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REPRESENTATION OF THE ZIMBABWEAN 2015–2022 SOCIAL STUDIES CURRICULUM: TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES ON CHALLENGES AND "UBUNTULISING" CURRICULUM CHANGE AND IMPLEMENTATION

ABSTRACT

The new 2015–2022 Zimbabwean curriculum in which Social Studies is engrained was driven by the need among others to transform the Zimbabweans' demeanour and etiquette by employing Ubuntu as its philosophical base. Through the Ubuntu lens, this qualitative case study explores how Ubuntu values could be applied to mollify challenges of curriculum reform and implementation. We purposively sampled 12 teachers who participated in semi-structured interviews, observations and a focus group discussion (FGD) to generate data for this study. The findings established that employing the top-down approach in the dissemination of the Zimbabwean curriculum, devoid of the teachers' consultations and participation, catalyses the manifestation of acerbic and innumerable challenges that included inadequate resources, lack of consultation, lack of training for teachers and poor public relations, which led to poor implementation of the Social Studies curriculum. The study discovered that the basis of Ubuntu, which the Zimbabwean curriculum claims to hinge on, is merely a paper exercise but practically it is not applied. The study recommends the rekindling of the Ubuntu values that capture the traditional African customs, work ethics and beliefs and applies them to curriculum reform and implementation in order to inform educational policy and practice as uncovered from the fieldwork undertaken for this study. This study is a contribution to the current topical issue about decolonisation globally.

Keywords: *"Ubuntulising", curriculum implementation, challenges, mitigation strategies.*

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

There has been a surge of interest recently in the concept of curriculum change and its relevance in the global village. Zimbabwe was caught up in this storm and took remarkable

steps to align the education system to the needs of the people in terms of socio-cultural and economic transformation. The new 2015–2022 Zimbabwean curriculum in which Social Studies is engrained was driven by the need among others to transform the Zimbabweans' demeanour and etiquette by employing *Ubuntu* as its philosophical base (MoPSE, 2015). To achieve that, the Social Studies curriculum of Zimbabwe was created around this African philosophy and through its aims, spelt out what the products of the education system were expected to be (MoPSE, 2015). The exit competencies of the learners are heavily tilted towards the demands and expectations of a society in which a full person laced with *Ubuntu* principles was expected to be moulded. In order to put this study in context, a brief background of the evolution of the Zimbabwean Social Studies curriculum is presented hereunder.

The development of the Social Studies curriculum in Zimbabwe was a response to crises that included, but were not restricted, to political agitation (Foley, 1979). These were later followed by tribal disturbances and indecorous behaviour amongst students in tertiary institutions (Mapetere, Chinembiri & Makaye, 2013; Namasasu, 2012). Literature depicts that the 1982 Social Studies curriculum, which was inherited after attainment of nationhood by Zimbabwe, had remnants of the colonial perspective. The curriculum briefly reveals that it was not addressing the civic competence expected because of the lack of the *Ubuntu* philosophy. Consequently, the inherited Social Studies curriculum did not respond to the needs of a new vision of embracing *Ubuntu* that the decolonisation of the curriculum to capture the missing African dictates. The challenges resulting from lack of *Ubuntu* forced the government of Zimbabwe in 1999 to set up a Commission of Inquiry into Education and Training. The commission subsequently reported that indeed vandalism, violence and indiscipline in the schools and society were a result of the dearth of values, relevant ethics and morals (Nziramasanga, 2018).

The above suggests that education in Zimbabwe requires national values or philosophy to guide learners. As such, the government sought to eradicate the social ills through the development of a new personality of *Ubuntu*, which would fit in and contribute towards the construction of a better society. This led to the birth of the 2015–2022 version of the Zimbabwean curriculum, anchored to *Ubuntu* philosophy in which the Social Studies curriculum was embedded (MoPSE, 2015). As such, that move was meant to produce a student imbued with the attributes of *Unhu/Ubuntu* that revolve around communalism, consultation, respect, dignity and cooperation. On that note Kwaira (2018: 6) argues that there was a need to infuse elements of *Hunhu/Chivanhu/Ubuntu* across the full spectrum of learning areas in order to produce "a whole person" instead of just a book-based student. The birth of the 2015–2022 curriculum based on *Ubuntu* philosophy shows that the government of Zimbabwe had now found faith in the *Ubuntu* philosophy that was once rejected in favour of scientific socialism (Samkange & Samkange, 1980) in the 1980s. Interest in *Ubuntu* only resurfaced after the Nziramasanga Commission of 1999.

A scan through literature exposed that very few studies had been undertaken on the Social Studies teachers' representations of curriculum change and implementation. The limitation of these studies is that they used Eurocentric models of curriculum change overlooking the Afrocentric model. This study located in Africa in general, and Zimbabwe in particular, drew insights from the *Ubuntu* philosophy, an African model. From a literature review conducted, *Ubuntu* philosophy had not gained prominence in the new basic education Zimbabwean curriculum 2015–2022 design and implementation discourses. Concentration even globally in *Ubuntu* and curriculum change has been confined mainly to higher education, overlooking

its relevance to curriculum change and implementation in basic education (Chikoko, 2016; Chitumba 2013). Thus, none of the studies from my scan of literature in Zimbabwe had applied the *Ubuntu* values on curriculum discourse involving perspectives of teachers. As such, this study is an attempt to sensitise the policy makers on the importance of a collective involvement of all stakeholders in the development and articulation of policies. This article argues that this is possible when curriculum change and implementation follow a consultative process as engrained in the African institutions.

2. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The study sought to:

1. explore teachers' views on challenges they faced in implementing the new 2015–2022 Social Studies curriculum in Zimbabwe; and

2. establish *Ubuntu* strategies that policy makers can adopt to lessen challenges faced in the implementation of the new 2015–2022 Social Studies curriculum in Zimbabwe.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study is guided by the *Ubuntu* philosophy. The strands that run through *Ubuntu* are of African origin, as remarked by Setiloane (1985), and is a piece of homegrown African wisdom that strives on its virtues that emphasise the importance of a group or community through the promotion of communal interests. The philosophy of *Unhu/Ubuntu* is a collectivist approach, which Samkange and Samkange (1980) claim contradicts the Eurocentric approach to life and education, which is individualistic. This is because the *Ubuntu* philosophy implies that we are correctly human purely in a group with other people. Mbiti (1989: 108) aptly explains the philosophy as, "I am, because we are; and since we are, therefore I am." or, as Turaki (2006: 36) says: "[p]eople are not individuals, living in a state of independence, but part of a community, living in relationships and interdependence". Social Studies is about people and the values against which *Ubuntu* is built which is about people. These principles include norms, values, attitudes, collectiveness and comradeship, among others. Therefore, how policy makers and teachers work when developing and implementing a Social Studies curriculum must be consistent with *Ubuntu* principles.

Ubuntu strives on three components namely metaphysics, ethics and epistemology (Mangena, 2018). *Ubuntu* ethics refer to the idea of morality and use of terms such as good or bad behaviour; respecting or not respecting etc. (Mangena, 2018); hence, it is premised on a common moral position in which the community is the source, author and custodian of moral fibre or standards. Metaphysically, *Ubuntu*'s nature of reality is on "being" in which the idea of being has its fullest expression through participation. Sekou Toure has termed this "the communion of persons" whereby "being" is a function of the "us" or "we" as opposed to the "I" as found and celebrated in the west (cited in Mangena, 2018: 313). This suggests that the idea of being is relational and carries a communal character. In that light, whatever must be reformed in education should reflect the realms of togetherness and cooperation in terms of suggesting the ways on how to implement the process of curriculum change. *Ubuntu* philosophy is thus a footing on which a society is not only fortified but rather, it cements and fastens the people together.

Ubuntu epistemology is concerned with the meaning, source and the nature of the knowledge. Setiloane (1985) submits that African epistemology begins with the community

and moves to individuality. This suggests that the idea of knowledge in Africa is vested in the community and not in individuals who make up that community. *Ubuntu* epistemology is experiential, meaning experience is the best teacher. As such, strategies on meaningful curriculum change and implementation reside with the community of stakeholders made up of teachers and experts. The teachers in the schools have knowledge of what challenges they could face when implementing a new curriculum. Teachers are also the custodians of the implementation matrix because of their experiences. Therefore, their participation in decision making of the educational change is central to effective implementation of educational policy. *Ubuntu* philosophy is a fountain of wisdom which, when applied to educational reforms similar to or beyond what had been applied, can become an effective lever within the education system just the way it influenced management circles (Bryun, 2017; Msila, 2014). As such, it is the basis upon which interventions to challenges of curriculum implementation were formulated.

It was from the *Ubuntu* philosophy that we drew the attributes and the work ethics of educators that were necessary to unpack the challenges of the new curriculum implementation. Its strength is anchored in the fact that it is an indigenous, purely African, philosophy of life that is not borrowed from eastern or western Europe. It is grown from Africa and therefore had potential to offer African solutions to African challenges that teachers faced in the education sector. Its strength lies in the fact that it is the usable past which means the traditional values and beliefs drawn from the African societies can be utilised to drive reforms in education in Africa and globally. The essence of *Ubuntu* is participation by all people as collective assets in village activities. In the current study, participation is defined as "being with and acting for others with the aim of advancing the common good" (Pembroke, 2019: 1). Benefiting from the tenets of *Ubuntu* namely participation, consultation, love, dignity, respect, togetherness and compassion, this study was guided in the provision of mitigation strategies to curtail challenges of curriculum implementation. In addition, the same tenets introspected on what could have been done before the Social Studies curriculum implementation in order to thwart the possibility of poor implementation.

The *Ubuntu* philosophy was ideal as it explained why the challenges of curriculum implementation manifested the way they did as represented by teachers. It directed the formulation of suggestions on how to mitigate the challenges, the same way African communities solved their day-to-day problems. Intrinsically, the study argues that no challenge of curriculum change could therefore be completely averted without the efforts of interest groups. This is so because their major obligation is to work as support pillars for successful curriculum implementation. The collective involvement of all stakeholders in the development and articulation of policies is therefore an important issue.

4. METHODOLOGY

The study was framed from the qualitative approach which permitted us to continually tease out the nature of the implementation as it was "experienced, structured and interpreted" by the teachers in the course of their everyday teaching (Cropley, 2015: 13). By being qualitative in nature it sat comfortably within the philosophical assumptions drawn from interpretivism which is aimed at understanding people in their natural settings or context as De Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delport (2014) claim. The research design was cast as a descriptive and interpretive case study which fitted well within the interpretive methods (Ledford & Gast, 2018). We borrowed from Yin (2015) who sees the primary defining features of a case study as being a multiplicity of perspectives that are rooted in a specific context. In addition,

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011: 289) elaborate that case studies are "unique example of real people in real situations". This case study cast from a qualitative paradigm used semi-structured interviews, observations and a focus group discussion (FGD) to elicit data from 12 purposively sampled teachers.

The face-to-face semi-structured interviews and observations were conducted over a period of four weeks. The 12 mixed gender teachers from the six participating schools were purposively selected with the aid of the school principals. The schools were situated in the rural, urban, mission, farm and growth points dotted in the Masvingo Province of Zimbabwe. The six schools selected were representative enough of the nature of the schools found in Zimbabwe, allowing multiple voices. It was also logical to select six schools and two participants from each school for "feasibility reasons" (O'Leary, 2014: 30). The teachers were selected because they were the first batch of teachers to engage in the implementation of the new curriculum upon its launch in 2017 and they were trained as specialists in Social Studies. This enabled us to generate data from the experts of Social Studies rather than picking untrained Social Studies teachers who were not conversant with the learning area. We had the view that selecting one teacher at a school could defeat the purpose of data triangulation; hence, the choice of two teachers from each sampled school.

We observed infrastructure, facilities and educational materials at each of the six schools under study. The observations were made on the same day the interviews were conducted using an observation guide. This helped us to validate the quotes from the interviews and the FGD. Each interview lasted approximately 45 minutes to an hour. The face-to-face interviews were conducted to establish rapport, build trust and to identify any non-verbal cues that warranted further questioning. In this research, teachers who took part in the interviews were the same teachers who were part of the FGD. This was important because rich and sensitive data emerged that were not possible to elicit through individual interviews. This was because being part of a group often created a more relaxed atmosphere compared to a one-to-one interview (Pandey & Pandey, 2015) and as such, varied and rich in-depth material from several teachers was obtained.

Adherence to strict ethical guidelines in order to uphold participants' privacy, confidentiality, dignity and rights was religiously followed. Before approaching the participants, permission was sought from gatekeepers of institutions. As such, ethical clearance was obtained from the University of KwaZulu-Natal, protocol reference number HSS/0855/018D. Approval was first given by the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, Provincial Education Director for Masvingo Province, the District Schools Inspectors and then the school principals to conduct research in schools. Participants signed consent forms in line with De Vos *et al.* (2014: 117). Consent was requested for the use of a tape recorder during interviews and focus group sessions and then later for the use of the interviewees' quotes for publications. To hide the identities of participants, pseudonyms were employed.

In this study, data analysis involved reducing "the volume of raw data, sifting the important data from the less important, identifying significant patterns, and constructing a framework for communicating the essence of what the data revealed" (De Vos *et al.,*2014: 397). Aware of Maree's view that qualitative data analysis is "an on-going and iterative process generating large amounts of data," analysis was done simultaneously with data collection (2012: 99). Data were thematically presented as narratives ensuring the teachers' representations of the 2015–2022 Social Studies curriculum implementations in Zimbabwe were depicted. Their views were

on the challenges they faced and the mitigation strategies thereof. To enhance trustworthiness of data, member checking was done where themes were returned to the participants who verified "the data collected matched or not to their lived experiences" in implementing the Social Studies curriculum (Birt, Scott, Cavers, Campbell & Walter, 2016: 1802). In addition, validity of data was enhanced through triangulating the data generating techniques namely the observation, semi-structured interviews and FGD.

5. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The teachers' representations of the challenges and the *Ubuntu* strategies to abate them are presented below.

5.1 The top-down approach in curriculum reform

From the FGD and semi structured interviews, data gathered indicated that the top-down process that was followed in the dissemination of the curriculum reform was problematic because the participants claimed that in the top-down approach changes were generated from the centre and then diffused to the periphery without their voices. With a frown visible on her face, S1 said:

> *No effort was made to seek our views though we were to go and implement the new Social Studies curriculum since it was now a policy. As teachers, we do not change policies. So the new curriculum was an imposition by the government. Eeh it was the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education's directive and we had no option as classroom practitioners. But what worried me was that while I am a trained teacher, the changes were not clear to me. I don't know how to start. In most cases, I retained my old practices. It is like putting new wine in an old bottle.*

This means teachers were told of the 2015–2022 Social Studies curriculum at the dawn of its implementation. That finding confirms Zindi's (2018: 31) observation that, "not enough information was given to Zimbabwean teachers on how the new changes were to be implemented". Implied herein was that the teachers were seen as mere implementers regardless of whether they were aware of the modality or intentions of the changes. This implies that teachers were dehumanised as *Ubuntu* values emphasise participation as an aspect that fulfils ethics humanness in African philosophy (Setiloane, 1985).

5.2 Teachers' participation in curriculum reform

It emerged from the study that there was lack of ownership by teachers on the reforms made because they were imposed on them. It means that if curriculum change is enforced without teacher participation then the issue of ownership by the teachers is belittled. As posed by S2 that: "we perceive the reforms as a threat, which can challenge our beliefs, and tear our confidence in our established practices and the feeling of self-efficacy". This means that teachers did not own the reforms since they were centrally planned. Consequently, teachers remained quiet about the Social Studies reforms out of fear. The non-participation of teachers in the reforms led to a lack of vision as advanced by Fullan (2015). That worsened the challenges of the Social Studies curriculum implementation because the teachers had no clear direction to follow. As argued by S2 who lamented that she was not aware of the Social Studies changes, vision and its thrust in depth. In the words of teacher G1:

> *At first, we did not fully participate in the planning and development of the new curriculum. They did not consult us at all on the implementation process of the updated curriculum.*

They planned and developed the implementation process without us from the grassroots. Later, they called us to attend a workshop at which we were informed of the launch of the new curriculum. That was tokenistic participation because we could not get the gist of the implementation matrix which as implementers was supposed to know before the roll out.

The above suggests that the informants were partly consulted in the process though they bemoaned the lack of meaningful participation that could have assisted them in acquiring necessary skills and knowledge related specifically to the Social Studies changes. To avoid challenges that emanated from non-involvement of teachers in educational reforms, the participants in the FGD as well as in semi structured interviews mentioned one essence of *Ubuntu,* which is participation. Participation by all people in community tasks is common in African societies and is aptly etched in the *Ubuntu* philosophy expressed in their proverbs. One such idiomatic expression couched in the Nguni language is *"Okuhlula amadoda kuyabikwa"* meaning what is a challenge to the individual, is declared to the community (Khoza, 2018: 6) and that whenever there is a community task people have to assemble together to work on solutions. The implementers of the reforms should be involved in the planning stage so that they gain an understanding of what is to be implemented and how that is to be done.

5.3 Inadequate educational resources

From the interviews and the FGD, the participants indicated that the lack of the syllabus, textbooks, teaching and learning media and standardised classrooms prevented the effective implementation of the Social Studies curriculum and littered it with challenges. A summary of the inadequate resources that were seen as determinants that side-tracked the proper implementation of Social Studies was made by one teacher, C1, in the FGD:

The new Social Studies curriculum was giving us problems as we happen to have scarce educational materials such as the syllabus, textbooks in form of teachers' books, learner's books and the teaching aids which could go a long way in the implementation of the subject. Teachers were facing challenges in getting these materials. In addition, textbooks were not yet available in book shops and even if funds were available, we could not find them. What was available at our schools and in the market were the sample books which were not for sale as they awaited the approval from the Ministry of Education.

Observations at M and C's schools located in rural and farm areas respectively confirmed the acute shortages of educational resources. Zindi agrees by stating that there were "no adequate textbooks in most of the learning areas to be used in the implementation of the new Zimbabwean curriculum" (2018: 31). Failure to provide resources results in the decline and/or death of any new curriculum implementation, which can also lead to the death of the education system.

From the findings of the study, the teachers suggested working together as a team to source resources as captured in the finger theory of *Ubuntu* by Mbigi and Maree who illuminate that "a thumb working on its own is useless" (2005: 103). Participants in the FGD suggested numerous options in getting teaching resources. One teacher summarised when she narrated:

On their part, teachers ought to be resourceful and should scavenge for instructional materials from their communities. They are urged to author books for use in the schools. As for schools, they should introduce a book levy so that they can have textbooks. Schools should organise fund raising activities such as raffles to beef up their coffers.

> *The government has to resuscitate the per capita grant for all schools on need basis so that the money is used to purchase more educational resources. It has to exercise speed in approving new textbooks in the bookshops. The government has to establish minimal infrastructures required per school. Provision of educational materials has to be the responsibility of the government and everyone else (Teacher R2)*

Drawing insight from this sentiment, the essence of *Ubuntu* is therefore a collective, shared experience and collective solidarity. Hence, teamwork through partnership, which is an application of the *Ubuntu* philosophy, may help to abate the challenges of inadequate resources. The *Ubuntu* values centred on teamwork celebrate cooperation as also captured in the African proverb "*Ditau tsa go tlhoka seboka di sitwa ke nare e tlhotsa*" (An uncooperative pride of lions fails to bring down a limping buffalo) which implies that, the Social Studies curriculum change and implementation is an easy task if collectively enacted. This is because teamwork as an African belief system considers that collectivity supersedes the individual and interdependence is a superior value in all community operations (Khoza, 2018: 8). That again is celebrated by globalisation which views nations of the world as a connected village.

5.4 The nature of professional development for teachers

To mitigate the challenges of lack of knowledge and expertise, teachers called for continuous and vigorous training to be undertaken during the holidays in Social Studies. Teacher R1 pointed out that human capital needs to undergo surgery and needs to be re-serviced to align it with the new Social Studies changes. This was further suggested by S2 that the education department:

> *Should give us more workshops on how to teach the new Social Studies curriculum in particular because we do not have any problems with other learning areas like Mathematics or English since not much was changed in these disciplines. But as for Social Studies curriculum, we need to be educated because the content added is new and while we were at school or college we did not learn this subject to such a depth. As such, we are told to teach what we have not been trained to teach.*

In accordance with the above suggestion, J2 also indicated that, "I think more training is needed because the training we undertook did not look at a particular subject area. Considering that view, we argue that training of teachers that is based on *Ubuntu* values of love, respect and participation is important because it boosts their confidence and skills for implementing the curricula. Thus, training of the teachers is linked to the hallmarks of *Ubuntu* values which submit that training is not a one-man task as depicted in the Nguni saying that "*Izandla ziyagezana*" which means that one hand washes the other. To borrow from Khoza (2018: 8) on *Ubuntu* principles, the Xhosa say "*Akukho qili lino kuzikhoth emhlana* (No genius is so clever that he can lick his own back). This implies that teachers with various levels of Social Studies knowledge and experiences must meet regularly to sharpen each other's skills through workshops and seminars at different levels of the educational structures because no one has the monopoly of knowledge. Seen this way, the teachers' various levels of experiences when combined could become a weapon to destroy the challenges of curriculum implementation.

Benefiting from *Ubuntu* values, the issues of inadequate training were because of the neglect of what is entrenched in the African village. Educationists need to use *Ubuntu* to address the problems of inadequate training and return to the African villages and seek in-depth understanding of how a village trained its members, extracting relevant elements and bringing them back to the education system. As Mbigi and Maree (2005: 105) state,

training and development in an African village is based on collective action where leaders of such training must be collective in their approach and practice. As such, the whole village is responsible for raising and training the child. Thus, for training to move from collective talk to collective action it will need to harness the collective energy and support of the key players in the education sector. This implies that no one must be excluded in terms of what is to be learnt and applied during the reforms and implementation stage if the *Ubuntu* values are embraced.

5.5 School principals' relations and demeanour

From the study, the teachers felt detached from the Social Studies curriculum implementation owing to the school principals' failure to sow good relations in schools. As teacher J2 explained:

> *School principals do not understand us in terms of the help we expect from them. As such each time we seek for help, they answer arrogantly and in a militia stance. We ask them to exercise due caution and respect our views as well. School principals must shun arrogance, impolite a[n]d disheartening responses when asked for help. We expect them to show respect and love since they should offer us pastoral care. Above all, we need to share information on the requirements of the new Social Studies curriculum. This sharing promotes working together as a team. United we stand but divided we fall. We can share information at school, cluster or even at district level. The spirit of unity must prevail at all these levels.*

Hence, the principals' poor support of staff emerged as a challenge to effective curriculum implementation as generated from interviews and the FGD. The school principals offered minimal professional support infused with arrogance, disrespect and lack of love. As such, recent studies support that this is a problem because implementation of programmes and initiatives have the greatest chance of success if they are supported intellectually and emotionally by the management (Dube & Jita, 2018; Fullan, 2015: 97; Nziramasanga, 2018). While literature focuses on professional support characterised by communication and feedback; management and supervision of teachers as key to avoid challenges of curriculum implementation, interviews indicate that emphasis is on respect and demeanour coupled with grooming. This means *Ubuntu* is at the core of the needs of teachers in terms of curriculum support. In this context of the Social Studies curriculum implementation, respect was expected from the school principals. Frei and Shaver (2002) in Seroto (2016: 47) describe respect as a social or attitudinal construct that guides people's social behaviour toward others and in most instances, it regulates relationships. As such, treating others with respect and dignity is at the heart of *Ubuntu*. Poovan, du Toit & Engelbrecht (2006: 26) describe respect as *Ukuhlonipa*, which in an African word that demonstrates its centrality in the values of the *Ubuntu* worldview, stipulates the social position of an African in society and permeates an entire set of authoritarian and hierarchical relations that are found within an African culture in general and educational culture in particular. As suggested by the teachers in the FGD, if school principals used respect and dignity in their interactions with teachers, then teachers will view school principals as understanding people. The application of respect and dignity in the school context implies that it allows for an interactive process to take place between teachers and school principals.

5.6 Teachers as curriculum content developers

It was clear that the Social Studies content, as represented by the teachers, has directed more effort in democratic societies that are powered by western views. The nature of topics in the new Social Studies curriculum reflected Eurocentric biasness as argued by J2:

> *…new topics were added for instance the topics "Global issues" and "governance" were added yet they are too difficult to be delivered by teachers. I am clueless of what to teach and how to teach it. I wonder why they left out a topic like "Living together" which promotes humanity and African values for instance respect and tolerance. They brought in Eurocentric topics which are not necessarily helpful in the African way of life. We are potent sources of knowledge for the Social Studies curriculum. As such, we can be helpful in the development of the curriculum content.*

The views indicated above reflect that the policy makers did not identify teachers as an effective source of Social Studies content. They belittled them to be mere implementers of an already crafted policy. They missed the experiences of the teachers as springs of knowledge indicating that curriculum planners overlooked the importance of the local people and their *Ubuntu* values, which is the guiding philosophy in the Zimbabwean education system (MoPSE, 2015). The *Ubuntu* philosophy is rooted in sharing, cooperation, group cohesion, communal and communitarianism that could have been articulated in the topic Living Together, which was regrettably removed. This indicates that decolonisation and "*ubuntulising"* of the curriculum was used as window dressing when constructing the new curriculum. Such representations from teachers had pointed out that the teachers were to some extent not consulted on the content and nature of the Social Studies curriculum. That led to a situation where learners were exposed to non-African values. Thus, it emerged from the semi-structured interviews and the FGD that teachers were not represented in the construction of the Social Studies curriculum because new topics with a European slant were introduced in Social Studies while others were modified. This confirms that the *Ubuntu* philosophy was only on paper but was silent on its application. Teachers' lack of content regarding curriculum change is not new because it is reported in several studies (Zindi, 2018; Mtetwa, 2018).

Ubuntu epistemology strives on oneness and is concerned with the meaning, source and nature of knowledge. This infers that the content of the Social Studies curriculum could have been derived from the community so that it addresses the realities of the community (Dube & Jita, 2018: 907). As suggested in the FGD, integrating *Ubuntu* into the content would fulfil what the curriculum is expected to address – the lived realties of people and offer solutions and facilitate the improvement of human lives. This suggests that the community members (teachers included) had to contribute to the content of the curriculum since *Ubuntu* epistemology is experiential (Mangena, 2018; Ramose, 1999). In cognisance of that view, we argue that teachers as members of the community, have vast experiences in the subject matter of the school curriculum that they can use to decide what, why and how that is to be taught. If that were done through consultation of teachers, the challenges of having new topics that were beyond the teachers' knowledge and comprehension would not have surfaced. Teachers could therefore make meaningful inputs towards developing the content that could address lived realities. In that way, unwanted content materials could have been left out, relevant concepts could have been incorporated and more African values could have been

added, whichr were not done, limiting the space for teachers to participate in curriculum change and implementation.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the problems of curriculum implementation could be circumvented through the participation of teachers in curriculum reform and implementation as engraved in the work ethics of *Ubuntu* values which are centred on participation and communism. Based on the findings, this study argues that the idea of dare/imbizo (African indigenous traditional council) being the usable past as enshrined in the African culture can be used to guide people on the direction of curriculum implementation. Thus, for effective educational policy development and implementation, there must be wide consultation, advocacy and piloting before proper implementation can take place.

Teachers in the study called for teamwork to source instructional resources by engaging the community in the form of partnerships. Mitigating the unavailability of educational resources could be done if the global village plays their collective part by giving a hand and sharing what it has. That partnership in resource mobilisation hinges on globalisation and the *Ubuntu* values of compassion and sharing which demonstrate a collective psyche where stakeholders partner with others in order to source critical resources. As such, policy makers must partner with the corporate world to source resources for use in schools.

The findings of the study indicated that some of the school principals offered unprofessional support characterised by arrogance, disrespect and lack of love. The *Ubuntu* philosophy cites poor relations as an impediment to effective implementation of changes in education. The teachers' representations of the mitigation strategies proposed the creation of cordial and symbiotic relations between school principals and teachers based on *Ubuntu* values. This is a plausible strategy that can effectively reduce the challenges faced in the implementation of the Social Studies curriculum. This is because *Ubuntu* is about hiring leaders who understand the workplace and lead "with the heart and soul" so that teachers who are followers are motivated to contribute to an organisation if they feel that they are valued (Makka, 2019: 77–82). This study argues that this could be made possible by altering the attitudes of school principals positively through some management training that is drawn from *Ubuntu* ethics such as sharing views. Teacher evaluation of school principals' demeanour and etiquette in the form of reports can be administered termly to improve the working relations. While the government is urged to direct its effort towards improving relations in schools, the school principals themselves are also implored to undertake studies that empower them to understand their subordinates in terms of their needs to promote cooperation from teachers.

The study discovered that the basis of *Ubuntu* that the Zimbabwean curriculum claims to hinge on is a mere paper exercise but practically it was not applied. To mitigate that hurdle, teachers pointed out that there was a need to harness the ordinary teachers' past experiences. It can then be merged with the policy makers' input to come to an agreeable African Social Studies content and in so doing, capture the realities of the Zimbabwean community in line with the *Ubuntu* philosophy. The policy makers are reminded to acknowledge that the content of any learning area must be drawn from the community so that it addresses its realities. Use of teachers in the construction of the Africanised Social Studies content is useful here. Thus, a review of the Social Studies curriculum with teachers as developers is therefore important in order to align it with the demands and dictates of the African community.

7. CONCLUSIONS

The study argues the implementation would not have been so fraught with challenges had the policy makers consulted the teachers and worked within the confinements of *Ubuntu* ethics. It can be argued based on the findings obtained from FGD data that there was now need for policy makers to decolonise their western ways of thinking and resuscitate their African way of life if curriculum change and implementation are to take place effectively in educational institutions couched in Africa. This study argues that the curriculum is only good when it addresses the needs of the community. Failure to embrace the people's concerns in curriculum change is tantamount to creation of two separate worlds because such a curriculum will breed alien values that are not applicable outside the classroom and therefore differ from the realities of the people who were excluded. Relevance of curriculum is possible only if the people are the contributors of their education as drawn from the *Ubuntu* philosophy which respects the construction of knowledge by the people for the people.

Seen from that African view and approach, once a nation sees it fit to make curriculum innovations and implementation, it becomes the duty of the policy makers to invite all members to a consultative meeting from which pertinent issues are gathered and collated in the spirit of survival. The ideas from all people could then be solidified to make one critical thing for use by all. Survival is one value of the *Ubuntu* philosophy that runs through all African activities. Why do the African people do what they do? The obvious reason for doing that hinges on survival. From that view, if curriculum change and implementation are for the survival of any country, then consultation of all stakeholders including teachers is necessary, as enshrined in the African institutions which staunchly believe in the power of sharing through consultation which can aptly be applied to the education system of today. This is because participation is a key value in the philosophy of *Ubuntu* (Ramose, 1999).

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