.”
teacher explained that councilors and members of parliament are in the same category of political leaders, and asked the students to recite the term “political leaders.”

He explained further that leaders of political parties like chairpersons, treasurers, secretary-generals, and regional governors are selected through voting. The teacher asked further, “What is another way of choosing leaders?” A boy stood up and responded, “Raising hands.” The teacher commented that they would come back to that as one of the ways of voting. He then asked the students how civil servants or public workers are selected. Students just watched him, apparently not knowing what the teacher meant. He explained to class that civil servants like him are selected through appointments. Again he asked students if they questions, but none of them did.

After 17 minutes of lesson time, the teacher said, “Now I want you to debate. What I want you to do is to debate on the advantages and disadvantages of voting for members of parliaments. What does advantages mean?” A boy correctly explained the meaning in Chichewa. The teacher also asked the students about the meaning of disadvantages, and another boy explained its meaning in Chichewa. The teacher repeated the task in Chichewa and switched back to English and added, “I want everybody to take part in this debate. You should be free to express your opinions. You can even express your ideas in Chichewa.” He continued, “Now let me have two boys and two girls to come here in front and move a debate.” Seven students raised their hands of which two were girls. The teacher chose the two girls and two boys to come in front of the class. He then asked the foursome to volunteer the side they wanted to take. A boy and a girl volunteered to move the debate on the advantages side. The teacher asked the other two to take the side of disadvantages of voting. The teacher said, “Now we shall begin with the first speaker, the proposer.” The first proposer was a girl and made her contribution in Chichewa.

All the students debated in Chichewa except one boy who made his contribution in English. For purposes of understanding what they said, their quoted words are literal English translations. The first proposer said, “Voting is obviously good because the one we vote for respects us, his voters. He knows if he does not respect us we will never vote for him again. And also voting is done secretly. Nobody can tell you who to vote for. So, no intimidation.” The teacher moved to the other side of the class and asked the opposer to make his contribution. He said, “Voting is usually done using corrupt practices. Those with money influence voters. In
addition, children under the age of 18 also vote. That is corruption! Voting is bad.” The teacher asked the second proposer and second opposer to make their contributions, which they did.

After the four moved the debate, the teacher opened the floor to all students, “Now I want you to participate, either you agree or disagree with what these here have said.” The teacher explained the task again in Chichewa. Several students raised their hands to contribute and the teacher mentioned one student at time to contribute by evenly pointing at boys and girls. Most of the students’ contributions were short, possibly giving chance to other contributors. One boy remarked, “Voting is bad because it just divides people based on their tribal lines.” He was followed by a girl who said, “Voting is bad because it depends on individuals’ personality.” Another girl said, “Voting is good because it gives you freedom of choice.” The teacher watched as students contributed. His role was just to point at a student to make his/her contributions, but made no comments. A little while later, the teacher cut short the debate and asked the foursome to summarize the points. By this time, over half of the class had made their contributions. The four made their summaries by mostly repeating what they had said when opening the debate. The debate took about 15 minutes.

After the debate activity, the teacher selected a girl and a boy to come in front of the class to conduct voting for or against the system of voting leaders into public office. The teacher asked the boy to be the chairperson and responsible for voting. He also asked the girl to be the vice chairperson responsible for recording vote counts on the chalkboard. After giving rubrics on how voting would take place, the teacher asked the chairperson to begin conducting the voting process. The chairperson of voting said, “Now those of you who say we should be choosing leaders by voting, raise your hands.” The vice chairperson counted those who had raised hands and wrote on the chalkboard “9.” Then the chairperson proceeded; “Now I want the ones who are against voting to raise their hands.” The vice chairperson counted the hands that were raised and wrote “44” on the chalkboard. Apparently some few students did not vote because there was a total of 59 students in class. The group that won celebrated. Soon after the voting activity, the teacher thanked the students for their participation. That marked the end of the 37 minute-long lesson.

This vignette gives a synopsis view of how Mr. Chiwisa occasionally integrated Traditional and Western concepts of governance and citizenship. Undoubtedly, the teacher
organized a lively debate before the students voted for or against democratic form of leadership. The debate offered the students some skills in critical thinking. The voting activity held towards the end of the lesson also helped students in practicing the skills of voting. What was even more interesting is that some students were given leadership skills in organizing the elections. However, what seemed worth noting from this lesson was that students overwhelmingly voted against democratic leadership.

It looked likely that socio-cultural background influenced the students to vote against democratic leadership. The students might have come to class with rich knowledge about traditional governance and not much about democracy. However, the goal of this lesson was to help students appreciate the importance of democracy. For example, the teacher had stated in his lesson plan the objectives of the lesson as follows:

By the end of the lesson, the pupils should be able to:

1. Mention types of leadership in Southern Malawi.
2. State how leaders are selected.
3. Explain the importance of democratic leadership.

Yet the voting results in class suggested that the students did not appreciate the importance of democratic leadership. This seemed problematic considering that many of the students in the class were only a couple of years away from the legitimate voting age in democratic elections. In Malawi, the minimum age for voting is 18 years.

In a post-lesson interview, I wanted to learn from the teacher about his impression of the lesson. He expressed satisfaction with the students’ involvement in the lesson. He never mentioned anything about the students’ voting against democratic leadership. When I prompted him on this issue, his explanation was that the students might have voted against democratic leadership because politicians did not fulfill their campaign promises once they were elected. It looked likely that there was more to that than what met the eye. Traditional forms of governance that the students brought to class might have influenced their thinking. The teacher’s socio-cultural background might have blindfolded his perceptions to the extent of not spotting that students voted against democratic leadership. The teacher’s failure to notice this aspect meant that the students went back home with their beliefs, perspectives, and stances largely unchallenged.
The second evidence was that socio-cultural background appeared to have caused a reduction in girls’ participation in class activities. The two curriculum developers explained the rationale of including gender issues in the social studies curriculum. For instance, in response to how they dealt with the issue of negative elements of cultural practices and beliefs during curriculum reform, the curriculum developer representing teacher educators responded:

Cultural practices also cause these gender disparity problems. So during the curriculum development the aim was to tackle this cultural thing. The cultural problem theme was included because we wanted the youth to learn that they are equal; that way it’s like you are reversing the culture. And you cannot reverse the culture outside the classroom, but inside the classroom with the youth so that when they grow up they should behave differently from their fathers and mothers. We also included suggestions of lesson activities to promote active involvement of boys and girls in the classrooms. That way we will not have the culture that makes girls fail to participate effectively.

From what the curriculum developers narrated, the curriculum has both the content and teaching and learning pedagogies for promoting equal active participation of both boys and girls in the classroom. The analysis of the curriculum in theme 2 has shown that the teacher’s guides have various suggestions of how teachers can organize learner-centered lesson activities for the engagement of all students in the classrooms.

The three case study teachers, too, had their views of the negative impact of culture on girls’ participation in the classroom and also what they did in the amelioration of the situation. For instance, during the second semi-structured interview, Mr. Chiwisa explained the challenges he faced in the promotion of active participation among boys and girls in his class. He narrated that:

If you mix boys and girls, the girls did not take part because they think they are always under the armpits of the boys. But, when you use the group method, boys and girls will try to build some stuff together, share some knowledge. Mixture of boys and girls in groups maybe three girls against four boys or the same number so that they have ample time to discuss. But, when they are hipped together as a class, girls always suffer from inferiority complex.

Asked why girls viewed themselves with this inferiority complex, he responded:
It should go together with culture. You can see in other races they say ladies first, but when it comes to our culture it is gentlemen first. So that thing comes up right into the class. Girls say boys know better than we do. Let them go with the subject. Mrs. Kasinja also expressed similar sentiments that culture has a negative impact of girls’ participation in classrooms. Asked about the source of the problem, she stated that:

It’s the husband who makes decisions for children because it is a custom. I can say it is a custom because women respect their husbands following initiation customs. So the husband has more power than the woman. Because of this custom women cannot do anything on their own. They wait for their husbands to come to make decisions. So the girls also wait for boys to make decisions.

Such statements showed that the teachers were aware of the impact of culture on girls’ participation in the classrooms. In this connection, all three case study teachers claimed that they made deliberate interventions for the enhancement of girls’ participation in their classrooms.

However, classroom observations showed that generally many of the girls in the three classrooms did not take active roles in lesson activities. All three teachers generally preferred boys to girls in taking leading roles in the classrooms. For example, all three lesson vignettes presented in this paper have evidence that boys dominated girls in lesson activities that called for active participation of all the students. Other lesson activities that have been described in greater details in this chapter show the same pattern of boys’ domination in class activities. A good example is the role-play that Mr. Chiwisa organized on traditional ways of resolving conflicts. Of the nine students that took part in this role-play, only two were girls because the teacher had asked for volunteers. He did not seem to have realized that boys dominated in this activity.

Paradoxically, Mrs. Kasinja also relied heavily on boys although during semi-structured interviews she seemed to have been aware of how culture negatively affected female participation and also in decision-making in the society. Suffice it to say that occasionally the teachers made some deliberate interventions to encourage girls’ participation in their classrooms. A good example is Mr. Chiwisa’s lesson vignette, in which the teacher encouraged equal participation between girls and boys during the debate activity. Even with such interventions many of the girls seemed to have resigned to fate.

There was no evidence that suggested that the teachers were deliberately reinforcing the polarity between boys and girls in the classrooms. It looked like their socio-cultural backgrounds
generally blindfolded their decisions in the organization of active participatory activities. In fact, both boys and girls seemed to have taken for granted their cultural positions, which were transferred to the classrooms. Many of the boys appeared to have the assumptions that active participatory activities were meant for them. The girls, too, seemed to have accepted that leading roles are exclusively for males. Thus, although all the teachers knew the importance of involving all students in lesson activities regardless of their gender, their socio-cultural backgrounds seemed to have ruled supreme in the decisions they made in the classrooms.

In addition, contrary to what the teachers had said during semi-structured interviews about the formation of gender-mixed groups for classroom discussions, there were clear patterns of all-boys or girls groups in all three classrooms. Sometimes the groups were a mixture of boys and girls, but highly gender-skewed. Classroom observations showed that the teachers rarely formed the groups as they had alluded to during semi-structured interviews. Instead, the students themselves formed the groups. In that way, socio-cultural backgrounds seemed to have influenced the students in the formation of gender-based groups. The teachers did not seem to have noticed these clear patterns in the groups, possibly because their socio-cultural backgrounds also blindfolded their perceptions of students’ classroom behaviors.

The last evidence was that students never asked their teachers questions whenever the teachers gave them the chance to do so. The students were always ready to answer questions from their teachers, but not asking them questions. The only time a student asked a question to their teacher was in Mr. Mwase’s classroom. The student asked a question on the meaning of “policies” on a lesson about “Conservation of wildlife.” Otherwise it was a ritual that whenever the teachers asked, “Does anybody have a question?” All the students responded in a chorus, “Nooo.” Similarly when the teachers asked, “Is is clear?” the students responded, “Yesss.” However, not asking questions to their teachers did not necessarily suggest that the students had no questions. Classroom observations showed that the students preferred asking each other questions rather than directing them to their teachers.

All three teachers acknowledged that students did not normally ask them questions because of the influence of their cultures. Mr. Mwase and Mr. Chiwisa observed that elder-centered traditional teaching, which caused children’s passivity, was the main source of students’ inactivity in the classrooms. For example, during the third semi-structured interview Mr. Mwase stated that:
When they go for initiation ceremonies they meet the elders so that they may have some fear in those elders. And as they are teaching them at least these little ones can grasp; can take in what they are told there. The children learn a lot about their responsibilities in the societies from these elders.

Thus, according to Mr. Mwase, fear is an integral part of traditional teaching among people of his cultural group. During the interview, he did not sound alarmed with the elders’ use of fear in the traditional setup of teaching possibly because he, too, was a product of the same culture.

Mr. Chiwisa, too, revealed during the third semi-structured interview that there were some conflicts in the teaching for citizenship between traditional institutions and schools. For example, he explained that teaching in the traditional setup was one-sided with children getting instructions from the elders without them asking questions. He also explained that modern classroom practices encourage students to take active roles in lesson activities. In reference to traditional teachings in initiation rites, Mr. Chiwisa stated:

Because the type of teaching they have there is not the democratic teaching we have these days. It’s is a kind of harsh teaching. So I don’t know if we were born to understand things or situations through iron fists. When you have iron fists then you come to understand things, but that is how the teaching is done for children to learn their responsibilities in society.

Thus, Mr. Chiwisa, though from a different cultural group from that of Mr. Mwase, also narrated that the traditional teachings in his cultural group were harsh.

Traditional teachings might have stacked in the students’ minds when they came to class because the larger proportion of them had already undergone initiation rites in their cultural groups. This situation possibly made students to assume low profile positions in the classrooms, especially when it came to asking questions to their teachers. The implication of this kind of scenario was that teachers’ failed to recognize students’ perspectives of the taken for granted life issues. For that reason, they also failed in the organization of lesson activities for the promotion of students’ critical view of their taken for granted perspectives.

**Summary**

Discussion under research question 3 has focused on how limited conceptions of participatory learning affected the teachers’ organization of classroom practices for the preparation of competent citizens in a democracy. Generally, the organization of classroom practices was
teacher-centered, although Mr. Chiwisa had some better skills of learner-centered approaches than his other two counterparts. Discussion in theme 5 has shown that the teachers’ limited understanding of participatory learning was reflected in their organization of lesson activities, use of teaching and learning resources, students’ assessment procedures, and the weak integration of concepts. Theme 6 has illustrated that the socio-cultural experiences that both teachers and students brought to class exposed the teachers’ limited conceptions of active participatory classroom practices. In general, such experiences caused more negative than positive impact on classroom practices meant for the preparation of active citizens in a democracy.

However, the teachers’ limited understanding of participatory approaches was not the only cause of missed opportunities for students’ development of skills, values, and attitudes necessary for civic responsibilities in a democratic society. Government policies on the use of English as a medium of class instruction and the grade eight public examinations also contributed to the teachers’ organization of largely teacher-centered classroom practices. The next section is a discussion of this dimension.

Impact of State’s Policies on Teachers’ Classroom Practices

Research question 4. How do the state’s policies on language and grade eight public examinations influence teachers in the organization of classroom activities for the preparation of active participatory citizens?

Theme 7. The teachers’ usage of English as a medium of classroom instruction reduced students’ active participation in lesson activities.

Theme 8. Grade eight national examinations influenced the teachers’ use of teacher-centered classroom practices.

Classroom constraints seemed to have influenced the teachers’ perceptions of the implementation of participatory classroom practices. State’s policies on the use of English as a medium of class instruction and the grade eight public examinations were the most outstanding classroom constraints that negatively impacted the teachers’ organization of interactive classroom practices. Discussion in this section begins with the state’s policy on the use of English as a medium of class instruction.

Use of English as a Medium of Instruction

Theme 7. The teachers’ use of English as a medium of classroom instruction reduced students’ active participation in lesson activities.
State policy expects teachers to use Chichewa as a medium of instruction from grade one through four, and English from grade five through eight. Classroom observations showed three issues that seemed to indicate that the use of English as a medium of instruction summarily reduced students’ active participation in lesson activities. The first issue was breakdown in communication between teachers and their students whenever English was used persistently as a medium of instruction. The second issue was that the teachers made frequent code-switching between English and Chichewa to stimulate students’ participation in lesson activities. The last issue was that the teachers frequently used recitations as one way of helping students to master English concepts. These three issues were more prominent in Mrs. Kasinja’s class. Therefore, examples of how the use of English reduced students’ participation in lesson activities will largely come from pieces Mrs. Kasinja’s class. A lesson vignette based on the topic “Safety in working places” is an entry point to this discussion.

Mrs. Kasinja’s Lesson Vignette on Safety in Working Places

It was Monday, June 4, 2007, that I observed Mrs. Kasinja’s lesson on “Safety in working places.” The lesson started at 11.20 in the morning. The teacher began the lesson with the usual greetings and then she wrote on the chalkboard, “Social Studies,” and underneath it she wrote “Safety in working places.” There were 59 students in all, of which 23 were girls and the rest were boys.

After writing the lesson topic on the chalkboard, the teacher faced the students and asked in English, “What did you learn in the previous lesson about the effects of customs and traditions?” There was no response from students as they just watched their teacher. “You don’t know!” The teacher exclaimed. “Okay, can you all stand up!” She repeated the question in Chichewa and then switched back to English. Three boys and two girls raised their hands. The teacher pointed to a girl who responded, “About suffering.” The teacher commended her for a good response and she explained more on the effects of some customs and traditions on peoples’ lives. All students responded in English, but using one-word responses like, “problem,” “death,” and “abuse.” It was the teacher who did the explanation after the students mentioned the one-word or two-word responses. The teacher continued, “Is there any question on this?” The students indicated that they had no questions.

After the recap of the previous lesson, the teacher introduced a new topic whose title she had written on the chalkboard. She lectured for four minutes and briefly re-explained in
Chichewa. The students listened attentively. After about 11 minutes of lesson time, the teacher said, “Now listen, I want you to be in groups, and discuss the accidents that occur in working places, it that clear?” The students answered in a chorus, “Yes” and they quickly formed groups. She repeated the task in Chichewa. There were eight groups in all of between 5 to 11 students in each group. Two groups were entirely boys, one group was entirely girls and the rest were a mixture. The teacher went around monitoring students working in groups and also repeated the task to each group as she went around monitoring. The students discussed in Chichewa and Yao, but the teacher spoke to them in English.

After three minutes of group discussions, the teacher went in front of the classroom and asked the group leaders to report their findings. The first group leader (a girl) reported in English and she simply said, “At home,” which resulted in the teacher asking, “Where exactly?” Some students in the same group raised their hands and one of them (a boy) said, “In the kitchen.” The teacher thanked the student and wrote on the chalkboard, “In the kitchen” and moved on to ask another group leader to report. The second group leader (a boy) reported, “At the road” and the teacher wrote this on the chalkboard. The rest of the group leaders also reported using one or two words responses or even simple phrases. After group reporting, the teacher asked the students to go back to their places.

The teacher continued with the lesson by asking students about the types of accidents that occur in gardens. A few of the students raised their hands, mostly boys. The teacher pointed at a boy to respond who said, “Cut with hoe.” The teacher repeated the student’s response that, “You can cut yourself with a hoe” and asked the students, “With what?” The students responded in a chorus, “With a hoe.” The teacher asked further questions and students’ responses included: “With an axe,” “By the panga,” “With a sickle.” At the mention of each farming tool, the teacher jotted it down on the chalkboard in form of short sentences she composed and asked the students to recite. The students recited in a chorus. After writing all students’ responses on the chalkboard, the teacher said, “These are accidents in the gardens, accidents where?” The students responded in a chorus, “In the garden.” Then the teacher asked, “Do you have questions here?” While pointing at what she had written on the chalkboard. Students indicated that they had no questions.

She continued asking students about other types of accidents that occur in the gardens, but all students watched their teacher in silence. A few seconds later, the students began
murmuring amongst themselves, apparently asking each other in vernacular what the teacher had said. The teacher re-explained in Chichewa what she had just said, and then lectured for four minutes about accidents caused by snakes in the gardens. After a short lecture the teacher asked, “What accidents can happen because of snakes?” A boy responded, “A panga” and the teacher exclaimed “A panga!” Another boy responded, “A hoe.” The teacher exclaimed again, “A hoe!” -looking disappointed. Yet another student (a girl) mentioned a sickle. The teacher explained that snakes in the garden bite people. At this moment in time, about half of the class began copying down notes from the chalkboard. The teacher emphasized that snake bites were also accidents and said, “That is an accident, that is what?” The students responded in a chorus, “An accident.”

Then the teacher went on to ask the students other accidents that occur in the gardens. Again, the students just watched their teacher in silence while others continued copying down notes from the chalkboard. The teacher lectured for a short while about accidents associated with climbing trees. She re-explained in Chichewa before continuing in English as she said, “When cutting those branches, people fall down from the trees. Some people die.” She then asked, “Falling down from where?” Some few students responded rather hesitatingly, “From the garden.” The teacher asked fondly, “Garden or tree?” Many students responded with confidence, “From tree.”

After 24 minutes of lesson time, the teacher asked a rhetorical question, “Now, how can we prevent such accidents in the garden?” She faced the chalkboard and wrote, “Prevention of accidents in the garden.” She repeated the question in Chichewa and asked students to respond. One boy responded, “Bush fire.” The teacher faced the whole class and asked, “Is that correct?” Some students responded in a chorus, “Noo!” The teacher asked the rest of the students on what they knew, but nobody responded. Then the teacher lectured for about six minutes on the prevention of accidents in gardens.

Towards the end of the lesson the teacher asked all students to stand up and began asking them recall kind of questions based on what had been covered in the lesson. She began, “Can you tell me places where accidents occur?” One by one the students mentioned “water,” “garden,” “river,” “home,” and those that responded correctly sat down. The teacher went on asking, “Can you tell me accidents that occur in the gardens?” The students responded using one word or simple phrases like “snakes,” “by a hoe,” “with a sickle.” Most of them just read what was on the chalkboard or read their notes, which they had copied from the chalkboard. After 36
minutes of lesson time, the teacher thanked the students for their positive contributions and that marked the end of the lesson.

This lesson vignette gives a vivid picture of what generally occurred in Mrs. Kasinja’s classroom. As already indicated, three main pieces of evidence showed that the use of English as a medium of instruction reduced students’ active participation in the classroom. Breakdown in communication was one of such pieces of evidence.

Breakdown in Communication between Teachers and Students

Mrs. Kasinja explained during the second semi-structured interview that she used English in class because it was a state’s policy. However, she further stated that, as a grade five teacher, she faced a big burden because students experienced, for the first time, instruction done in English. Indeed, as shown in the lesson vignette, students failed to make conversations in English. They either remained silent whenever the teacher called upon them to respond to oral questions or they used one or two-word responses. In some cases, the bizarre responses that the students made were clear evidence that they, altogether, missed what the teacher had said to them. This is well exemplified when the teacher asked, “Falling from what?” The students responded, “From garden” because that is what they had memorized earlier in the lesson through recitations. Apparently what stuck in the students’ minds was the concept of a garden. It was only after the teacher asked a leading question that, “From a garden or tree?” that made the students to change their response to “A tree.”

Similarly when the teacher asked students about accidents caused by snakes in the gardens the students’ responses included, “A panga,” “A hoe,” and “A sickle.” This is also clear evidence that the use of English language as medium of instruction resulted in a breakdown in communication between the teacher and the students. Thus, classroom observations showed that students’ participation was greatly affected whenever the teacher persistently used English for classroom instruction. In post-lesson interviews, the teacher explained that she failed to use activities like role playing, debating, discussions, and students’ written exercises largely due to students’ failure in understanding instruction done in English. Because of this problem, the teacher explained that she frequently made some code switching between English and Chichewa as one way of encouraging students’ participation in lesson activities.
Frequent Code-switching between English and Chichewa

A common feature in all the classrooms of the three case study teachers was frequent code switching between English and Chichewa as media of instruction. Teachers often explained in English and re-explained in Chichewa or Yao. As regard to this problem, Mrs. Kasinja extrapolated that:

There is also a problem to them because here in our country in lower classes from standard one to four we teach them in Chichewa. So because they have changed the language from Chichewa and coming to standard five we teach in English. So we find a big problem to communicate with the pupils. Sometimes we can see that pupils have got ideas but, they fail to answer or participate or contribute some ideas because of language problem.

Indeed, Mrs. Kasinja’s lesson vignette has evidence of the code switching between English and Chichewa. In post-lesson interviews, the teacher explained that she used Chichewa explanations whenever she realized that the students did not understand what she had said to them in English. She explained further that she resorted to code switching as one way of encouraging students’ participation in class.

Mr. Chiwisa and Mr. Mwase faced similar problems. They, too, resorted to code switching to encourage students’ participation in class, while helping them to master the English language. Mr. Chiwisa frequently used Yao as well because the majority of the students in his class were from this ethnic group. A couple of students in Mr. Mwase’s class spoke some simple English when responding to oral questions. In post-lesson interviews, what was coming clearer from the teachers was that there was a general problem in the use of English as a medium of instruction. In addition, the teachers also frequently used recitations in their lessons.

Teachers’ Reliance on Recitations

Recitation was a common feature in the three classrooms as the teachers engaged students in the memorization of English concepts or facts. For example, in the lesson vignette the teacher said, “You can cut yourself with a hoe,” and asked the students, “With what?” The students recited, “With a hoe.” Similarly the teacher said, “These are accidents in the gardens; accidents where?” The students recited, “In the garden.” Thus, recitations were a dominant feature in all the three classrooms. In post-lesson interviews, all the teachers explained that they
had no choice, but used English as a medium of instruction since this was a state policy. They further explained that the recitations were intended for helping students to learn some English concepts.

Thus, in general, all three teachers acknowledged in pre-lesson and post-lesson classroom observation interviews that the use of English as a medium of instruction was a stumbling block for students’ active participation in classrooms activities. However, the three teachers also admitted that grade eight national examinations influenced their organization of classroom practices.

*Influence of Grade Eight National Examinations on Classroom Practices*

_Theme 8._ Grade eight national examinations influenced the teachers’ use of teacher-centered classroom practices.

The state uses grade eight public examinations as the only tool for selecting students for secondary school education. The examinations cover the curricula work from grade five through eight. In this regard, semi-structured interviews and classroom observations showed that all three teachers were preparing students for grade eight mandated examinations. Two pieces of evidence seemed to reveal that the teachers were teaching to examinations. The first evidence was that of teachers’ emphasis on knowledge domain at the expense of skills and attitudes domains. The second evidence was reduction of students’ active engagement in lesson activities. Therefore, discussion in this subsection will use these pieces of evidence for the discussion of what occurred in the three classrooms of study.

*Teachers’ Emphasis on Knowledge Domain*

The three case study teachers revealed during the third semi-structured interviews that the grade eight public examinations influenced their decisions in the organization of classroom practices. For example, Mrs. Kasinja said:

> Public examinations, they include any topic they think that time that the pupils can answer. This is because the examiners include all the work from standard five to standard eight. So there is no chance for students to revise the standard five work because the standard eight teacher covers only standard eight content.

In connection to the same issue, Mr. Mwase stated that:

> Of course according to the curriculum, the syllabus that we have; the examinations when they are coming they don’t tell you the areas they are going to ask you questions. That’s
why you are forced to consider different areas. So you have to teach the students against the time that you are given. And the examinations are coming at least you should cover all the areas in readiness for the examinations.

Classroom observations showed that it was Mr. Mwase, of the three teachers, who was evidently teaching to examinations. Thus, most examples in this section come from what I observed from Mr. Mwase’s class.

There were two ways that indicated how the three case study teachers emphasized the knowledge domain. The first one was that the teachers frequently warned their students about the importance of knowing some concepts for the sake of examinations. For example, Mr. Mwase made frequent references to mandated examinations especially on areas that were often tested. The students, too, anxiously listened to whatever their teacher warned them about examinations. Some students even wrote down some notes in their copybooks about the possible areas for examinations. In this connection, analysis of Mr. Mwase’s teaching plans showed that he had included topics from other senior grades for the sake of preparing students for mandated examinations.

From this perspective of teaching to examinations, I wanted to learn from the curriculum developer representing the state how they factored in the curriculum the issue of mandated examinations. In his response he said:

The skills it’s true they can be used and acquired in the actual classroom, but once again, at national examinations level we are not in a position to develop assessment items that test values and attitudes. We never had time to look at that and definitely we anticipated the bulk of the examinations to be on knowledge, rather than values and attitudes. In fact those are difficult to assess from a MANEB point of view. And even skills have been problematic. But, how do you assess that component? In terms of case studies, we incorporated that technique in the curriculum, but assessing from written examination point of view, that is difficult.

This response suggests that, although the social studies curriculum guides teachers on the classroom practices that are necessary for the development of knowledge, skills, and attitudes in students, the format of mandated examinations forces the teachers to emphasize the knowledge domain.
The second one was that note copying was one of the major activities in all the three classes especially in Mr. Mwase’s class. During the actual lessons the notes were usually in the form of summaries with important points underlined. In addition, all teachers gave class monitors more detailed notes to be copied outside the lesson time or during timetabled preparation periods. As a result of their emphasis on the knowledge domain, the teachers’ organization of interactive classroom practices was generally weak, especially as regard to Mr. Mwase.

*Ineffective Use of Interactive Classroom Practices*

Classroom observations showed that Mr. Mwase’s major concern was knowledge achievement largely done through rote learning. It seemed the teacher wanted to cover as much content material as possible to help students gain the much-needed knowledge for mandated examinations. As already discussed under theme 5, Mr. Mwase largely used classroom techniques and activities like lecture, explanation, question and answer, and recitations. The use of these techniques and activities focused on the teacher. Because of his persistent use of teacher-centered approaches, I wanted to learn from him how he felt such approaches could help the students in the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for civic life. In response to this question, he stated during the third semi-structured interview that:

> Honestly there we dwell on one side, that is teach the students knowledge and not much of attitude change. And the other thing is that when you are teaching the students you involve them of course in certain activities and you are aiming at the students acquiring some skills maybe in classroom situation you expect them that at least they should show some skills to respect one another, listening to one another. So you expect the students to get skills. But, normally we dwell much on teaching the students about knowledge as we are preparing them for examinations.

This response shows that although Mr. Mwase conceded that his teaching was centered on knowledge domain, he still felt he involved students in lesson activities for the development of the skills and attitudes domains. It looked likely that mandated examinations contributed greatly to his decisions in the selection of teacher-centered pedagogies. Practically, what this meant was that the teachers’ use of teacher-centered pedagogies denied students’ active participation in the classrooms.
Conclusion

Research evidence from a triangulation of data sources based on four generic research questions has yielded eight themes. The serendipitous lessons drawn from these themes tell us a well-connected story about the state’s idealism and the teachers’ realism of classroom practices meant for the preparation of active participatory citizens in a democratic society. The first two lessons inform us that the social studies curriculum is organized with content and pedagogical strategies that are appropriate for the preparation of active participatory citizens at various societal levels. The curriculum documents define active participatory learning from the perspective of instilling in students wide content knowledge and the development of skills in critical thinking, problem solving, and rational decision-making. The purpose of this approach is that citizens who possess such knowledge and skills can competently display their active participatory posture that is required for the maintenance of a decent democratic society. Based on the first two lessons, the third lesson tells us that the teachers did not hold the same conceptions of active participatory classroom pedagogies as those stipulated in the social studies curriculum documents, which they used for the planning of their lessons. Interviews with teachers and classroom observations revealed that what the teachers held as interactive participatory learning was essentially the mere involvement of students in lesson activities with emphasis on acquisition of knowledge.

From the third lesson, a fourth lesson was derived that tells a story that the teachers’ illusions of active, participatory classroom practices were reflected in their lesson planning. Analysis of the teachers’ schemes and records of work and lesson plans indicated that the teachers largely planned lessons from their own perspectives and not from what they intended the students to do. However, in their view they still maintained that their lesson planning was intended for enhancing interactive classroom practices. Such perceptions affected their implementation of the planned lessons as was learned in lessons five and six.

The fifth lesson informs us that teachers mostly used teacher-centered classroom practices as reflected in their organization of lesson activities, use of teaching and learning resources, students’ assessment procedures, and the integration of traditional forms of governance and citizenship with those adopted from other parts of the world, especially the West. In this way, the organization of lesson activities caused a lot of missed opportunities for
the preparation of active participatory citizens that are required in a democracy. The sixth lesson enlightens us that the teachers’ socio-cultural backgrounds blindfolded their conceptions of the organization of interactive classroom practices. All three case study teachers had indicated during semi-structured interviews that they were aware of the impact of socio-cultural influence on classroom practices. However, classroom observations and post-lesson observation interviews illuminated that the teachers were unaware of the magnitude of the socio-cultural influence on classroom practices. It is very likely that the teachers did not realize the magnitude of the impact because they were also products of the same socio-cultural histories. In fact, it seemed that, rather unknowingly, the teachers reinforced the status quo. This situation made many of the students to go back home with their taken for granted life issues largely unchallenged. Therefore, the intention of the state in the hybridization between traditional elements of citizenship and governance and similar elements from other parts of the world failed to take place in the classrooms. Yet the goal of the social studies curriculum is this kind of hybridization for purposes of evolving forms of citizenship and democratic governance that suits the local contexts of Malawi.

The last two lessons complete the story that some external factors that the teachers had no control over also contributed to the missed opportunities for students’ development of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that are necessary for active civic life. Both of these lessons hinge on the state’s policies. For example, the seventh lesson illustrates that the use of English as a medium of classroom instruction reduced students to mere spectators of their own learning in the classrooms, especially in grade five. In this connection, the eighth lesson enlightens us that grade eight mandated examinations forced teachers in the organization of lessons that focused on students’ acquisition of knowledge largely done through rote learning.

The overall picture from these eight lessons is that classroom atmosphere gave students limited opportunities for the acquisition of knowledge and the development of skills, values, and attitudes required for active participatory citizenry in a democratic society. Therefore, there was an obvious discrepancy between the state’s intended curriculum and the teachers’ enacted curriculum. Hence, Chapter Five is a discussion of the eight lessons learned through the four research questions.
CHAPTER FIVE
DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

Introduction

As stated in Chapter One, critical pedagogy theory guided this study because of its three fundamental principles for the preparation of critically minded citizens. The first principle is that the theory takes students as thinking beings (Giroux, 1994; Leistyna & Woodrum, 1996). The second principle is that the theory proposes that interactive processes between teachers and their students, and also among the students themselves, are what produce the thinking beings (Leistyna & Woodrum, 1996). The last principle is that the theory assumes that the goal of the interactive processes is to instill in students the skills of argumentation and reasoning for criticizing the established order of rationality on which the society is based (Winch, 2004). Therefore, the goal in this chapter is to interpret the major findings of the study using the framework of critical pedagogy theory. The interpretation focuses at how critical pedagogy theory informs the study based on the research findings discussed in Chapter Four, and also how the study informs the theory. This interpretation forms the basis for the extrapolation of insights for the improvement of citizenship education in Malawi, as well as areas for further research.

Therefore, discussion in this chapter falls into three sections. The first section is the interpretation of the research findings. The second section is a discussion of recommendations for the improvement of classroom practices for the preparation of active citizenry in Malawi. The last section is a discussion of implications for further research.

Discussion of Research Findings

Through a recursive categorization of the research data, eight themes emerged, which jointly tell a story about classroom practices that were meant for the preparation of active participatory citizens in Malawi. Therefore, discussion in this section ties closely with the four research questions and their corresponding themes, beginning with the organization of the social studies curriculum.

The Organization of the Social Studies Curriculum

Evidence based on theme 1 under the first research question illustrates that the organization of the Malawi primary school social studies curriculum fits very well with what Barton and Levstik (2004) referred to as “humanistic education.” By humanistic education,
Barton and Levstik were referring to the curriculum that does not render students to simple-minded indoctrination based on mainstreamed curriculum content. In this connection, Banks (1997) also raised important points for consideration in the selection of content for citizenship education. He proposed that the selection of content should reflect the interests of people for whom the curriculum is intended to serve. He further observed that the purpose for the selection of such kind of curriculum content should aim at giving people the crucial knowledge for the transformation of their societies. This validates what many authors have argued that the goal of citizenship education is preparation of motivated participatory citizens in a democratic society (see arguments by Carr, 1991; Krisjajsson, 2004; Parker, 2003; Tlou & Kabwila, 2000). Taking this viewpoint, this study has found that the Malawi primary school social studies curriculum has the content that aims at humanistic education.

For example, the multidisciplinary content aims at the preparation of citizens with the knowledge that can help them participate competently in the social, economic, and political aspects of life at various societal levels. In addition, the curriculum has multicultural content based on race, ethnicity, gender, religion, and region. Social studies educators observe that multicultural content is important because it ensures that all citizens are well represented in the curriculum for instilling in them the spirit of unity and cooperation that are required for civic responsibilities in a democratic civil society (see for example, Banks, 1997; Banks, 2004b; Barton & Levstik, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 2004).

As regard to the organization of pedagogical approaches, evidence in theme 2 reveals that the Malawi primary school social studies curriculum has appropriate approaches that educators propose for the effective preparation of active participatory citizens. The analysis of curriculum documents showed that teachers are encouraged to use various techniques, lesson activities, and resources for the preparation of critically minded citizens (see for example, Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, 2001; Simbeye, 2005; Tlou, 1998). For instance, the organization of the teacher’s guides is in the form of units. The goal is to help teachers in the organization of effective classroom practices for preparing students for civic duties and responsibilities in their societies. From this perspective, the social studies curriculum has the ingredients of participatory approaches that fit very well with the proposals of critical pedagogy theory. Indeed, as many writers on participatory learning have purported, the development of students’ critical thinking and decision-making skills are fundamental principles of citizenship.
learning (see for example, Barton & Levstik, 2004; Giroux, 1994; Leistyna & Woodrum 1996; Parker, 2003; Nieto, 2005; Saxe, 1992). The development of these skills in students occurs when teachers organize lesson activities that can help students to use their multiple perspectives for a critical analysis of the taken for granted issues (Giroux, 1994).

However, analysis of the curriculum documents also showed that concepts of traditional citizenship and governance and similar concepts from other countries are not well integrated. Such concepts include types of leadership, governance, human virtues, justice, conflict resolutions, cultural aspects, and gender roles and responsibilities. Most of these concepts are treated as separate entities of traditional forms of knowledge or similar forms of knowledge that were adopted from other countries. It looks like the curriculum developers organized the topics in the curriculum based on the concept of expanding horizons from the family through to the global society by treating each societal level as an entity. As such, there are loose connections between traditional forms of citizenship and governance and similar forms that were adopted in the curriculum from other countries in the world. This loose connection of concepts does not fit well with what Griffith and Barth (2006) referred to as a spiralling curriculum. They argued that the idea of the spiralling curriculum is making connections between the knowledge students learned at one level as a basis for learning more complex forms of knowledge at each succeeding levels. Thus, although the curriculum contains elements of both traditional forms of citizenship and governance and similar concepts from other parts of the world, there is not much of hybridization for coming up with forms of citizenship and democratic governance that suits the local contexts of Malawi.

This implies that the teacher’s guides should have contained lesson activities that connected the forms of knowledge that students covered at one grade level to the other complex forms of knowledge at the succeeding grade levels. On the contrary, this was not the case. According to the curriculum developer representing the state, much was left to the teachers to make the integration. What the curriculum developer suggested assumes that the teachers are well trained to handle the cumbersome social studies citizenship curriculum. As shall be discussed in the next subsection, this state of affairs forced teachers to also treat the traditional forms of citizenship and governance as separate entities from similar forms from other parts of the world. For example, the teachers rarely used the traditional concepts that students already covered in the lower grades as a starting point for students to critically view similar concepts.
from other parts of the world. Thus, the weak integration of concepts in the curriculum does not make it fit well with critical pedagogy theory’s principle of organizing interactive processes to instill in students the skills of argumentation and reasoning.

In spite of this pitfall, document analysis showed that the Malawi social studies citizenship curriculum has the appropriate content and pedagogical practices for the preparation of active participatory citizens in a democracy. However, the strength of delivering the content to students largely depends on the teachers’ understanding of participatory classroom practices. The next subsection is a discussion that the three case study teachers held different meanings of participatory learning from that of the state. The teachers’ limited conception of the concept was also reflected in their planning documents.

**Different Meanings of Participatory Learning between the State and Teachers**

The second research question ties closely with themes 3 and 4. Evidence from theme 3 reveals that teachers had limited conceptions of participatory learning. Interviews with the teachers showed that all of them embraced participatory approaches for the preparation of competent citizens in a democracy. What the teachers held as participatory classroom practices was largely teacher-centered approaches. This shows that what the teachers held as participatory learning was different from the state’s viewpoint as stipulated in the curriculum documents. In this connection, Borger and Tillema (1993) observed that teacher trainees have knowledge about classroom practices, but that the problem is transferring the theories into actions in the classrooms. This is a correct observation, but cannot be used as a general model of explanation. In as far as the meaning of participatory learning is concerned, evidence from this study showed that the challenge that the three teachers faced was not much about transferring, but not understanding the concept fully. As shall be explained later in this section, much of the teachers’ limited understanding of participatory learning could be a reflection of their teacher preparation program.

Evidence in theme 4 also illuminates that the teachers’ limited conceptions of participatory learning affected their planning of lessons. Although the teachers admitted facing some challenges in the classrooms, they still had an illusion that their planning of lessons was participatory in approach. Such findings confirm what Calderhead (1993) observed that teachers’ lesson planning is not a linear process, but depends much on the teachers’ creativity in blending the theories they learned during their preparation program and the actual situations they
encounter in their classrooms. However, as already indicated, teacher preparation programs seem to have been the source of the teachers’ limited conceptions of participatory learning and also their weak skills in lesson planning. In this connection, teachers’ limited conceptions of participatory learning were evident in the classrooms as they implemented their planned lessons. The next subsection is a discussion of this dimension.

The Organization of Classroom Practices

Through the third research question, this study has found that the teachers’ limited understanding of participatory classroom practices caused a lot of missed opportunities for the preparation of critically minded students. Thus, this subsection has three parts. The first part is an analysis of how the teacher’ organization of classroom practices fell short of the elements of critical pedagogy theory. The second part is a discussion of the teacher preparation program as the possible source of the teachers’ limited conceptions of participatory classroom practices. The last part is a discussion that, in spite of the teacher-centered classroom practices that dominated in the three classrooms of study, the teachers devised some forms of practical knowledge that worked for them.

Impact of Teacher-centered Classroom Practices

This subsection ties closely with themes 5 and 6, which illuminates some evidence that the teachers’ limited conceptions of participatory learning created a classroom environment that gave students few opportunities for developing their skills in critical thinking, problem solving, and making informed decisions in the way critical pedagogy theory proposes. There are two lessons that emerge from these two themes. On the one hand, theme 5 has illuminated evidence that the teachers’ limited conceptions of participatory learning were manifested in their weak skills in the organization of interactive classroom practices. On the other hand, theme 6 has demonstrated that the teachers’ limited conceptions of participatory learning exposed their inabilitys for spotting the opportunities and obstacles that socio-cultural influences posed on their organization of classroom practices. Thus, the analysis of classroom practices begins with the impact of the teachers’ limited conceptions of participatory learning on their skills in the organization of interactive lesson activities.

Teachers’ Weak Skills in the Organization of Lesson Activities. Research studies indicate that students make reasoned judgments when they are engaged in interactive activities (see for example, research findings by Shanks, 1994; VanSledright, 1995; Zhao & Hoge, 2005).
However, the way the three case study teachers organized their lesson activities, especially as regard to Mr. Mwase and Mrs. Kasinja, denied students the opportunities for analysing their multiple perspectives for making informed decisions. Three pieces of evidence of what occurred in the three classrooms showed that the teachers’ limited conceptions of participatory learning affected their skills in the organization of interactive classroom practices.

The first evidence was that teacher-centered lesson activities dominated the three classrooms. As a result, the activities generally lacked the tempo of critical thinking associated with citizenship learning even when the three teachers used techniques like group discussion, role-play, and debate. Mr. Mwase’s lesson vignette shows how teachers generally organized teacher-centered classroom activities, which they thought were learner-centered. In addition, the teachers’ limited understanding of participatory learning also affected their perceptions of some of the teaching and learning techniques they used or did not use in class. For example, they seemed to have misconceptions of the purposes and procedures for using field study, resource persons, and project study. For this reason, the teachers displayed weak skills in the use of some of the lesson activities that were suggested to them through the teacher’s guides. Possibly this explains the reasons for teachers not using many of the lesson activities in the teacher’s guides.

The second evidence was that the teachers failed to make connections between classroom activities and the outside world. As many writers correctly observed, citizenship learning is about making connections between classroom lessons and the real world in which the students will be expected to display competent skills in active participatory life (see Barton & Levstik, 2004; Cogan et al., 2000; Giroux & McLaren, 1999; Remy et al., 1976). In fact, this kind of connection is what Cogan et al. (2000), and Giroux and McLaren (1999) contended that it is important for providing students with the skills in critical thinking and development of positive attitudes about the real world. This validates what Remy et al. (1976) observed that the greater the connections between the curriculum and the outside world, the higher the likelihood that the students can transfer the classroom experiences to the real life situations. However, as shall be explained in detail below, the three case study teachers did not seem to have the skills of organizing links between classroom activities and the local environments around their schools. Yet as already discussed, the curriculum documents encouraged teachers to make such connections using resource persons like elders and experts in various fields.
The third evidence, which is similar to the one above, is that teachers displayed weak skills in the use of teaching and learning resources for engaging students in lesson activities on the few occasions they used such resources. For instance, the use of the resources was teacher-centered and for shorter times, especially as regard to Mr. Mwase and Mrs. Kasinja. The teachers’ limited skills in the use of the TALULAR concept worsened the situation. Teacher’s guides have a lot of suggestions of how teachers can make use of the available social and physical environments around their schools for instilling in students the skills in critical thinking, problem solving, and making informed decisions. Yet none of the teachers took advantage of the rich physical and social environments around their schools. There is likelihood that the teachers’ limited conceptions of participatory learning affected their skills in the use of the TALULAR concept. Since the teachers’ hardly used this concept, it becomes difficult to describe the magnitude of their inability in using the concept. What became apparent in the classroom was that the teachers’ lack of skills in the use of resources thwarted students’ active participation in lesson activities.

However, it is also possible that the teachers’ perceptions of the failure of the Ministry of Education to provide them with some basic resources reduced their morale in the use of the TALULAR concept. For example, in addition to the acute shortage of the already-made resources, each of the two schools of study had one copy of the social studies syllabus for all teachers in the senior grades to share. Similarly, all teachers at each grade level had one copy of a supplementary teacher’s guide to share. Under such circumstances, one wonders how all teachers were expected to effectively plan their lessons using these few curriculum documents. The general picture was that the teachers failed to use some techniques and lesson activities because of the appalling shortage of teaching and learning resources.

Thus, inadequate teaching and learning resources in the three classrooms confirm what some authors have argued that lack of resources influence teachers’ decisions in the classrooms (see for example, Chapin & Messick, 2002; Kaambakadzanja, 2001; Luykx, 1999). In addition, the lack of resources also validates what observers in Malawi have contended that the Ministry of Education lacks commitment in the implementation of school curricula. In this regard, revelations at the Malawi National Educational Conference in 2005 showed that the Ministry drags its feet in dealing with pertinent issues that affect the quality of education in the country. For example, Kambaakadzanja (2005) grieved that the Ministry’s sluggish commitment to the
planned educational activities reduced the effective implementation of the Malawi Primary Curriculum and Assessment Reforms (PCAR). Nsapato (2005) agreed that the Ministry fails to achieve most of its plans because of lack of aggression in tackling problems affecting the quality of education in the country.

The last evidence was that of the teachers’ failure in the organization of group work activities. As already indicated in the previous chapter, students usually formed groups whenever group work activities were called for. As such, some groups were small and others were very large. Similarly, some groups were based on one gender, or mixed, but with apparent gender-skewed patterns. Such kinds of group formations affected active participation because not much interactive process took place among students in the way critical pedagogy theory proposes. Thus, what Parker (2004) proposed that active participatory classroom activities must aim at helping students to deliberate in groups, express their opinions of life issues, and make decisions together, generally failed to occur in the three classrooms of study.

These pieces of evidence indicate that the teachers’ limited conceptions of participatory learning failed to create an environment for the effective preparation of competent citizens in a democratic society in the way critical pedagogy theory proposes. For example, the teachers used more of teacher-centered approaches, which meant that the interactive processes that the theory proposes failed to take place (see arguments by Leistyna & Woodrum, 1996). Since teachers hardly used such interactive classroom practices, students were not treated as thinking beings as the theory proposes (see arguments by Giroux, 1994; Leistyna & Woodrum, 1996). Thus, the ultimate results of such classroom practices was that students failed to develop skills in critical thinking, problem-solving, and making informed decisions about the issues they learned in class or the knowledge they brought from home. And yet, the development of critical thinking skills is another fundamental principle of critical pedagogy theory (see arguments by Winch, 2004).

Thus far, discussion based on theme 5 has focused on the impact of teachers’ limited conceptions of participatory learning on their skills in the organization of effective classroom practices for the preparation of effective citizens in a democratic society. However, as revealed in theme 6, the impact of socio-cultural experiences that both teachers and students brought to the classrooms also exposed the teachers’ limited understanding of participatory learning. The next subsection delves into this discussion.
Teachers’ “Blindfolded” Conceptions of Socio-cultural Influences. Classroom observations revealed that the three case study teachers failed to realize the opportunities and obstacles that socio-cultural experiences imposed on interactive classroom practices. The preceding chapter has detailed pieces of evidence that illuminates that such experiences created both opportunities and obstacles on interactive classroom practices for the preparation of effective citizens in a democracy. However, in most cases, the socio-cultural backgrounds seemed to have blindfolded the teachers in making appropriate decisions for interactive classroom processes.

For example, this study found that on the positive side, cultural tools like songs, dances, and folklores helped the teachers in the organization of active participatory practices in their classrooms. Indeed, such cultural tools are fundamental media of core values that are essential for keeping alive the elements of traditional citizenship and governance against all forces of alien denudation processes. Both Mr. Chiwisa and Mrs. Kasinja used these cultural tools in their classrooms, although it was the former who demonstrated some individual brilliance in their use. However, what was missing in these classrooms was the critical analysis of latent messages in these oral cultural tools. Indeed, traditional songs, dances, and folktales contain clandestine messages that require a critical analysis to discern their meanings. Most likely, the teachers failed to organize such lesson activities because of their limited understanding of the meaning of participatory learning. It is also very likely that the teachers’ weak skills in the organization of interactive activities compounded the problem. However, what occurred in the classrooms of Mr. Chiwisa and Mrs. Kasinja tells us that, if used effectively, some cultural tools can help in the organization of interactive participatory activities for the preparation of competent citizens.

On the negative side, socio-cultural experiences created a classroom atmosphere that failed to treat students as thinking beings in the ways critical pedagogy theory proposes (see arguments of Giroux, 1994; Green, 1996; Leistyna & Woodrum, 1996). There were three pieces of evidence in this study that illuminated that socio-cultural experiences negatively affected the students’ active participation in the classroom. The first piece of evidence was the teachers’ failure to identify students’ cultural beliefs, perspectives, and stances that were detrimental to their reception of new ideas from other social contexts beyond their own. The second piece of evidence was the girls’ inability to take active roles in all three classrooms. The last evidence was students’ failure to ask questions to their teachers. In general, the culmination of these three
socio-cultural elements was a classroom environment that fell short of interactive classroom activities for promoting students’ skills in critical analysis of issues, problem solving, and making informed decisions.

As Nasir and Hand (2006) correctly observed, people are not passive carriers of their culture. The implication of this is that we can understand classroom behaviours with reference to the culture of the teachers and their students. For example, in Malawi people are associated with either matrilineal or patrilineal cultural systems, but the majority of them belong to the matrilineal cultural group. Both cultural systems have their own beliefs, customs, and practices, which are expressed in form of marriages, chieftaincy, property inheritance, marriages, and land owning. For instance, in matrilineal society inheritance of property and land is traced through female lines while as in patrilineal society it is through male lines. In addition, the custody of children in matrilineal cultural system is in their mothers, but in a patrilineal cultural system it is the responsibility of fathers. Although in the matrilineal society the custody of children is with their mothers, they do so through their brothers. The implication of this is that women assume subordinate positions in both cultural groups, although comparatively women in matrilineal societies have more individual power than their counterparts in the patrilineal society.

Furthermore, both cultural systems have various forms of traditional practices for preparing children for adulthood responsibilities at both family and society levels. Different ethnic groups in each of the cultural systems have their own forms of cultural practices for the preparation of children for civic responsibilities. In spite of the differences in these cultural practices, there are three common elements between the two cultural systems. The first one is that teaching is elder-centered and the role of children is to pay attention and follow what the elders tell them to do or not to do. The second one is that children are not expected to interrupt or question the wisdom of their elders as they teach them because that is tantamount to unruly behaviour. The last one is that of social distance between females and males. As such, males and females attend different traditional “schools” for the preparation of their adult responsibilities. Through such schools, boys are taught their dominant positions in families and society while girls are taught more of their subordinate positions to their male counterparts.

Teachers and students go to their schools with such kinds of customs and traditions that are engraven in their minds from an early age. The two schools that were used in this study had students who were predominantly from the matrilineal cultural system. All their teachers were
also from the same cultural system. Therefore, the socio-cultural perspective can help us understand better classroom behaviours from both the standpoints of teachers and students. Indeed, some research studies indicate that teachers’ socio-cultural histories influence their classroom behaviours (see for example, Calderhead, 1993; Grant, 2003; Hamilton 1993; Hamilton; 1996; Rios, 1996) while other studies indicate that cultural backgrounds of students influence teachers’ classroom decisions (Marshall, 1996). This study has found that both the teachers’ and students’ socio-cultural behaviours influenced classroom practices. For example, in Mr. Chiwisa’s lesson vignette, the debate activity allowed many of the students to participate in the lesson. Critical thinking was also partially promoted when students argued for or against democratic governance. However, what was missing in this lesson is what Leistyna and Woodrum (1996) contended that students must be engaged in a critical examination of the links between ideology, power, and culture. Indeed, the students’ contributions in the debate showed that they had a fair understanding of the concept of holding power in a democracy in terms of both the elected and electorate, but their overall understanding of democratic ideology was weak. Actually the goal of the lesson was to help students understand the democratic ideology. Thus, what was largely missing in this lesson was that the teacher did not make connections between ideology and power in the context of the students’ own local culture in which these two concepts operated. In this context, “culture” refers to the traditional forms of governance and citizenship. Indeed, with the re-introduction of democracy in Malawi, the implication is that some elements of democracy and citizenship that were developed in other parts of the world are operating in a traditional cultural setup.

In this regard, Mr. Chiwisa’s lesson demonstrated that students’ knowledge of the traditional forms of governance and citizenship might have influenced them to overwhelmingly vote against democratic elections. It seems the students had no prior experiences of traditional forms of democratic elections that Busia (1967) and Nohlen et al. (1999) described. If the societies from which Mr. Chiwisa’s students came from practised these traditional forms of democracy, then the students did not show that dimension in class. What was even more critical in this lesson was that Mr. Chiwisa did not even realize the opportunities of connecting between traditional ideology of power holding, which the students were familiar with, and the democratic ideologies from other parts of the world. Most likely, the teacher had weak skills in the organization of such lesson activities because of his professional background. There is also
likelihood that his socio-cultural background blindfolded his perceptions of students’ prior knowledge that was not receptive to new ideas from other parts of the world. Yet the goal of citizenship education is to provide those links for the effective preparation of active participatory citizens at various societal levels.

Another possibility of this problem is the poor connection of topics in the curriculum documents of both the traditional forms of knowledge and those adopted from other parts of the world. As already described, the curriculum does not explicitly help teachers in making such integration. It seemed like the curriculum developers over assumed the capabilities of teachers during the development phases of the curriculum. This validates what Hertzberg (1981) observed that often times curriculum developers reform curricula based on assumptions.

Thus, what generally occurred in the three classrooms of study was that the teachers, rather unknowingly, reinforced the socio-cultural elements that fetter equal active participation of all individuals regardless of their identities. This situation is similar to what Luykx’s (1999) contended that school is a citizen factory that produces and reproduces existing social inequalities. In such a factory system, different groups of people are pushed to opposite extremes that hinder the accomplishment of active participation in all spheres of human interactions (for example, see arguments by Parker, 2004). Luykx (1999) used this concept in reference to the curriculum content that the state purposely designs to promote the interests of influential groups in a society at the expense of the other groups. Banks (1997), too, raised the same concern about the organization of a citizenship curriculum around influential groups in a society.

However, the concerns that Luykx, Banks (1997), and Parker raised about the curriculum content are not applicable to the content of the current social studies citizenship curriculum in Malawi. If such problems do exist, then this study did not find any persuasive evidence to that effect. As already discussed, curriculum document analysis illuminated that the content of the curriculum is more representative than what existed in the curriculum of the pre-democratic era (see for example, Simbeye, 2005; Tlou, 1998; Tlou & Kabwila, 2000). Rather, it was the teachers’ weak organization of classroom practices that caused the replication of social inequalities in the classrooms. As a result, what Dam and Volman (2004) proposed, that the youth should be prepared to think critically and make rational decisions about the taken for granted issues, generally failed to take place in the classrooms of the three case study teachers. Winch (2004) agreed that the development of critical pedagogy is an aspect of critical rationality.
within modern society because such societies depend on critically minded citizens for their viability.

Therefore, viewing from the lens of critical pedagogy theory, socio-cultural experiences that both the teachers and students brought to class created a classroom environment that was not conducive for the preparation of active participatory citizens in a democracy. This dimension confirms what some writers have observed that socio-cultural experiences, beliefs, and assumptions influence the decisions that teachers make in their classrooms (see for example, Grant, 2003; Hamilton, 1993; Leistyna & Woodrum, 1996; Marshall, 1996; Rios, 1996). Indeed, a closer analysis of what occurred in the three case study classrooms also confirms what Nasir and Hand (2006) observed, that individuals carry with them their culture, which manifests as they interact with each other.

One limitation of critical pedagogy theory is that it does not clearly stipulate the actual contexts of classroom interactive processes that are necessary for the development of skills in critical thinking, problem solving, and making informed decisions. From that perspective, this study informs the theory that creating an interactive classroom environment that treat students as rational beings is not always a linear process as the theory assumes. There are some factors that impinge on such processes, one of which is the socio-cultural histories that both the teachers and students bring to class.

It seemed likely that the teachers might have prevailed over many of the challenges that have been discussed thus far had they been properly trained. In this regard, there is a possibility that weak teacher preparation programs were responsible for the teachers’ lack of competent skills in the organization of effective classroom practices. Therefore, the next subsection is a discussion of the teacher preparation program.

Problems Associated with Teacher Preparation Programs

Pieces of evidence from the preceding sections raise a question as to why all teachers displayed identical problems of limited understanding of participatory classroom practices and weak skills in the organization of such practices. These problems could be indicative of the teachers’ preparation programs. Possibly, the problems that Mr. Chiwisa faced are understandable because he underwent his teacher preparation during the colonial times when participatory learning was not emphasized. On the other hand, Mr. Mwase and Mrs. Kasinja received their teacher training through the Malawi integrated in-service teacher education
programme (MIITEP), which emphasized participatory classroom practices. Yet classroom practices of these two teachers were dominated with teacher-centered pedagogies, which they referred to as participatory in approach. Interestingly, during both the semi-structured and post-lesson interviews the three case study teachers expressed satisfaction with their preparation programs. For example, Mrs. Kasinja and Mr. Mwase explained that classroom practices during their teacher preparation programs were participatory in approach. Yet a post-mortem of the available literature on pre-service teacher preparation in Malawi indicates that various insurmountable obstacles thwart effective preparation of teachers in the country (Kunje, 2002; Kunje & Chimombo, 1999; Stuart, 2002). For example, Kunje’s study on the implementation of MIITEP revealed that although the program reduced the shortage of teachers in primary schools, the quality of teachers produced leaves much to be desired. As already discussed in Chapter Two, Kunje noted various challenges that negatively contributed to the ineffectiveness of the program. The challenges included under qualified tutors, overloading of tutors due to large class sizes, inadequate teaching and learning resources, and lack of certified teachers in schools to help in the tutoring of teacher-trainees.

The Multi-Site Teachers Education Research (MUSTER) project in Ghana, Lesotho, Malawi, South Africa, and Trinidad and Tobago also showed that teacher educators in Ghana and Malawi rarely used participatory approaches in their classrooms (Stuart, 2002). As Stuart stated, interviews with teacher educators at teacher preparation colleges in these two countries revealed that they “regard their students in deficient terms, as empty vessels to be filled with correct ideas and skills” (p. 7). Possibly the teacher educators viewed the pre-service teachers this way because, up until 2006, Malawi was the only MUSTER project country that recruited even junior secondary school certificate holders (equivalent of grade 10) for teacher training programs (Stuart, 1999). Therefore, there is a possibility that the illusion that the case study teachers held about participatory learning were a reflection of their perceptions of classroom practices during their preparation time.

The findings of this study validate what other research works elsewhere in the world indicate that initial training courses are important in equipping teachers with the necessary competence and skills for handling a citizenship curriculum at both local and global levels (Passe, 2006; Robbins, Francis, & Elliot, 2003; Yeager & Wilson, 1997). For example, Yeager and Wilson (1997) argued that teachers develop instructional skills much faster during the
formative years of their preparation programs. The implications of this argument are that the conceptions that the three case study teachers held about participatory classroom practices might have been shaped and developed during their initial preparation programs. In this connection, the teachers’ failure in the organization of effective interactive classroom practices confirms what many educators have argued that teacher preparation programs fail to instill in teachers transformative skills in the organization of effective classroom practices (see for example, Giroux & McLaren, 1999; Passe, 2006; Thornton, 1994).

In spite of the general problems that have been discussed thus far, the three case studies especially Mr. Chiwisa used his own practical forms of knowledge in the organization of interactive classroom practices they found workable in their classrooms. Such forms of practical knowledge deserve a detailed analysis.

**Teachers’ Classroom Practical Knowledge**

Evidence from classroom observations and interviews indicated that the teachers used some forms of practical knowledge that were not directly linked to the curriculum. Indeed, although the teachers skipped many of the suggested lesson activities in the teacher’s guides for reasons that have been discussed already, they also devised some strategies for the engagement of students in lesson activities based on some of the challenges that they faced in their classrooms. This validates what Thornton (1994) argued that teachers gain practical forms of knowledge based on what works well for them.

This research study found three pieces of evidence that demonstrated that the three case study teachers, especially Mr. Chiwisa, used their own practical knowledge for the effective engagement of students in lesson activities. The first example is that the teachers used vernacular languages for enhancing students’ participation in lesson activities. The teachers realized that going by the state’s policy of using English as a medium of class instruction reduced students’ participation. Hence, all three case study teachers devised ways of helping students to participate in some classroom activities while teaching them some English concepts.

The second evidence was that the teachers, especially Mrs. Kasinja and Mr. Chiwisa, occasionally used cultural tools such as songs, dances, folklores, and simulations to help students participate in class. The curriculum documents do not explicitly encourage teachers in the use of such tools in the classrooms. Nonetheless, the teachers made some attempts in using these tools as avenues for integrating traditional concepts of citizenship and governance with similar
concepts from other parts of the world. During interviews, Mrs. Kasinja and Mr. Chiwisa indicated that their roles as elders in their villages helped them in the adaptation of such cultural tools for use in their classrooms. Viewed from this perspective, Leistyna and Woodrum (1996) were right that teachers make classroom decisions based on their socio-cultural history. Possibly, this explains why Mr. Mwase did not use much of the cultural tools because he came from a different cultural group from that of many of his students. However, as has already been discussed, the teachers’ integration of traditional concepts of governance and citizenship with similar concepts that were adopted from other parts of the world was generally weak. In addition, the teachers did not involve students in the critical analysis of the traditional core values that are conveyed through such cultural tools.

Last, the teachers used practical knowledge gained in the classrooms as evidenced from Mr. Chiwisa’s use of the ground as a resource to help students develop skills in map drawing and also to demonstrate the concept of migration. Possibly Mr. Chiwisa gained such skills and knowledge from his long experience of trying out what worked for him in the classroom. Croft (2002) also found that the more experienced teachers in Malawi were more versatile in the use of traditional songs than the less experienced teachers. Such findings validate what Shulman (1991) and Fenstermacher (1994) argued that teachers use two forms of knowledge in their classrooms. The first form is the formal knowledge (TK/F) they gain from their teacher preparation programs, and the second form is the practical knowledge (TK/P) they gain and use in their classrooms. The TK/P comes from many sources including long classroom experiences (Croft, 2002) and the teachers’ socio-cultural experiences (see for example, Adler & Goodman, 1983; Grant, 2003; Murry, 1997). Indeed, Mr. Chiwisa’s long classroom experience and his role as a village chief seemed to have exposed him to many opportunities for devising practical strategies for the engagement of students in lesson activities than his other two counterparts.

Discussion in this section has shown that teacher preparation programs might have been the main source of the teachers’ limited conceptions of participatory classroom practices. As a result, the teachers failed to use the suggested participatory activities in the teacher’s guides, which they used for the planning of their lessons. However, state policies on language for class instruction and the grade eight examinations compounded the challenges that the teachers faced in their classrooms. Therefore, the next subsection is the analysis of the impact of state policies on classroom practices.
Impact of State Policies on Classroom Practices

The fourth research question aimed at finding out how some state policies impinged on teachers’ abilities to organize effective classroom practices. This research study has found that the state’s policies on the use of English as a medium of class instruction as well as the grade eight national examinations contributed to the teacher-centered classroom practices in the three classrooms of study. This state of affairs confirms what studies have indicated, that various classrooms constraints hinder teachers in the effective organization of interactive lesson activities (see for example, Grant, 2003; Thornton, 1994). Therefore, discussion in this subsection focuses on the impact of these state policies on classroom practices, beginning with the use of English as medium of class instruction.

Use of English as a Medium of Class Instruction

As indicated in theme 7, evidence from the three classrooms showed that the use of English as a medium of instruction curtailed students’ active participation in lesson activities. While this problem was somehow comprehensible, the magnitude of curtailment of students from class participation, even at grade eight level, was one of the surprises of this enquiry. As exemplified in Mrs. Kasinja’s lesson vignette, the weird responses that the students made when responding to oral questions were revelations that they misunderstood instructions in English. Usually, the teachers switched to vernacular whenever they noticed that their students were not getting much from English instruction. When the teachers switched to vernacular, students’ participation increased, but not considerably because of the teachers’ over dependence on teacher-centered approaches.

All three case study teachers indicated during interviews that the state’s policy on the use of English as a medium of class instruction was one of the major obstacles they faced in the organization of effective interactive classroom practices. As demonstrated in Mr. Chiwisa’s lesson vignette, students’ participation in the debate activity was relatively high because the teacher allowed the students to make their presentations in Chichewa. Chances are that the use of English might have brought the debate activity to an abrupt halt. Possibly this scenario explains why the policy on the use of English as a medium of instruction forced the three case study teachers to abandon some techniques and activities that call for maximum class participation. Of
course this does not rule out the possibility of the teachers’ weak skills, which has already been discussed.

The findings of this study confirm what other researchers in Malawi have found about the use of English or a local language as a medium of instruction in primary schools (see studies by Kaphesi, 2001; Mkandawire, 2004). For example, Mkandawire found that students’ participation reduced drastically whenever the class teacher switched from a local language to English. Kaphesi (2001) also found that the use of local languages in a grade five mathematics class greatly increased students’ participation in lesson activities. Thus, there is little, but significant research findings that suggest that the use of English as a medium of class instruction in the Malawi primary school classrooms reduces students’ active participation. In this connection, this study also found that public examinations evidently forced teachers to use techniques and lesson activities that promote rote learning.

*Influence of Public Examinations*

Theme 8 has shown that mandated examinations influenced classroom practices of all three teachers. As already discussed in the previous chapter, recitations and note copying are some of the major activities that dominated classroom practices. It looked likely that acute shortages of textbooks resulted in teacher-made notes becoming an essential tool for preparing students for examinations. This contradicts what other studies elsewhere in the world have found about the importance of textbooks for both students and teachers (see for example, Evans, 2004, Grant, 2003; Hooghoff, 1993; Myers & Savage, 2005; UNESCO, 2000). For instance, a study in the Netherlands found that both students and teachers relied heavily on textbooks for the sake of standardized testing (Hooghoff, 1993). This research estimated that students spent as much as 75% of their classroom time, and 90% of their homework time involved with textbook material (Hooghoff, 1993). The study also indicated that textbooks determined between 75% and 90% of instruction time. It is important to note that both teachers and students use textbooks for purposes of mandated examinations and not acceptance of what they read (Grant, 2000). Such studies have also found that over reliance on textbooks reduces participatory classroom practices necessary for citizenship learning.

This study found that teacher-made notes seemed to have substituted the textbooks. Teachers spent a great deal of time copying notes on the chalkboard for students to copy down in their notebooks. All the important points were underlined or written with coloured chalk, and the
teachers often asked students to recite some of these points. The teachers also gave students their notebooks to students to copy down additional detailed notes outside lesson times. Thus, notes became a tool for preparing students to examinations, especially in grade eight. In this way, participatory classroom practices were affected because teachers preferred to use pedagogies like lecturing, in association with note copying and recitations. The question that inevitably comes at this juncture is: why did the grade eight public examinations cause panicking in teachers to the extent of influencing their decisions in the use of teacher-centered pedagogies?

There are three possible explanations to this state of affairs. First, it seemed like the pyramidal structure of the Malawi education system forced teachers to use pedagogical practices that enhance memorization of facts. For example, at the time of this study, a national total of 161,567 candidates had sat for the 2007 grade eight public examinations, but only 48,604 were selected for secondary school education (Kandiero, 2007). These figures imply that only 30% of the candidates made it for secondary school education. Yet the number of candidates who actually passed the examinations was 150,670 (Kandiero, 2007). The implication of this situation is that the larger proportion of students who pass grade examinations do not proceed for secondary school education because of limited spaces at that level. This situation is compounded with the fact that the grade eight written examinations are the only gate-keeping tool for entrance into secondary school education (Chakwera, Khembo, & Sireci, 2004). The implication of this is that many of those who were not selected for secondary school education had to repeat the class until they get selected into secondary school education, or drop out of school altogether. It is from this perspective that the bottleneck between primary and secondary school education sectors was one of the causative factors for the ineffective use of participatory pedagogies in the classrooms.

Second, the grade eight examinations emphasize the knowledge domain at the expense of the skills and attitudes domains. As discussed in the previous chapter, the curriculum developer representing the state also expressed his concerns about this state of affairs. Possibly this explains why classroom observations showed that the teachers’ major concern, especially Mr. Mwase, was knowledge achievement largely done through rote learning. For instance, the teachers relied heavily upon recitation, lecture, explanation, and question and answer. Yet the intended curriculum emphasizes students’ acquisition of knowledge, and development of skills, values, and attitudes that are required for active civic life. The discrepancy between the goals of
the intended curriculum and the focus of public examinations confirms what Chakwera, et al. (2004) observed that teachers in Malawi emphasize cognitive domain at the expense of psychomotor and affective domains.

Last, there seems to be a discrepancy between the vision of the state and the perceptions of the general public as regard to the purpose of primary school education. As already indicated in Chapter Two, the state sees the end of primary school cycle as a terminal stage for many of the students (see for example, Kadzamira & Rose, 2003; Ministry of Education, Science & Technology, 2001). This is why the state views the goal of primary school education as preparation of competent citizens who can participate effectively in the social, economic, and political affairs affecting their lives (Ministry of Education, Science & Technology, 2001). However, the general public does not necessarily share the same view of the state. For example, Kadzamira and Rose (2003) noted that the perceptions of parents are that of getting their children selected for secondary school education. Chakwera et al. (2004) shared the same opinion that the general public’s interest for secondary school education has increased over the years because the grade eight certificate is no longer useful for the job market. Possibly this scenario puts the senior grade primary school teachers in a deep dilemma. In fact, evidence from this study showed that the three case study teachers shared the same views of the general public. Possibly this is inevitable since teachers are part of the general public. Consequently, the teachers considered themselves as main actors in getting as many candidates as possible into secondary school education. In this way, they largely used teacher-centered approaches as a way of drilling students for the examinations.

These research findings authenticate what other authors and researchers elsewhere in the world have argued that standardized testing forces teachers to emphasize rote learning classroom practices (see for example, Brophy & Alleman, 1991; Grant, 2003; Kornblith & Lasser, 2004; Myers & Savage, 2005; Passe, 2006; Whelan, 1997). For instance, Brophy and Alleman (1991) observed that too much emphasis on examinations makes teachers drift away from the goal of preparing active and competent citizens. They argued further that teachers reduce social studies citizenship curriculum to simple memorization of facts for the sake of examinations. It is this kind of scenario, which is defeating the purpose of the social studies citizenship curriculum in Malawi.
All in all, findings from all four research questions, especially the last two, indicate that teachers faced enormous constraints that created a very unfavourable classroom environment for the preparation of active participatory citizens. As such, the three principles of critical pedagogy theory generally failed to take place in the three classrooms, especially as regard to Mrs. Kasinja and Mr. Mwase.

**Conclusion**

The four research questions and their corresponding themes provide the platform for making closing insights of this study. The first research question was an investigation of the appropriateness of the social studies curriculum for the preparation of active participatory citizens in a democracy. This study has found that both the content and suggested pedagogical strategies of the curriculum fit very well with what many social studies educators describe as humanistic education. For instance, the multidisciplinary and multicultural content aims at developing students with the knowledge for active participatory life at various societal levels. The suggested pedagogical strategies aim at providing an interactive classroom environment that treats students as thinking beings. However, the weak integration of traditional concepts of governance and citizenship with similar concepts that were adopted from other parts of the world does not help the teachers in the organization of lessons that fit the conceptual framework of the spiralling curriculum. It looks like the curriculum developers over assumed that teachers could do the integration on their own. On the contrary, this study has found that the teachers covered each topic as an entity following the same sequence of topics in the curriculum documents. Such loose connections between the traditional forms of citizenship and governance with similar concepts from other parts of the world makes it hard for the realization of the goal of hybridizing of the concepts for coming up with forms of citizenship and governance that suits the local contexts of Malawi.

The second question was about the teachers’ conceptions of participatory learning and how that affected their planning of lessons. This study has found that the three case study teachers, especially Mrs. Kasinja and Mr. Mwase, had an illusion of what participatory classroom practices are. To them the mere involvement of students in classroom activities was what they referred to as participatory learning. They also did not understand the meanings of critical thinking, problem solving, and making informed decisions, and yet these are the pinnacles of participatory learning. Their limited understanding of the concept of participatory
learning influenced their decisions in the planning of lessons, which were largely teacher-centered. One major feature in the teaching plans was that the teachers planned their lessons from their perspective roles and not from the expected roles of the students.

The third question aimed at exploring how the teachers implemented their planned lessons in classrooms. This study has found that classroom practices were teacher-centered just like the teaching plans had indicated. The teachers’ manifestations of their illusions were in two ways. The first one was that their limited conceptions of participatory learning affected their skills in the use of lesson activities that were suggested in the teacher’s guides. Practically, what occurred in the classrooms was that teachers monopolized lesson activities with students reduced to listening, watching, reciting, answering oral questions, and copying down teacher-made notes. Paradoxically, the teachers held that such classroom practices were participatory in approach. Another manifestation of the teachers’ limited understanding of participatory learning was that the teachers hardly realized the opportunities and obstacles of students’ socio-cultural experiences on classroom practices. For instance, teachers found themselves trapped in cultural beliefs as expressed in their preference to boys than girls in taking active roles in the classrooms. There was no persuasive evidence that this was a deliberate move. On the contrary, the socio-cultural experiences that were engraved in the teachers’ minds seemed to have blindfolded their perceptions of equal treatment between girls and boys. In fact, all three case study teachers occasionally encouraged girls’ participation whenever they awakened from their cultural slumber of preference to boys.

Therefore, pieces of evidence from the second and third research questions showed that teacher preparation programs are possible sources for the teachers’ limited understandings of participatory learning, and also their weak skills in the organization of interactive classroom practices. As already indicated, there is some compelling evidence from literature that suggests that teacher preparation programs in Malawi leave much to be desired (see for example, Hauya, 1993; Kunje & Chimombo, 1999; Stuart, 2002).

The fourth research question sought to investigate how state policies affected the teachers’ selection and use of various techniques and lesson activities for the preparation of active participatory citizens. As regard to language policy for class instruction, this study found that the use of English as a medium of class instruction and pressure from grade eight mandated examinations contributed to the teachers’ organization of largely teacher-centered classroom
practices. This study found that teachers made a lot of code switching between English and vernacular languages as one way of encouraging students’ participation in the classroom. Whenever the teachers used English for longer periods, students were largely reduced to spectators of classroom events. Similarly, the grade eight examinations forced teachers to use more of teacher-centered classroom approaches that also reduced students’ participation in lesson activities. This shows that some of the state policies had negative repercussions on classroom practices aimed at the preparation of active participatory citizens in a democracy.

Based on the findings of this study, the fundamental principles of critical pedagogy theory, as many educators and authors have purported, generally failed to take off the ground in all three classrooms of the case study teachers. However, as has been discussed in the preceding subsections, critical pedagogy theory does not stipulate clearly the context of interactive processes that produce critically minded citizens. Hence, this study informs the theory that there are some challenges that can cripple the organization of interactive classroom practices for the preparation of effective citizens in a democracy.

All in all, evidence from the four research questions has illuminated that there are enormous constraints that the three case study teachers faced in the implementation of the social studies citizenship curriculum. Such constraints caused a discrepancy between the state’s intended curriculum and the teachers’ enacted curriculum. This scenario confirms what many authors have argued that several factors cause the discrepancy between the state’s intended curriculum and the teachers’ enacted curriculum (see for example, Dilworth, 2004; Ross, 1991a; Ross, 1991b; Thornton, 1994). If what occurred in these classrooms is a general picture of what is happening in other social studies classrooms in primary schools in Malawi, then citizenship preparation remains more of a lip service as Parker (2003) correctly asserted. From this perspective of an apparent discrepancy, the next section is a discussion of recommendations for the improvement of classroom practices for the preparation of active participatory citizens in the Malawi democratic society.

Recommendations of the Study

This research has found that there were systemic problems that jointly contributed to the teachers’ failure in the planning and implementation of social studies curriculum for the preparation of active participatory citizens. The challenges were not much to do with the teachers as individuals, but largely because of the circumstances they were in. Various stakeholders that
included the Ministry of Education, Teacher Training Colleges (TTCs), curriculum developers, and the Malawi National Examinations Board (MANEB) were jointly responsible for such challenges. Hence, discussion in this section focuses on recommendations to these stakeholders about what could be done for the improvement of classroom practices for preparing active participatory citizens.

**Recommendations to the Ministry of Education**

This research study has found that although the state, through the Ministry of Education, has high expectations of active participatory citizens, it fails to provide an enabling classroom environment for the achievements of those expectations. Therefore, the Ministry needs to approach the many challenges that the teachers face in the implementation of the social studies citizenship curriculum with a lot of seriousness. There are five areas that the Ministry needs to consider for the improvement of effective classroom practices. Provision of adequate resources for the teachers is one of such areas.

**Provision of Adequate Teaching and Learning Resources**

This study revealed that teachers failed to plan lessons effectively because of serious shortages of curriculum documents. For example, after launching the current social studies citizenship curriculum in 2005, each of the two schools that were used in this study got one syllabus and a few copies of supplementary teacher’s guides and pupils’ books. According to the curriculum developer representing the state, the situation was the same in all schools in the country. This situation forced the three case study teachers to depend heavily on the available 1994 teacher’s guides and pupils’ books. Therefore, the Ministry needs to find ways of providing resources for teachers as well as for students. Unless the teachers begin to see the Ministry’s commitment to the teachers’ profession support, their dedication to the organization of effective classroom practices will remain low even if they have the skills. However, orientation of teachers to new curriculum is an equally important issue the Ministry needs to consider.

**Orientation of Teachers to the Curriculum**

The three case study teachers never had a chance of attending any orientation activities for the effective implementation of the new curriculum. In fact, the curriculum developer representing the state explained that few teachers in the country were oriented for only three days owing to inadequate financial resources. The original plan was to orient teachers for two weeks, which the curriculum developer hinted that it was not enough. If two weeks were not enough, it
follows that three days was just a lip service. Therefore, the Ministry needs to take seriously the
provision of necessary conditions for the achievement of its desire in the preparation of an active
participatory citizenry. The fourth recommendation to the Ministry is about policy issues.

Review of Some Policies

The Ministry needs to review some of the policies that hamper active participatory
classroom practices. The findings of this study show that two policy mandates hampered active
participatory pedagogies. One of such policies is the use of English as the medium for class
instruction. It was clear in the three classrooms of study that students struggled with two issues:
to grasp the content of social studies and to understand the English language, which conveyed
that content to them. The Ministry’s expectation is that teachers from grade five and onwards use
English, but in reality teachers do a lot of code switching. However, as will be discussed in the
last section of this chapter, this issue requires rigorous research for coming up with a language
policy for class instruction.

Another policy issue the Ministry of Education needs to review relates to the bottleneck
between primary school and secondary school education. It looks like, while the state views the
primary school education as terminal to most of its graduates, the general public views the sector
as a stage to secondary school education. This is where the bottleneck seems to be causing
unnecessary panicking in teachers, students, and parents. However, teachers bear the burden as
regard to ensuring that their students get selected for secondary school education. Therefore, the
Ministry needs to come up with better policies that give students adequate spaces in secondary
schools. It may take time for every primary school student to have a place in secondary school,
but terminating the majority of students after completing the eight-year primary school cycle
seems to be hopelessly out of date.

Organization of Seminars

The Ministry also needs to find ways of exploiting the practical knowledge some talented
teachers develop in their classrooms for the benefit of other teachers who may not have the same
skills and talents. There is adequate research studies that inform us that teachers use two forms of
knowledge: the formal knowledge they gain from teacher preparation programs and the practical
knowledge they gain in their classrooms (see for example, Fenstermacher, 1994; Shulman; 1991;
Zembylas, 2007). In this study, Mr. Chiwisa showed some flashes of individual brilliance in the
use of practical knowledge in his classroom. There may be more of such creative teachers in the
field. Such practical knowledge can help in coming up with effective participatory practices that are appropriate in the context of Malawi, instead of depending on models that were developed in the context of classrooms from other parts of the world.

One way of tapping and exploiting teachers’ practical knowledge could be organizing seminars for teachers at various levels of the existing education structure. The levels are zones, districts, divisions, and the nation. At these levels, the Ministry could organize various kinds of forums for teachers to share the forms of practical knowledge that work well in their classrooms. The format and objectives of the forums at each of these levels may vary, but the overall goal should be sharing practical classroom innovations for the improvement of interactive learning. For instance, the two schools that were used in this study are about two miles apart. Yet Mr. Chiwisa’s forms of practical knowledge have not been tapped and exploited, even at school level. In fact, the sharing of such knowledge at zonal level could be cost effective because a zone is geographically small, consisting of between 10 and 15 schools. Such seminars can take advantage of the teachers’ frequent meetings at designated school centers of their zones. The zonal meetings could, in turn, help the practical knowledge to reach the district, division, and national levels. In that way, the sharing of classroom practical knowledge can help in the reduction of frustrations teachers face in dealing with the many challenges they face in their classrooms.

_Improvement of Conditions in the Teacher Training Colleges_

The Ministry needs to include teacher training colleges whenever there are major reforms affecting the primary school sector. Stuart (2000) observed that teacher educators and teacher training colleges are usually neglected during primary school curricula reforms. Possibly this explains why after spending a lot of time and resources in coming up with the social studies citizenship curriculum, teachers fail to implement it effectively. The teachers, especially Mrs. Kasinja and Mr. Mwase, displayed symptoms of weak skills in the effective implementation of the curriculum. In fact, Mchazime (2005) cautioned that it’s not enough to spend a lot of resources on curricula reforms and then neglect their implementation. Therefore, the Ministry needs to take into account the improvement of educational qualifications of teacher educators and the conditions at teacher training colleges as a starting point for the effective preparation of teachers.
However, while the Ministry of Education is responsible for the bulk of the challenges that thwart the effective implementation of active participatory classroom practices, teacher preparation programs share some of those responsibilities.

**Recommendations to Teacher Training Colleges**

Findings from this study have revealed that the three case study teachers did not fully understand the meanings of active participatory learning and its associated concepts of critical thinking, problem solving, and making informed decisions. They also demonstrated mediocre skills in professional aspects like lesson planning, selection of various teaching and learning classroom activities, organization of group work, and use of TALULAR concept. In general, the teachers failed to use the suggested lesson activities in the teacher’s guides. From this perspective, teacher preparation programs need to consider three issues. One of such issues is the use of the actual social studies curriculum for helping pre-service teachers in the familiarization of the documents they will use in the planning of their lessons in schools.

**Use of Curriculum Documents in College Classrooms**

The three case study teachers generally failed to plan their lessons based on the lesson activities that were suggested to them in the curriculum documents. For example, they did not understand the concept of the spiralling curriculum for the preparation of effective citizens. As a result, they taught each topic as an entity. It was largely because of this problem that the teachers failed to make connections between traditional concepts of citizenship and governance with similar concepts from other parts of the world. Indeed, the multidisciplinary field of the social studies citizenship curriculum has content and classroom pedagogical approaches that make it a cumbersome field. Consequently, preparation of social studies teachers requires a very rigorous program to produce the kind of teachers that can effectively enact the curriculum in the intended way.

Therefore, teacher educators should use the actual curriculum documents in the training of pre-service teachers on the key ingredients of the curriculum like the goal of the social studies field, arrangement and purpose of the spiralling structure, and use of participatory lesson activities. On the spiralling curriculum, teacher educators need to emphasize the teaching of concepts from familiar to unfamiliar and from a simple world to a more complex world. It will be from this conceptual framework of the spiralling curriculum that teacher educators should instill in pre-service teachers the purposes of using traditional forms knowledge for providing an
interactive classroom atmosphere for learning similar forms of knowledge from other parts of the world. The pre-service teachers themselves can be a source of traditional forms of knowledge for discussion in the college classrooms. The goal must be to help the pre-service teachers in the organization of classroom practices that use traditional forms of citizenship and governance for understanding similar forms that are adopted in Malawi from other parts of the world. In addition, preparation of pre-service teachers using the curriculum documents should take a practical approach. Therefore, another recommendation to the TTCs is the engagement of pre-service teachers in practical experiences for the development of skills in classroom practices.

Organization of Practical Activities

Teacher educators need to give pre-service teachers adequate time for practical experiences that can help the trainees in gaining the much needed skills for the organization of effective classroom experiences. For instance, the teacher educators should use the actual curriculum that the teachers will use in schools to gain practical skills in the planning and presentation of mini-lessons based on the documents. Taking an example of the integration between traditional concepts of governance and citizenship and similar concepts adopted from other parts of the world, teacher educators should involve the pre-service teachers in the planning of interactive classroom practices using these concepts. After planning their lessons, the pre-service teachers should be engaged in micro-teaching to demonstrate their skills in the organization of classroom practices. In this way, the pre-service teachers can develop initial skills of organizing interactive classroom practices that blend traditional forms of knowledge with those adopted from other parts of the world. Unless the teacher preparation classrooms begin the integration at college classroom level, pre-service teachers may not see the relevance and value of doing the same in their primary school classrooms.

In addition, teacher educators should give pre-service teachers adequate practice in the use of teaching and learning techniques, lesson activities, and resources. All three case study teachers admitted that pre-service preparation programs did not give them adequate hands-on experiences on many of these aspects of classroom practice. Chances are that the teachers’ negative attitude towards some of the learner-centered techniques emanated from their preparation programs. One cost effective model could be teacher educators giving pre-service teachers a take-home project to try out some techniques and strategies in their home schools during college semester breaks. This could give the pre-service teachers a chance to practice
what they learn in college. Their school experiences could be shared in class when they come back to college.

In this connection, the teacher educators should create genuine participatory practices in their college classrooms from which the pre-service teachers can emulate once they begin their teaching profession. The available literature in Malawi suggests that teaching in the TTCs is teacher-centered (Stuart, 2002). Possibly this explains why the three case study teachers had an illusion of participatory learning.

**Preparation of Teachers Based on Realities on the Ground**

Teacher educators should take into consideration the actual challenges teachers face in the field. Such challenges include large classes, lack of teaching-learning resources, and socio-cultural influences. These challenges are well known in Malawi, and it does not make sense in preparing teachers based on assumptions. Theories and models of teaching and learning that were developed in the context of the developed countries may not be wholly applicable to the preparation of teachers in the context of Malawi. Therefore, teacher educators in Malawi need to modify these teaching and learning techniques to suit the real conditions in the schools.

**Recommendation to Curriculum Developers**

This study has found that although the social studies curriculum is well organized in terms of content and pedagogical strategies, it is not giving adequate help to teachers in the organization of effective classroom practices. Therefore, this study makes two recommendations to curriculum reformers, beginning with making citizenship curriculum appropriate in terms of its practicability to the local context.

**Practical Curriculum for Local Contexts**

As already discussed, developing countries like Malawi should not entirely depend on the theories and models of teaching and learning that were developed in other countries, especially the West, for the development of their curricula. Such theories and models are undoubtedly good, but may not be entirely applicable to all social settings in the world. This is where forms of practical knowledge that teachers gain and use in the classrooms could help in the adaptation of pedagogical approaches from the other countries to suit the local contexts. There may be some teachers in the field who display excellent adaptation skills of the teaching and learning techniques that were adopted from other countries to suit the local contexts. In this regard, reformers need to include teachers who display such excellent interactive skills in their
classrooms during the developing phases of the curriculum. Teachers like Mr. Chiwisa could give insights to the curriculum developers of better lesson activities for incorporation in the teacher’s guides. If left untapped, some excellent practical knowledge that teachers gain and use in their classrooms will continue to remain with individuals.

In this connection, it is important to note that in recent years Malawi has included some few classroom teachers during the development phases of the curricula. However, an important element that the social studies curriculum organizers need to consider critically is the inclusion of teachers who can offer better insights about forms of classroom practical knowledge. In this regard, curriculum reformers need to work hand in hand with Primary Education Advisors (PEAs) in the identification of teachers who display excellent skills in classroom practical knowledge. Such teachers could provide practical insights for developing a realistic citizenship curriculum, instead of bloating the curriculum development team with “specialists,” some of whom have never had any experience of primary school teaching. In this regard, the curriculum developers need to make a tight integration of concepts between traditional forms of knowledge and similar forms of knowledge that were adopted from other countries.

Hybridization of Concepts in the Curriculum

Another issue the curriculum reformers need to consider critically is the re-organization of the content of the spiralling curriculum to help teachers make connections of concepts at all societal levels. The current curriculum contains both traditional epistemologies and similar epistemologies that were adopted from other countries in the world, especially the West. Such common concepts include forms of governance, citizenship, human rights, duties and responsibilities, and gender. Suffice it to say that the traditional forms of citizenship and their importance are not clearly defined in the curriculum. Nonetheless, the hybridization of such concepts is very important for coming up with forms of democratic values and citizenship that suit the local contexts of Malawi. Based on what the curriculum developer representing the state had explained during interviews, much was left to the teachers to make such connections. However, the three case study teachers failed to make the connections partly because they did not have the skills, and partly because the curriculum did not help much for such kind of connections.

Therefore, the reformers need to make the connections to help teachers in the organization of interactive classroom practices. Lesson activities in the teacher’s guides are the
best avenues for helping teachers to make such integrations. Of course some of the activities in the teacher’s guides make some connections, but this is not a general feature. Through such activities, reformers must refer teachers to similar concepts that were already covered in the preceding grades. Alternatively, suggested activities in the teacher’s guides must help teachers in how they could bring into their lessons the traditional forms of knowledge that are prevalent in the schools’ social settings. The ultimate goal should be to help teachers in the organization of lesson activities that can facilitate a classroom environment that uses traditional forms of knowledge for understanding similar forms of knowledge that are adopted from other countries in the world. For instance, in a traditional social setting people have indigenous ways in dealing with issues like preparation for civic responsibilities, unity and cooperation, governance, social inequalities, conflict and conflict resolutions, and taking care of the environment. There are topics in the current curriculum that represent these elements such as a topic on socio-cultural traditions and practices. Initiation rites are covered through such topics. The problem is the way they are covered in the curriculum because each topic is treated as an entity. For example, there are no activities in the teacher’s guides that show the importance of initiation rites in as far as traditional forms of citizenships are concerned.

Therefore, the curriculum reformers need to come up with a curriculum that can help teachers in the organization of lessons that takes students to examine critically the advantages and disadvantages of their own forms of traditional citizenship and governance. For example, a curriculum must contain lesson activities that can help students understand the role of traditional practices such as initiation rites in the preparation of competent citizens at family and local community levels. The activities must also help students understand why the traditional forms of citizenship do not teach beyond the local community levels, and yet modern democratic societies require civic responsibilities beyond their own local societies. Furthermore, the suggested activities in the teacher’s guides must help students examine the kind of teachings in their own cultural systems. The ultimate goal of such activities should be to help students understand why some elements of their own cultural citizenship and governance are good while others are outdated. It is from this perspective that students can appreciate why it is important to adopt elements of citizenship and governance that have worked well elsewhere in the world to suit their local contexts of Malawi. Such hybridization is what is lacking in the current social studies citizenship curriculum. Thus, there is a need for social studies curriculum reforms that must
create a well-knit citizenship curriculum between traditional forms of epistemologies and similar forms of epistemologies that are adopted from other countries to suit the contexts of Malawi.

However, even with a well-organized curriculum, teachers can still fail in the organization of effective classroom practices for the preparation of active participatory citizens with the current format of mandated examinations. Therefore, the last recommendation in this section goes to the Malawi National Examinations Board (MANEB).

Recommendations to the Malawi National Examinations Board

The Malawi National Examinations Board (MANEB) is responsible for the organization of all public examinations. The organization needs to find better ways of assessing students at grade eight level. This study has shown that the three case study teachers relied heavily on teacher-centered approaches partly because the current format of the grade eight examinations largely tests knowledge. Therefore, in as long as MANEB continues this kind of examination format, teachers will continue to drill their students with the knowledge domain for the sake of preparing them for examinations. Written examinations may not be the best tools for assessing students’ skills and attitudes. Actually, the curriculum developer representing the state agreed during an interview that these domains are difficult to assess in written examinations. For this reason, MANEB should find alternatives for testing these two domains. For example, school based group projects on various topics of citizenship could offer best ways of assessing students’ skills and attitudes. Topics for such projects must take into account the seven strands of social studies that have already been discussed in Chapter Four. Schools can organize their grade eight students to carry out such various projects based on the relevance and practicability of the projects to the schools’ social and physical settings. MANEB could come up with better rubrics for assessing the projects.

Such projects can have multiple advantages. For example, projects have the potential of instilling in students the spirit of working together regardless of their identities that are expressed in form of ethnicity, religion, and gender. In addition, the projects can help students with hands-on experiences in dealing with real issues that affect their own local areas. In this way, students can develop skills and positive attitudes that include critical thinking, problem solving, decision-making, public speaking, tolerance to each other, and conflict resolution. Furthermore, the students can have a rare opportunity of interacting with elders and experts in various social, economic, and political settings. Communities around the schools can also have an appreciation
of the relevance of primary school education that meets their needs and aspirations. Such projects can also help remove pressure on both teachers and students because written examinations would not be the only tool for assessing students as is the current status. In fact, such projects can give students the chance of exposing their multiple intelligences, which the current format of written examinations fails to address.

In this connection, MANEB must take advantage of the primary school curriculum and assessment reforms (PCAR) that requires that forty percent of the final students’ grade must be based on summative assessment. If the proposed summative assessment will also depend on written assignments, then it will have the same effects of promoting the knowledge domain. This is where MANEB needs to come up with better modes of summative assessments. As regard to the social studies citizenship curriculum, activities involving project studies and field studies offer best opportunities as already discussed in the preceding paragraphs.

Discussion in this section has focussed on recommendations to major stakeholders for the improvement of interactive classroom practices for the preparation of active participatory citizens in a democracy based on pieces of evidence from this study. However, there is a need for more rigorous research studies for guiding policy makers on the appropriate classroom practices for the preparation of competent citizens. The last section delves in those areas.

Implications for Further Research

This study has found multiple factors that hamper teachers in the organization of participatory classroom practices for the preparation of active citizens in Malawi. From this broad spectrum, there is a need for research studies that focus on particular issues for an in-depth understanding of how each factor affects the preparation of active participatory citizens. In this regard, this study proposes four areas that are worth this kind of investigation.

First, this study has found that socio-cultural backgrounds of both teachers and students have both positive and negative repercussions on interactive classroom learning. Therefore, a study that focuses on socio-cultural background as the lens for a critical inquiry of what occurs in classrooms is worth considering. Such a study is important because research on teachers’ cognition have failed to vigorously explore how the teachers gain knowledge from their socio-cultural histories and also how those forms of knowledge influence their decisions in the classrooms (Rios, 1996). This kind of inquiry can take various dimensions. For example, one dimension would be selecting schools of study from different social settings. This study used
schools in a rural setting. This explains why the two schools had students who were predominantly Yao, the ethnic group in the social setting of the two schools. Therefore, there is a need to carry out a similar study in a town setting where students are ethnically more heterogeneous to find out how their socio-cultural underpinnings impact active participatory practices in the classrooms. Another dimension would be to conduct a similar study in an area, which is ethnically different from that of the Yao. Such a study is important because there are some cultural differences among different ethnic groups in Malawi. In this way, studies from multiple social perspectives can help in the understanding of how various socio-cultural experiences that enter classrooms influence interactive classroom practices.

Second, there is need for a critical inquiry that focuses on the influence of various state policies in Malawi on classroom practices for the preparation of active participatory citizens in a democracy. This study has found that grade eight national examinations and the use of English as a medium of class instruction influenced the teachers’ organization of participatory practices. However, a study that focuses on each of these issues will be worth doing for guiding policy makers on the improvement of participatory classroom practices. There are some studies that have investigated the impact of the use of English and local languages as media for class instruction. However, there is not much inquiry about the effects of standardized testing. Much of what is available about the influence of standardized testing on classroom practices are not research based.

Third, there is a need to investigate critically the preparation of teachers in the teacher training colleges. The available literature in Malawi attributes teachers’ failure in handling the school curricula to the challenges they face in the classrooms like large class size, and lack of teaching and learning resources (Emas, 2005; Nsapato; Kunje & Chimombo, 1999). However, this study has found that in addition to these challenges, teachers also displayed weak skills in handling active participatory practices. For example, classroom practices largely remained teacher-centered even on the occasions that the teachers used resources. They also did not show much skill in using many of the lesson activities that were suggested in the teacher’s guides, even those that did not require the use of already-made materials. The implication of this is that even with the amelioration of the constraints that teachers face in the classroom, not much can change in the way they implement the intended curriculum. Therefore, there is a need to make such a critical investigation of how the teachers are prepared instead of rushing to judgement that
classroom constraints are the only sources of challenges that teachers face in the implementation of the intended social studies curriculum.

Last, there is a need for an investigation of classroom practices from the perspectives of students. Much research studies on classroom practices focus on the teachers and yet, participatory learning is much about students. Thus, there is a need to make an investigation about the students’ views about participatory learning. For example, this study has found that socio-cultural experiences influenced students’ passivity in the classrooms, especially among girls. This conclusion is from the perspective of the researcher’s observations and interviews with teachers. Do students have the same perceptions? In terms of the social studies curriculum, not much is known in Malawi about students’ liking of the subject as well as their conceptions of citizenship and democracy. Thus, most of what we know about students is learned from other sources. This is why a study that focuses on students can also provide better insights for the improvement of classroom practices that aim at the preparation active participatory citizens.
REFERENCES


Domasi: Malawi Institute of Education.


## Appendix A

**Request for Expedited Review**

**Principal Investigator [Faculty or Faculty Advisor] (all fields required)**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>PID: 904505335</th>
<th>What is a PID (scroll over)</th>
<th>Email: <a href="mailto:glasson@vt.edu">glasson@vt.edu</a></th>
<th>Signature of Principal Investigator</th>
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<td>George Glasson</td>
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**Department: ECDI: Teaching and Learning**

**Co-Investigator(s) [Faculty or Student] (all fields required for each Co-Investigator)**

- **Co-Investigator #1**
  
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>PID: 904-07-5865</th>
<th>Organization Name: Virginia Tech, Teaching and Learning</th>
<th>Email: <a href="mailto:nmhango@vt.edu">nmhango@vt.edu</a></th>
<th>Signature of Co-Investigator #1</th>
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<tr>
<td>Ndalapa Mhango</td>
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<td>05/09/07</td>
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- **Co-Investigator #2**
  
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**Departmental Reviewer: (not required for all departments)**

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**Section 1: Contact Information**

**HST = Human Subjects Training**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>HST completed through: VT in-class training</th>
<th>Mail Code: 0313</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Date:**

5/10/07
Section 2: General Information

1. Project Title: How do primary school social studies teachers in Malawi plan and implement lessons that reflect preparation of active citizens?
   "Enter title as you would like it to appear on the official IRB approval letter"

2. Number of Human Subjects: up to 4 teacher participants and up to 3 curriculum developer participants.

3. Do any of the investigators on this project have a reportable conflict of interest? Yes ☐   No ☒ If yes, explain:

☐ All investigators of this project are qualified through completion of human subject protections education. Visit our website at http://www.irb.vt.edu/pages/training.html to view training opportunities accepted by the VT IRB. (Note: Do not submit your IRB application until all investigators are qualified)

☐ All investigators listed on this project, along with the departmental reviewer (if applicable), have reviewed this IRB application and all requested revisions from these parties have been implemented into this submission. (Note: Do not submit your application until all parties have reviewed and signed off on the final draft of the materials)

Section 3: Source of Funding:

☐ Departmental Research [If Dept. Research, skip to Section 4]

☐ Sponsored Research, including VARIOUS funds & OSP/VT Foundation funds [If Sponsored Research, respond to letters A-D below]
   A. Name of Sponsor [If NIH, specify department]:
   B. Title of study as listed on OSP application
   C. OSP # [enter 8 digit number, no dashes/spaces]: OR
   * Proposal # [enter 8 digit number, no dashes/spaces]: OR
   * Grant # [enter 8 digit number, no dashes/spaces]: OR
   * OSP # pending (check box if pending): ☐
   D. Is this project receiving federal funds (e.g., DHHS, DOD, etc.)? select one

Section 4: Expedited Criteria:

Note: To qualify for Expedited Approval, the research activities must meet all of the following criteria (a-c):
(a) Be of minimal risk to the subjects; AND
(b) Must not involve pregnant women, prisoners or mentally impaired persons; AND
(c) Involve only procedures listed in one or more of the following categories:

☐ 1. Clinical studies of (a) drugs for which an investigational new drug application is not required (Note: research on marketed drugs that significantly increases the risks or decreases the acceptability of the risks associated with the use of the product is not eligible for expedited review), or (b) medical devices for which an investigational device exemption application is not required; or the medical device is cleared/approved for marketing and the medical device is being used in accordance with its cleared/approved labeling.

☐ 2. Collection of blood samples by finger stick, heel stick, ear stick, or venipuncture as follows: (a) from healthy, nonpregnant adults who weigh at least 110 pounds (Note: amounts drawn may not exceed 550 ml in an 8 week period and collection may not occur more frequently than two times per week) or (b) from other adults and children, considering the age, weight, and health of the subjects, the collection procedure, the amount of blood to be collected, and the frequency with which it will be collected (Note: amount drawn may not exceed the lesser of 30 ml or 3 ml per kg in an eight week period and collection may not occur more frequently than two times per week).

☐ 3. Prospective collection of biological specimens for research purposes by noninvasive means. Examples: hair and nail clippings, deciduous teeth, permanent teeth, excreta and external secretions, uncannulated saliva, placenta, amniotic fluid, dental plaque, mucosal and skin cells and spumon [Visit our website at http://www.irb.vt.edu/pages/newstudy.html#ExpForm for further information]

☐ 4. Collection of data through noninvasive procedures routinely employed in clinical practice, excluding procedures involving x-rays or microwaves [Visit our website at http://www.irb.vt.edu/pages/newstudy.html#ExpForm for further information]

☐ 5. Research involving materials (data, documents, records or specimens) that have been collected or will be collected solely for non-research purposes (such as medical treatment or diagnosis).

☐ 6. Collection of data from voice, video, digital, or image recordings made for research purposes.

Revised: 22 February 2006
Appendix B
IRB Approval Certificate

DATE: May 30, 2007

MEMORANDUM

TO: George E. Glasson
    Ndalapa Mhango

FROM: David M. Moore

SUBJECT: IRB Expedited Approval: "How Do Primary School Social Studies Teachers in Malawi Plan and Implement Lessons that Reflect Preparation of Active Citizens?". IRB # 07-261

This memo is regarding the above-mentioned protocol. The proposed research is eligible for expedited review according to the specifications authorized by 45 CFR 46.110 and 21 CFR 56.110. As Chair of the Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board, I have granted approval to the study for a period of 12 months, effective May 10, 2007.

As an investigator of human subjects, your responsibilities include the following:

1. Report promptly proposed changes in previously approved human subject research activities to the IRB, including changes to your study forms, procedures and investigators, regardless of how minor. The proposed changes must not be initiated without IRB review and approval, except where necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subjects.

2. Report promptly to the IRB any injuries or other unanticipated or adverse events involving risks or harms to human research subjects or others.

3. Report promptly to the IRB of the study's closing (i.e., data collecting and data analysis complete at Virginia Tech). If the study is to continue past the expiration date (listed above), investigators must submit a request for continuing review prior to the continuing review due date (listed above). It is the researcher's responsibility to obtain re-approval from the IRB before the study's expiration date.

4. If re-approval is not obtained (unless the study has been reported to the IRB as closed) prior to the expiration date, all activities involving human subjects and data analysis must cease immediately, except where necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subjects.

Important:
If you are conducting federally funded non-exempt research, this approval letter must state that the IRB has compared the OSP grant application and IRB application and found the documents to be consistent. Otherwise, this approval letter is invalid for OSP to release funds. Visit our website at http://www.irb.vt.edu/pages/newstudy.htm#OSP for further information.
Appendix C
Request for the Study to the Ministry of Education

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
220 War Memorial Hall
Blacksburg
Virginia 24061
U.S.A.
10th May 2007

The Division Education Manager
South East Education Division
Zomba
Malawi
cc: District Education Manager (Zomba Rural and Zomba Urban)

Dear Sir,

REQUEST FOR RESEARCH STUDY IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

I am a PhD student in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at the above named university, but formerly a social studies teacher educator at Domasi College. I have just completed my two-year course work, and I will be returning home to collect data for my thesis. I am interested in studying how classroom practices in social studies classrooms contribute to the preparation for active citizenry, according to the first national goal of education in Malawi.

I will be arriving home on 17th May and intend to begin data collection from the following week up to the end of the school term. I have not yet finally decided the setting for the study, but I am likely to study one school in urban district and another in the rural district.

Thus, the purpose for writing this letter is to request for your permission to use schools in your division in my research study. Data collection will involve interviews with teachers and curriculum developers, as well as classroom observations. Students will not be involved directly in this study. I intend to come and meet you in person should there be some areas requiring further clarification.
All the information from this study will be strictly confidential. I will not use the actual names of participants or names of their schools in the collection and analysis of the data, and final write-up of the study. The goal is not disclosure of confidential information or other information of a personal nature that is potentially sensitive to the participants. Instead, the study aims at studying classroom practices in the ways that would help in reformation of the school citizenship curricula.

I will be very grateful if you will grant me the permission and I will be looking forward to hearing from you.

Yours faithfully,

Ndalapa Mhango
Appendix D
Permission for the Study from the Ministry of Education

Telephone: (265) 01 525 55
Fax: (265) 01 526 432
Ref.No. SEED/PER/GEN/1 (10)

NDALAPA MHANGO,
VIRGINIA TECH UNIVERSITY,
C/O DOMASI COLLEGE,
P.O. BOX 49,
Zomba.

Dear Sir

RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN OUR PRIMARY SCHOOLS

With reference to your letter dated 22nd May 2007 in which you applied for permission to conduct research in our primary schools, I am pleased to inform you that permission has been granted.

It is my hope that you will by all means adhere to research ethics. Please ensure that you don’t disrupt lessons.

Sincerely Yours

G. S. Mafuta
EDUCATION DIVISION MANAGER
Appendix E

Informed Consent Form for Teachers

VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY

Letter of Informed Consent (social studies teachers)

Title of Study: How do primary school social studies teachers in Malawi plan and implement lessons that reflect preparation of active citizens?

Investigators: Dr. George Glasson and Ndalapa Mhango

I. Purpose

The goal of this study is to investigate how social studies teachers plan and implement lessons that reflect preparation of active citizens for a democratic civil society. Thus, my interest is to interact with you on the decisions you make when planning and teaching your lessons. The focus areas are: selection of content and teaching-learning strategies. I am conducting this study in partial fulfillment of my PhD studies. I will use the research study to write-up my dissertation paper. In addition, I will submit up to three manuscripts for publication in professional journals in the field of education. I also intend to present the findings at national or international professional conferences, upon the completion of the whole study.

II. Procedures

I would like to interview you on how you plan and teach lessons that reflect preparation of active citizens. I will ask you a series of open-ended questions, and the interview will last approximately two hours. I will ask you questions about: your role as a citizen in the country; your pre-service and in-service preparation programs, and how you relate these to your planning and teaching; the constraints that challenge your work and how you go about solving the challenges. I would like to audio-record the interview for the purposes of data analysis only. This will help me when making verbatim transcription of the data.

I would also like to analyze your teaching plans (that is, schemes of work and lesson plans). Where necessary, I would like to photocopy your plans for the purposes of detailed study of the plans. Among other things, the analysis of the teaching plans will involve how you select content and teaching-learning strategies; how you select lesson activities. In addition, I would like to ask you for consent to observe your lessons. Lesson observations will focus on how you: implement your planned lessons; use various teaching strategies; use lesson activities to support the learning process; use teaching-learning resources; engage students in different activities during the
lessons; and assess students’ learning. I would like to observe you teaching at least three times a week for the next 10 weeks.

III. Risks
There are no risks involved in this project, other than you may experience in everyday activity. You will not be asked to be involved in any situation that will cause you any physical danger or psychological stress. The interview is for the purpose of more fully coming to understand how you plan and implement lessons that help students acquire the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes necessary for citizenship life. This information may be shared with a wider audience through presentations and/or publications. As you will control the extent of your participation, there are no potential risks for participating in this project. The goal is not disclosure of your confidential information or other information of a personal nature that is potentially sensitive to you.

IV. Benefits
There are no direct benefits to you from this study. However, by sharing your experiences, you will be contributing to overall goal of teaching social studies, that is, citizenship education. The study may also help social studies educators on how they could design methods courses for the citizenship education. In addition, the study may also help in overall curriculum development processes and policy making as regards an appropriate and feasible citizenship curriculum for the schools.

V. Extent of Anonymity and Confidentiality
All the information from this study will be strictly confidential. I will not use your actual name or name of the school in the collection and analysis of the data, and the final documentation of the study. Instead, I will use a code number to identify you in the typed transcripts and a false name in the actual documentation of the study. The only people who will share this information are members of my academic committee, but that will be for purposes of analyzing data only. However, while I would take all necessary steps to protect your identity in this study, I cannot guarantee you that this would be a perfect protection especially if there are some people who may be close to you.

The teaching plans will be given back to you after the analysis or photocopying is done is done. The audio-recorded interviews and the photocopied lesson plans will be destroyed at the conclusion of the study.

VII. Freedom to Withdraw
Your participation is entirely voluntary. You may refuse to answer specific questions. You may withdraw from participation at any time without any repercussions. Should you wish to withdraw, please inform me or Dr. George Glasson or Mr. David Moore (contact details listed below).

**IX. Participant’s Permission**

By signing this consent form, I confirm I have read and understand the information presented in it. I have had the opportunity to ask questions. I understand my participation is voluntary, and I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason and without cost. I understand that I will be given a signed copy of this consent form. I voluntarily agree to take part in this study.

I hereby acknowledge the above and give my consent:


Date: ____________

Participant’s signature

__________________________________________________________

Name (please print)

Should you have any questions regarding this research or its conduct, please contact:

Dr. George Glasson, Principle Investigator: (540) 231-8346  glasson@vt.edu

Ndalapa Mhango, Co-Investigator:    (540) 231-1388        nmhango@vt.edu

David M. Moore, Chair, IRB          (540) 231-4991                  moored@vt.edu
Appendix F

Informed Consent Form for Curriculum Developers

VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY

Letter of Informed Consent (curriculum developers)

Title of Study: How do primary school social studies teachers in Malawi plan and implement lessons that reflect preparation of active citizens?

Investigators: Dr. George Glasson and Ndalapa Mhango

I. Purpose

The goal of this study is to investigate how social studies primary school teachers make decisions about planning and teaching lessons that reflect preparation of effective citizens. The starting point of this study is to learn about the development process of the citizenship curriculum, which the teachers use to plan and teach their lessons. Thus, my interest in interacting with you is to fully understand the kinds of decisions you made in the development of the citizenship curriculum. I am conducting this study in partial fulfillment of my doctoral studies. I will use the research study to write-up my dissertation paper. In addition, I will submit up to three manuscripts for publication in professional journals in the field of education. I also intend to present the findings at national or international professional conferences, upon the completion of the whole study.

II. Procedures

I would like to interview you about the whole process of the development of the social studies curriculum for citizenship education. I will ask you a series of open-ended questions, and the interview will last approximately two hours. I would like to audio-record the interview for the purposes of data analysis only. This will help me make verbatim transcription of our conversation. I will ask you questions about: your conceptions of citizenship and citizenship education; your role in the curriculum development process; decisions on the selection of people who were involved in the whole process; decisions on the selection of content, as well as teaching-learning strategies for the curriculum.

III. Risks

As you will control the extent of your participation, there are no potential risks for participating in this project. The goal is not disclosure of your confidential information or other information of
a personal nature that is potentially sensitive to you. I will try to minimize any discomfort you may feel when possible.

**IV. Benefits**
There are no direct benefits to you from this study. However, by sharing your experiences, you will be contributing to overall goal of teaching social studies, that is, citizenship education. The study may also help social studies educators on how they could design methods courses for citizenship education. In addition, the study may also help in overall curriculum development processes and policy making as regards an appropriate and feasible citizenship curriculum for the schools.

**V. Extent of Anonymity and Confidentiality**
All the information from this study will be strictly confidential. I will not use your actual name in the collection and analysis of the data, and final documentation of the study. Instead I will use a code number to identify you in the typed transcripts, and a false name in the actual documentation of the study. The only people who will share this information are the investigators, but that will be for purposes of data analysis only. However, while I would take all necessary steps to protect your identity in this study, I cannot guarantee you that this would be a perfect protection, especially if there are some people who may be close to you. The audio-recorded interviews will be destroyed at the conclusion of the study.

**VII. Freedom to Withdraw**
Your participation is entirely voluntary. You may refuse to answer specific questions. You may withdraw from participation at any time without any repercussions. Should you wish to withdraw, please inform me or Dr. George Glasson or Mr. David Moore (contact details listed below).

**IX. Participant’s Permission**
By signing this consent form, I confirm I have read and understand the information presented in it. I have had the opportunity to ask questions. I understand my participation is voluntary, and I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason and without cost. I understand that I will be given a signed copy of this consent form. I voluntarily agree to take part in this study.

I hereby acknowledge the above and give my consent:

_________________________________________ Date: ____________

Participant’s signature
Name (please print)

Should you have any questions regarding this research or its conduct, please contact:

Dr. George Glasson, Principle Investigator: (540) 231-8346   glassong@vt.edu
Ndalapa Mhango, Co-Investigator:    (540) 231-5029        nmhango@vt.edu
David M. Moore, Chair, IRB              (540) 231-4991                  moored@vt.edu
Appendix G
Interview Protocol Questions for Teachers

Part 1: Teachers’ Cultural and Historical Background

1. Describe yourself in terms of your cultural group, and the history of your ethnic group?

2. How are historical and cultural traditions in your tribe passed down from one generation to the other?

3. How do traditions and practices of your cultural group promote the passing down of good virtues (good aspects) from one generation to the other? What are these traditions and practices? How are they practiced? What kinds of virtues are promoted?

4. Describe the traditional understanding of citizenship in your cultural group. What are the traditions and activities that help to promote traditional forms of citizenship? How are they practiced?

5. What role(s) do you play in the promotion of your cultural traditions and practices? Describe what you do and how you do it?

6. How have the traditions, practices, and activities of your cultural group helped to shape your current life?

7. How does the current generation of children respond to the traditional norms and practices of their cultural groups?

8. What kind of traditional elements of citizenship and other aspects of culture do students bring to class? In what forms are they presented?

9. How is your cultural citizenship history (and those of the students) treated in the current social studies citizenship curriculum?

Part 2: Classroom Practices

1. Describe the kinds of teacher preparations (in-service, pre-service, seminars, workshops) you have gone through? How was citizenship discussed in these programs?

2. What are the kinds of teaching and learning techniques that were covered in your teacher preparation programs? How were you expected to use those techniques? Which techniques do you use most and why? What strategies don’t you use much and
why? Are there some techniques, which you devise or adapt on your own? (If yes) what are these techniques and how do you use them?

3. What kinds of teaching and learning aids (resources) do you use in your class? How do you get them? How do you use them in class?

4. What kinds of lesson activities do you plan and implement in your class to enhance students’ learning of citizenship knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes? Describe how you involve students in these activities?

5. Describe how you go about planning your lessons (in terms of instructional strategies, and selection of techniques, lesson activities, and teaching-learning resources). What factors do you take into account when planning your lessons?

6. How much of the skills you learned from your teacher preparation programs help you organize your lessons?

7. Apart from what you learned through your pre-service and in-service programs, how else do you gain the content and instructional knowledge for teaching citizenship?

8. How do you go about assessing students’ learning of citizenship knowledge, skills, and attitudes?

9. Based on your own experiences, what is your understanding of citizenship and citizenship education? How do you relate this understanding to the Western meanings of democracy and citizenship?

10. How does your understanding of Western democracy and citizenship relate to Malawi’s cultural practices?

Part 3: Teacher’ Views about the Social Studies Curriculum

1. What is your understanding of the goal of social studies in the primary school education in Malawi?

2. How do you go about achieving this goal when planning and teaching your learners?

3. How were cultural issues, democracy, and citizenship issues covered in the social studies syllabi before and after 1994?

4. How do you compare and contrast the way you taught the social studies syllabus before and after 1994?
5. How do you compare and contrast the way you taught social studies before and after the 2005 social studies curriculum reform? How are the elements of traditional and Western forms citizenship portrayed in the syllabus?

6. How do you use the social studies syllabus to relate to the everyday life experiences (including your own experiences)?

7. How do you connect students’ cultural experiences they bring from home to the knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes suggested in the syllabus?

8. How do students’ prior experiences (knowledge, beliefs, conceptions, diversities etc) about citizenship and democracy influence your classroom practices?

9. Describe the challenges you face when implementing the social studies syllabus and the teachers’ guide. How do you cope up with these challenges?

10. What are your suggestions of how the social studies should be organized in terms of its content and instructional strategies?

11. How should teacher preparation programs be organized for the effective implementation of the social studies citizenship syllabus and teachers’ guide?
Appendix H

Interview Protocol Questions for Curriculum Developers

1. Please describe your role in the development processes of the social studies curriculum. What organization or institution did you represent? What criteria were used for selection of people? What was your contribution?

2. What is your understanding of citizenship, citizenship education, and democracy? How did you relate these concepts to Malawi’s cultural practices?

3. Describe the curriculum development process of the social studies citizenship curriculum from the beginning up to the end. What was involved at each stage? Who were involved, and why?

4. How is the 2005 social studies syllabus different from that of the previous ones (i.e. before 1994, between 1994 and 2004)?

5. Explain the purpose or goal of the 2005 social studies curriculum? What societal problems were you attempting to address through the curriculum? Why did you select those kinds of issues among the many societal challenges?


7. How did you take teachers’ cultural and historical underpinnings in the development of the social studies curriculum?

8. What kinds of teacher preparation were done to help teachers implement the curriculum? How were teachers selected and trained? For how long? Who conducted the training and why?

9. What kinds of teaching and learning resources were prepared for teachers to implement the curriculum? How adequate were the resources?

10. What kind of challenges did you anticipate teachers would face in the implementation of the curriculum? How did you plan to deal with those challenges?

11. What mechanisms were put in place to make sure that teachers implemented the curriculum as planned?
Appendix I
Classroom Observation Protocol

a. Pedagogical strategies
What are the various types of teaching-learning pedagogies does the teacher use?
How long is each technique? How does the teacher make transitions from one technique
to the other? What are learners’ reactions to the pedagogical techniques? Do they show
liking to some pedagogies more than the others? How to they express their liking or
disliking? What is the teacher’s response to learners’ reaction? How frequent does
teacher use each technique in one lesson? Does teacher incorporate everyday life
experiences in the lessons (are they political, economic, social or cultural)? Who shares
the experiences (teacher or learner centered)? How does teacher connect these issues to
the topics in the syllabus?

b. Lesson activities
What types of lesson activities does teacher use (e.g. writing, discussions, debates, role
play, simulation, analysis, book-centered, resource-centered)? Who performs the
activities?
Are rubrics given to learners for doing the activities? Are the tasks individual or group
work? How long does it take for learners to perform the task? Who determines the groups
(teacher or learners themselves)? What is the composition of the groups (girls with girls?
boys with boys? Mixture?)
How do learners perform the tasks? Are some individuals dominating in the activities?
Who dominates (girls, boys etc)?
How long does each activity take? Do all learners finish doing the activities?
Does teacher monitor learners performing individual or group tasks? How do learners
show that they need teachers’ help? Does the teacher get to all learners needing help?
What does the monitoring look like? Does the teacher adjust his/her posture and language
from one learner to the other?
Does the lesson activities relate to the way teacher planned the lesson? If not, what are
the changes?

c. Learners seating arrangement
How many learners are in the classroom?
What is the direction of learners’ sitting in relation to the teacher? Does the seating arrangement advantage some learners (in terms of proximity to teacher; resources; etc)? How does the teacher interact with learners in this kind of seating arrangement? Is the interaction taking any definite pattern?

Are there any patterns in the seating arrangements (e.g. ethnicity, gender, religion, class)?

How do learners interact between each other and with their teacher? Are there any patterns in these kinds of interactions? What is the nature of interactions?

d. Teacher’s use of teaching resources

What resources (e.g. books, charts, equipment etc) are available in the classroom? Which resources appear to be learner produced, teacher produced or manufactured elsewhere?

Where are the resources located in the classroom? How do teachers and learners use the resources?

What kinds of books are available in the classroom? How many are available for learners’ use? How do teachers and learners use the books? How much time do they spend on the books? Who keeps the books after the lesson?

Are there artifacts hanging on the walls of the classroom? What do they look like (e.g. charts, pictures, texts, statistical figures, models?) How long do they appear to be hanging on the walls? How do teachers and learners use the resources (individual or group work, hands-on experience or starring at them?) How much time do they spend on the resources?

How does the use of resources reflect what the teacher planned in the lesson plan?

e. Teacher’s assessment procedures

What are the kinds of assessment tasks teacher uses (oral or written; individual or group; do some tasks involve learners to perform)? What are the goals of the tasks? Does teacher provide rubrics? Do learners appear to understand the rubrics of the tasks? Are there variations in the way learners complete the tasks? What are the kinds of variations?

What kinds of feedback does the teacher award to learners’ assessment tasks (are they graded? How are the grades allocated? Are the grades recorded? Does teacher emphasize right or wrong answers? How do learners’ react to teachers’ feedback?)
Does teacher monitor learners when completing tasks? What kinds of monitoring does
he/she make (observing, giving assistance to those who need help?) Do the teachers give
verbal reinforcement kind of feedback to learners? How is this feedback done (what
kinds language does teacher use)? What are learners’ reactions to the feedback
(enthusiastic, demoralized etc?)