

Impact of Political Ideologies on Curriculum Development in Post-Colonial Zambia

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Abstract

This research paper examines the influence of political ideologies on the development of Zambia's secondary school curriculum from the post-colonial era to the present day. The study focuses on how successive regimes utilized the education system to promote national identity, political loyalty, and social cohesion. By analyzing key political shifts and their implications for curriculum design, the study reveals the complex interplay between politics and education in Zambia. The findings contribute to the broader discourse on educational reform, emphasizing the need for a balanced approach that considers both national priorities and global educational standards.

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1. Introduction

The role of education in post-colonial Africa extends far beyond the simple transmission of knowledge. It has been a key driver of nation-building, socio-economic development, and the promotion of national identity. In Zambia, education has played a crucial role in shaping the country's trajectory since gaining independence from British colonial rule in 1964. Education, particularly at the secondary school level, has been seen as a strategic tool for preparing future generations for both national leadership and participation in a globalized world. However, the development and reform of the Zambian curriculum have been deeply influenced by the shifting political ideologies of successive governments.

1.1 Background

Since independence, Zambia has undergone significant political transformations, each bringing with it changes in educational policy and curriculum development. The first president of Zambia, Kenneth Kaunda, implemented the philosophy of Humanism, which emphasized national unity, self-reliance, and social justice. Kaunda's government sought to decolonize the education system, replacing the colonial curriculum with one that promoted African culture, Zambian history, and civic education. This era of curriculum reform was characterized by a strong focus on nation-building and the promotion of a unified national identity (Carmody, 2020). Kaunda's vision for education was to create citizens who were not only knowledgeable but also deeply connected to their cultural heritage and committed to the development of their country.

However, Zambia's political landscape shifted dramatically in the early 1990s with the introduction of multi-party democracy. The Movement for Multi-Party Democracy (MMD), led by Frederick Chiluba, brought with it a new set of political ideologies centered on neoliberal economic policies. Under the MMD government, the focus of education shifted towards economic liberalization and preparing students for participation in a market-driven economy. The curriculum was reoriented to prioritize vocational training, technical skills, and economic competitiveness over the social and cultural goals that had dominated the Kaunda era (Ngoma & Kalaba, 2020). This shift reflected broader global trends towards neoliberalism, where the role of education was increasingly seen as preparing individuals for the labor market rather than fostering a collective national identity.

The interplay between political ideologies and curriculum development in Zambia has had profound implications for the quality of education and student outcomes. Frequent changes in political leadership have often led to corresponding shifts in the curriculum, resulting in instability and inconsistencies in educational content. This has posed significant challenges for educators, who must constantly adapt to new directives, and for students, who are often subjected to an education system that lacks coherence and continuity (Phiri, 2021). The impact of these ideological shifts on educational outcomes has been mixed, with some reforms improving access to education and aligning it with global standards, while others have detracted from the overall quality of education.

1.2 Significance of the Study

Understanding the impact of political ideologies on curriculum development is critical for several reasons. First, it sheds light on the ways in which education is used as a tool for political socialization and the promotion of specific ideological goals. In Zambia, as in many other post-colonial nations, education has been a key arena for the dissemination of political values and the reinforcement of state power. By examining the relationship between politics and education, this study contributes to a broader understanding of how political forces shape educational systems and, in turn, how education influences political stability and development.

Second, this study addresses the practical implications of political interference in curriculum development. The frequent changes in curriculum focus have led to significant challenges in the delivery of education, particularly in terms of continuity and stability. For educators, this instability has made it difficult to plan and implement effective teaching strategies, while students have often been subjected to an education system that is fragmented and inconsistent. By exploring the impact of these changes on educational outcomes, this study provides valuable insights into the challenges faced by educators and students in Zambia.

Finally, this study is significant because it offers recommendations for future curriculum reforms that balance political considerations with educational needs. In a globalized world, education systems must prepare students not only for participation in their national economies but also for engagement with global markets and international institutions. However, this must be done in a way that does not undermine the promotion of national identity and social cohesion. By proposing strategies for balancing these competing demands, this study contributes to the broader discourse on education reform in post-colonial contexts.

1.3 Research Objectives

The overarching goal of this study is to critically analyze the impact of political ideologies on curriculum development in Zambia, with a focus on the post-colonial period. This research is guided by the following specific objectives:

- **Objective 1:** To investigate how different political regimes have shaped the secondary school curriculum in Zambia, particularly in terms of content and pedagogical approaches.
- **Objective 2:** To assess the impact of political ideologies on educational outcomes, including student performance, curriculum coherence, and the quality of education.
- **Objective 3:** To propose strategies for depoliticizing curriculum development in Zambia and for creating a more stable and coherent education system that balances national priorities with global educational standards.

1.4 Research Questions

The following research questions guide this study:

1. How have successive political regimes influenced the development of the secondary school curriculum in Zambia since independence?
2. What have been the effects of these political influences on the quality and stability of education in Zambia, particularly at the secondary level?
3. What strategies can be employed to depoliticize curriculum development and create a more stable, coherent education system that meets both national and global standards?

1.5 Structure of the Paper

This paper is organized as follows. The literature review section provides a critical analysis of existing research on the relationship between political ideologies and curriculum development in Zambia, identifying key themes and gaps in the literature. The theoretical framework section outlines the key theories that inform this study, including Critical Pedagogy, Neoinstitutional Theory, and Structural Functionalism. The methodology section details the research design, data collection methods, and analytical approach used in this study. The results section presents the findings of the research, while the discussion section interprets these findings in the context of the research questions and objectives. Finally, the conclusion summarizes the key insights from the study and offers recommendations for future curriculum reforms in Zambia.

2. Literature Review

The literature on the relationship between political ideologies and curriculum development in Zambia primarily focuses on the historical evolution of education from the colonial period to the present. The review below critically examines existing research on post-colonial curriculum reform, the influence of political ideologies on educational policies, and the impact of these ideologies on educational outcomes. Additionally, it identifies gaps in the literature and ties these findings to the research objectives of this study.

2.1 Post-Colonial Curriculum Development in Africa

Education systems in Africa, particularly in post-colonial contexts, have been significantly shaped by the legacy of colonialism. Colonial education systems were designed to serve the administrative needs of the colonial powers, with little regard for the social and economic needs of the indigenous population (Ezeanya-Esiobu, 2019). In Zambia, the colonial education system was primarily focused on creating a small, educated elite who could support the colonial administration, while the majority of the population was left with limited access to education (Phiri, 2021). Post-independence, Zambia, like many other African nations, faced the challenge of restructuring its education system to reflect national priorities and promote social and economic development (Mulenga & Mwanza, 2019).

Post-colonial curriculum reform in Zambia began with a strong emphasis on decolonization and national identity. Kenneth Kaunda's Humanism, which dominated the political landscape in the first two decades after independence, was reflected in the curriculum through the promotion of national unity, civic education, and an emphasis on African history and culture (Carmody, 2020). This period saw the Zambian government striving to replace the colonial curriculum with one that reflected indigenous knowledge systems and supported the nation's development goals (Simuziya, 2021). However, despite these efforts, the legacy of colonial education persisted, and many of the reforms were criticized for being overly ideological and disconnected from the practical needs of the population (Chishiba & Simbeye, 2020).

A gap in the literature exists in the exploration of how these early reforms have influenced contemporary educational practices and outcomes. While the focus on national identity was essential in the post-colonial context, there is limited research on how these historical curriculum reforms have impacted current educational standards and the preparedness of students for the global economy.

2.2 Political Ideologies and Curriculum Reform in Zambia

The political landscape of Zambia has been characterized by shifts in ideology, each of which has had a significant impact on curriculum development. Under Kaunda's rule, the curriculum was aligned with the ideology of Humanism, which emphasized collective responsibility, social justice, and the promotion of national unity (Carmody, 2020). This period was marked by a strong emphasis on education as a tool for nation-building and decolonization, with subjects such as Zambian history and civic education being central to the curriculum (Ngoma & Kalaba, 2020).

However, the shift to multi-party democracy in the 1990s brought about significant changes in Zambia's political and economic orientation. The Movement for Multi-Party Democracy (MMD) government, which came into power in 1991, adopted neoliberal economic policies that prioritized market-driven skills and vocational training over the broader social goals of the previous era (Phiri, 2021). This shift was reflected in the curriculum, which increasingly focused on aligning education with the needs of the labor market. The neoliberal reforms introduced under the MMD government have been criticized for prioritizing economic efficiency over educational quality and for undermining the focus on national identity and social cohesion that had been central to earlier reforms (Simuziya, 2021).

The literature on this period highlights the tension between the need to promote national unity and the demands of a globalized economy. However, there is a gap in understanding how these neoliberal reforms have impacted long-term educational outcomes and whether they have adequately prepared students for both the national and global contexts. Furthermore, while existing research explores the ideological shifts that have influenced curriculum development, there is limited analysis of how these shifts have affected the day-to-day experiences of students and teachers in Zambian schools.

2.3 The Role of International Organizations

In addition to domestic political influences, international organizations such as UNESCO, UNICEF, and the World Bank have played a significant role in shaping Zambia's educational policies. These organizations have promoted global educational standards and best practices, often pushing for reforms that align with international development goals such as Education for All (EFA) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Matafwali, 2022). The influence of international organizations has added another layer of complexity to curriculum development in Zambia, as policymakers must balance global expectations with domestic political considerations.

For instance, global initiatives like Education for All and the Millennium Development Goals have emphasized the importance of universal access to education, gender equality, and the inclusion of marginalized groups (Matafwali, 2022). These initiatives have influenced Zambia's education policies, particularly in areas such as inclusive education and the promotion of girls' education. However, there is a gap in the literature on how these global initiatives have been adapted to the Zambian context and whether they have been successful in achieving their goals. Research is needed to explore the extent to which international policies have been effectively implemented in Zambia and how they have interacted with local political ideologies.

2.4 Challenges of Political Influence on Curriculum Stability

One of the recurring themes in the literature is the instability caused by frequent curriculum changes driven by political shifts. According to Musindo (2022), the politicization of curriculum development in Zambia has often led to inconsistencies in educational content and delivery. This instability has been particularly problematic in a context where political priorities can shift dramatically with changes in government. As a result, educators and students are often left grappling with a curriculum that is subject to frequent revisions, making it difficult to achieve continuity and stability in the education system (Ngoma & Kalaba, 2020).

Moreover, the literature points to the challenge of balancing national identity with the demands of a globalized economy. While the promotion of national unity has been a central goal of Zambia's education system, the need to prepare students for participation in the global economy has often taken precedence in recent curriculum reforms. This has led to tensions between the need to maintain a curriculum that reflects Zambian values and the need to align education with global standards (Phiri, 2021).

However, there is a gap in the literature regarding the specific strategies that have been employed to manage these tensions. While existing research highlights the challenges of balancing national and global priorities, there is limited analysis of how these challenges have been addressed in practice. More research is needed to explore the ways in which curriculum developers and policymakers have navigated the competing demands of national identity and global competitiveness.

2.5 Gaps in the Literature

Despite the extensive research on the political influence on Zambia's secondary school curriculum, several gaps remain. First, there is a lack of empirical research on the long-term effects of political interference in curriculum development. While much of the existing literature focuses on the historical and political aspects of curriculum reform, there is limited analysis of how these reforms have impacted student outcomes over time. Second, there is a need for more research on the perspectives of educators and students regarding the curriculum. Understanding their views and experiences can provide a more comprehensive picture of the curriculum's effectiveness and areas for improvement (Chishiba & Simbeye, 2020).

Finally, while international organizations have played a significant role in shaping Zambia's education policies, there is limited research on how these global initiatives have been adapted to the local context. More research is needed to explore the interaction between international policies and local political ideologies and to assess the effectiveness of global education reforms in Zambia.

3. Theoretical Framework

This study is guided by several theoretical frameworks that help to explain the relationship between politics and education. The first of these is Paulo Freire's Critical Pedagogy, which emphasizes the role of education in challenging oppressive power structures and promoting social justice. Freire's concept of "conscientization," or the development of critical awareness, is particularly relevant in understanding how education can be used to either reinforce or challenge existing power dynamics (Freire, 1970).

Another key theoretical framework is Neoinstitutional theory, which explores how educational institutions conform to the norms and expectations set by political and economic elites. Meyer and Rowan's (1977) concept of institutional isomorphism helps to explain why educational reforms in Zambia often reflect the ideological priorities of the ruling government, even when these reforms may not be in the best interest of students. By adopting certain policies and practices, educational institutions gain legitimacy in the eyes of the government, even if these policies do not necessarily improve educational outcomes (Meyer & Rowan, 1977).

Finally, Structural Functionalism, as articulated by Talcott Parsons, provides a macro-sociological perspective on the functions of education within society. This theory posits that education plays a key role in maintaining social stability by transmitting cultural norms and values. In the context of Zambia, the education system has been used as a tool for promoting national unity and social cohesion, but this has also led to tensions between political goals and educational quality (Parsons, 1959).

4. Methodology

This section outlines the research methodology employed in this study to explore the impact of political ideologies on curriculum development in post-colonial Zambia. The methodology section includes details on the research design, data collection methods, sampling strategies, data analysis techniques, ethical considerations, and the limitations of the study. The mixed-methods approach employed in this research combines qualitative and historical analysis with quantitative data to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between political ideologies and educational outcomes.

4.1 Research Design

The study employs a **mixed-methods approach**, combining qualitative and quantitative methods to investigate the impact of political ideologies on curriculum development in Zambia. This approach allows for a deeper understanding of the subject by integrating qualitative insights from stakeholders with quantitative data on educational outcomes. The qualitative component of the study focuses on gathering in-depth information through interviews, document analysis, and case studies, while the quantitative component involves the analysis of educational performance metrics over time.

The research adopts a **descriptive and exploratory design** aimed at uncovering the relationship between political changes and shifts in curriculum content and structure. The study's descriptive aspect provides a detailed account of Zambia's curriculum evolution over time, while the exploratory aspect seeks to uncover underlying patterns and relationships between political ideologies and educational practices. Given that curriculum development in Zambia has been subject to various political influences, this design is suitable for capturing the complexities of these influences and their impacts.

4.2 Data Collection Methods

The study employs **multiple data collection methods** to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the research problem. These methods include document analysis, semi-structured interviews, and analysis of secondary quantitative data.

- **Document Analysis:** Historical and policy documents were analyzed to trace the evolution of Zambia's curriculum over time. This includes government reports, curriculum frameworks, political speeches, and policy documents from the Ministry of General Education and other relevant institutions. The document analysis aimed to identify key political influences on curriculum content and structure during different political regimes. The analysis covered a wide range of documents from the post-colonial period to the present, providing a historical context for understanding current curriculum practices.
- **Semi-Structured Interviews:** Semi-structured interviews were conducted with key stakeholders involved in curriculum development in Zambia, including policymakers, curriculum developers, educators, and representatives from international organizations. The semi-structured format allowed for flexibility in exploring specific themes while also ensuring that key questions related to the research objectives were addressed. Interview questions focused on the

participants' experiences with curriculum development, their perspectives on the influence of political ideologies, and their views on the effectiveness of recent curriculum reforms.

- **Secondary Data Analysis:** Quantitative data on educational outcomes, such as student performance metrics, graduation rates, and enrollment statistics, were analyzed to assess the impact of curriculum changes on educational quality. This data was obtained from the Ministry of General Education, the Zambia Education Management Information System (ZEMIS), and international organizations such as UNESCO. The analysis focused on identifying trends in educational outcomes before and after significant curriculum reforms, particularly those associated with shifts in political ideologies.

4.3 Sampling Strategy

The sampling strategy for this study involved **purposive sampling** for the qualitative interviews and **document selection**, and **secondary data sampling** for the quantitative analysis.

- **Purposive Sampling for Interviews:** Key stakeholders in curriculum development were selected based on their expertise and involvement in education policy and curriculum reform in Zambia. This included officials from the Ministry of General Education, members of curriculum development committees, experienced educators, and representatives from international organizations that have influenced educational policies in Zambia. A total of 20 participants were interviewed, ensuring a diverse range of perspectives on the relationship between political ideologies and curriculum development.
- **Document Selection:** Historical and policy documents were selected based on their relevance to the study's objectives. These documents were chosen to cover major political eras in Zambia's history, including the post-independence period under Kaunda's Humanism, the neoliberal reforms of the 1990s, and recent curriculum changes influenced by global educational initiatives.
- **Secondary Data Sampling:** Quantitative data was sourced from national databases, including the Zambia Education Management Information System (ZEMIS) and reports from the Ministry of General Education. Data on student performance, graduation rates, and school enrollment was selected based on its relevance to the periods of significant political and curriculum reforms. The study focused on longitudinal data to identify trends in educational outcomes across different political regimes.

4.4 Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis in this study was conducted using **thematic analysis** for the qualitative data and **descriptive and inferential statistical techniques** for the quantitative data.

- **Thematic Analysis:** The qualitative data from interviews and document analysis were analyzed using thematic analysis. This involved coding the data to identify recurring themes related to political ideologies, curriculum development, and

educational outcomes. The thematic analysis was conducted in several stages, beginning with an open coding process where initial themes were identified, followed by focused coding where these themes were refined and categorized. Key themes included political influence on curriculum content, challenges in curriculum implementation, and stakeholder perceptions of curriculum reforms.

- **Statistical Analysis:** The quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics to summarize educational outcomes and inferential statistics to identify significant changes over time. Descriptive statistics were used to provide an overview of student performance, graduation rates, and enrollment trends, while inferential statistics were employed to determine whether these trends were significantly associated with political and curriculum reforms. Statistical software such as SPSS was used to perform the analysis, ensuring that the results were robust and reliable.

4.5 Ethical Considerations

This study adhered to strict ethical guidelines to ensure the protection of participants and the integrity of the research process. Ethical considerations included obtaining **informed consent** from all interview participants, ensuring **confidentiality and anonymity**, and securing **ethical clearance** from relevant authorities.

- **Informed Consent:** Participants were provided with detailed information about the study's purpose, methods, and potential risks before consenting to participate. Written consent was obtained from all interviewees, and they were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.
- **Confidentiality and Anonymity:** The confidentiality of participants was maintained throughout the study. Identifying information was removed from the data to ensure anonymity, and all data was securely stored to prevent unauthorized access. Participants' identities were protected in the reporting of results, with pseudonyms used where necessary.
- **Ethical Clearance:** The study received ethical clearance from the University of Zambia's Research Ethics Committee. The research was conducted in compliance with the university's ethical guidelines for conducting research involving human participants, ensuring that all ethical standards were met.

4.6 Limitations of the Study

While this study provides valuable insights into the impact of political ideologies on curriculum development in Zambia, it is important to acknowledge its limitations.

- **Historical Document Availability:** One limitation is the availability of historical documents, particularly from the early post-independence period. Some relevant documents may be incomplete or inaccessible, which could affect the comprehensiveness of the document analysis. Efforts were made to obtain as many relevant documents as possible, but gaps in the historical record may still exist.
- **Subjectivity in Interviews:** The semi-structured interviews relied on participants' recollections and personal experiences, which may introduce subjectivity into the data. While the interviews provide valuable insights into the

perceptions of key stakeholders, their views may not represent the full spectrum of perspectives on curriculum development in Zambia.

- **Generalizability of Findings:** The study's findings are specific to Zambia and may not be generalizable to other contexts. While the insights gained from this research contribute to the broader discourse on education and politics in post-colonial Africa, caution should be exercised in applying the findings to other countries with different political and educational histories.

Despite these limitations, the mixed-methods approach and the triangulation of data from multiple sources enhance the reliability and validity of the study's findings. The research provides a comprehensive analysis of how political ideologies have influenced curriculum development in Zambia and offers recommendations for future curriculum reforms that prioritize educational needs over political agendas.

5. Results

This section presents the key findings of the study, which explored the impact of political ideologies on curriculum development in Zambia. The results are categorized according to the main themes that emerged from the data analysis, reflecting the research objectives and answering the research questions posed in the introduction. The results are based on a combination of document analysis, semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders, and quantitative data analysis on educational outcomes. The findings highlight the significant role that political ideologies have played in shaping Zambia's education system, particularly at the secondary school level.

5.1 Political Ideologies and Curriculum Development: Historical Overview

The analysis of historical documents and interviews revealed that Zambia's secondary school curriculum has been heavily influenced by the political ideologies of the ruling government, starting from independence in 1964. Three distinct periods of curriculum reform emerged, each corresponding to shifts in political leadership and ideology.

- **Kaunda's Era (1964-1991): Humanism and Nation-Building**

The early post-independence period under President Kenneth Kaunda was characterized by the philosophy of Humanism, which prioritized national unity, self-reliance, and the promotion of Zambian culture. Curriculum reforms during this period were driven by the need to decolonize education and replace the colonial curriculum with content that reflected Zambian values and history. The curriculum emphasized subjects such as Zambian history, African literature, and civic education, with a focus on fostering a sense of national identity and social cohesion (Carmody, 2020).

Interviews with policymakers and educators from this period highlighted the positive impact of these reforms in promoting national unity and reducing the influence of colonial ideologies. However, some educators noted that the

strong emphasis on political indoctrination and national identity sometimes overshadowed the need for critical thinking and academic rigor in the curriculum. This led to a curriculum that was seen as more ideological than educational in its focus, which had implications for the quality of education delivered during this period.

- **Neoliberal Reforms (1991-2000s): Economic Liberalization and Vocational Training**

The transition to multi-party democracy in 1991 marked a significant shift in Zambia's political and economic orientation. The Movement for Multi-Party Democracy (MMD) government, led by Frederick Chiluba, adopted neoliberal economic policies that emphasized market-driven skills, privatization, and economic liberalization. These policies were reflected in the curriculum, which was reoriented to prioritize vocational training and technical education over the social and cultural goals of the previous era (Ngoma & Kalaba, 2020).

Quantitative data from this period shows a marked increase in the number of vocational and technical education programs offered at the secondary level. However, interviews with educators and policymakers revealed concerns about the narrow focus of these reforms, which often prioritized economic outcomes at the expense of broader educational goals. Some participants noted that the emphasis on vocational training did not always align with the aspirations of students, many of whom sought more academic or theoretical education to prepare them for higher education or professional careers. This misalignment led to dissatisfaction among both students and educators, and raised questions about the long-term effectiveness of these reforms.

- **Recent Reforms (2000s-Present): Balancing Globalization with National Priorities**

In the 2000s, Zambia's curriculum reforms began to reflect a growing tension between the need to align with global educational standards and the desire to maintain national identity and social cohesion. International organizations such as UNESCO and the World Bank played a significant role in shaping education policies during this period, promoting goals such as universal access to education, gender equality, and the inclusion of marginalized groups (Matafwali, 2022).

The curriculum reforms of this period were characterized by a shift towards more standardized education models that aligned with global benchmarks, such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). However, interviews with curriculum developers and educators revealed concerns about the extent to which these global initiatives were adapted to the Zambian context. Some participants argued that the emphasis on global standards sometimes led to the marginalization of local knowledge and cultural content in the curriculum. Others pointed out that the rapid pace of reform, driven by international funding and policy pressures, made it difficult for educators to keep up with the changes and to implement the new curriculum effectively.

5.2 Impact on Educational Outcomes

The study's analysis of educational outcomes across these different periods revealed several key trends and challenges associated with politically-driven curriculum reforms. These trends are discussed below in relation to student performance, curriculum stability, and the quality of education.

- | | | |
|------------------|--|--------------------|
| • Student | | Performance |
|------------------|--|--------------------|

Quantitative data analysis showed that student performance metrics, such as pass rates and exam scores, fluctuated in response to curriculum reforms. During the early post-independence period, the emphasis on civic education and national identity had a positive impact on student engagement and retention rates, as the curriculum was seen as relevant and meaningful to students' lives (Phiri, 2021). However, the strong ideological focus sometimes led to gaps in academic rigor, particularly in subjects such as mathematics and science, where students' performance lagged behind regional averages.

The neoliberal reforms of the 1990s, which prioritized vocational training and technical education, initially led to an improvement in student outcomes in these areas. However, the narrow focus of these reforms also resulted in a decline in performance in more academic subjects, as resources were diverted away from general education towards vocational programs. This created a disparity in educational outcomes, with students in more academically-oriented schools continuing to perform well, while those in vocational programs struggled to meet academic benchmarks.

Recent curriculum reforms have aimed to balance these competing priorities by promoting both vocational and academic education. However, the data suggests that while there have been improvements in student performance in some areas, challenges remain in terms of curriculum coherence and consistency across different schools and regions.

- | | | | | |
|---------------------|------------------|------------|-------------------|--|
| • Curriculum | Stability | and | Continuity | |
|---------------------|------------------|------------|-------------------|--|

One of the most significant challenges identified in the study was the instability caused by frequent curriculum changes driven by political ideologies. Educators interviewed for the study expressed frustration with the constant revisions to the curriculum, which made it difficult to plan and implement effective teaching strategies. This instability was particularly pronounced during periods of political transition, when new governments sought to impose their ideological vision on the education system (Ngoma & Kalaba, 2020).

The data also showed that curriculum instability had a negative impact on student outcomes, particularly in terms of retention rates and exam performance. When the curriculum was subject to frequent changes, students struggled to adapt to new content and expectations, leading to higher dropout rates and lower performance in national exams. This was particularly evident during the transition from the Humanist curriculum of the Kaunda era to the neoliberal

reforms of the 1990s, when many students found it difficult to adjust to the new focus on vocational training and technical education.

- **Quality of Education**

The quality of education delivered in Zambia has been a major concern throughout the various periods of curriculum reform. While political ideologies have shaped the content and focus of the curriculum, they have also had significant implications for the overall quality of education. During the Humanist period, the curriculum's strong ideological focus sometimes came at the expense of academic rigor, particularly in technical subjects. This led to concerns about the preparedness of Zambian students for higher education and the workforce (Simuziya, 2021).

The neoliberal reforms of the 1990s, while improving vocational training and technical education, also faced criticism for neglecting broader educational goals. The emphasis on economic efficiency and market-driven skills led to a narrowing of the curriculum, which some educators argued reduced the quality of education in other areas. More recent reforms, which have sought to balance global standards with national priorities, have made strides in improving the quality of education. However, challenges remain, particularly in terms of ensuring that the curriculum is relevant, coherent, and consistently implemented across the country.

5.3 Stakeholder Perceptions

The interviews with key stakeholders, including policymakers, educators, and curriculum developers, provided valuable insights into the perceptions of those involved in curriculum development and implementation. These perceptions varied depending on the stakeholders' roles and experiences, but several common themes emerged.

- **Educators' Views**

Educators expressed concerns about the frequent changes to the curriculum, which they felt were often driven more by political agendas than by educational needs. Many educators noted that they had little input into the curriculum development process, which was typically led by policymakers and government officials. This lack of involvement made it difficult for educators to adapt to the new curriculum, particularly when the changes were implemented rapidly and with little support (Chishiba & Simbeye, 2020).

Educators also highlighted the challenges they faced in balancing the demands of the curriculum with the realities of teaching in under-resourced schools. Many schools lacked the necessary materials, infrastructure, and training to implement the curriculum effectively, particularly in rural areas. This disparity in resources contributed to uneven educational outcomes, with students in urban schools generally performing better than those in rural schools.

- **Policymakers' Views**

Policymakers, on the other hand, defended the curriculum changes as necessary for promoting national development

and aligning Zambia's education system with global standards. Many policymakers saw the curriculum as a tool for social and economic transformation, arguing that it needed to be flexible enough to respond to changing political and economic conditions. However, some policymakers acknowledged the challenges of implementing these changes, particularly in terms of ensuring that they were adapted to the local context and supported by adequate resources and training.

Policymakers also emphasized the importance of balancing national priorities with global educational goals. While they recognized the need to align with international standards, they also stressed the importance of maintaining a curriculum that reflected Zambian values and culture. This tension between national and global priorities was seen as one of the key challenges facing curriculum development in Zambia.

• **Curriculum** **Developers'** **Views**

Curriculum developers highlighted the complexities of designing a curriculum that met the needs of both the government and the education system. They noted that curriculum development was often a politically charged process, with different stakeholders pushing for their own agendas. This made it difficult to create a coherent and consistent curriculum that could be implemented effectively across the country (Ngoma & Kalaba, 2020).

Curriculum developers also expressed concerns about the influence of international organizations on Zambia's education system. While they recognized the importance of aligning with global standards, they argued that these standards sometimes conflicted with local needs and priorities. They called for a more balanced approach to curriculum development that took into account both national and global goals, and that involved a wider range of stakeholders in the process.

These findings highlight the significant role that political ideologies have played in shaping Zambia's secondary school curriculum and the impact of these ideologies on educational outcomes. The results also reveal the challenges associated with politically-driven curriculum reforms, including instability, inconsistency, and disparities in educational quality. The next section will discuss these findings in more detail, exploring their implications for curriculum development and educational policy in Zambia.

6. Discussion

This section delves into the implications of the findings presented in the results section, analyzing how political ideologies have shaped curriculum development in Zambia and how these influences have affected educational outcomes. The discussion also explores the broader theoretical and practical implications of the study, highlighting the challenges and opportunities associated with politically-driven curriculum reforms. Finally, this section offers strategies for depoliticizing

curriculum development and ensuring that future reforms prioritize educational quality and stability while balancing national priorities with global standards.

6.1 The Influence of Political Ideologies on Curriculum Development

The study's findings reveal that political ideologies have been a significant driver of curriculum development in Zambia since independence. Successive political regimes have used the curriculum as a tool for advancing their ideological goals, from promoting national unity under Kenneth Kaunda's Humanism to emphasizing economic liberalization and vocational training under the neoliberal reforms of the 1990s. These ideological shifts have had profound implications for the content, structure, and delivery of education in Zambia.

One of the key takeaways from this study is that while political ideologies can play a crucial role in shaping national identity and promoting social cohesion, they can also lead to instability and inconsistency in the education system. The frequent changes to the curriculum, driven by shifts in political leadership, have often resulted in a fragmented and incoherent education system that struggles to maintain continuity and stability. This finding aligns with existing literature on the challenges of politically-driven curriculum reforms in post-colonial Africa, where education systems are often subject to the whims of changing political regimes (Ezeanya-Esiobu, 2019).

For instance, during Kaunda's era, the focus on Humanism and nation-building was reflected in the curriculum's emphasis on civic education and Zambian history. While these reforms were successful in fostering a sense of national identity, they also led to an overemphasis on political indoctrination at the expense of academic rigor, particularly in technical subjects like mathematics and science (Carmody, 2020). This ideological focus on promoting national unity, while important in the post-colonial context, ultimately limited the curriculum's ability to prepare students for the demands of a modern economy.

In contrast, the neoliberal reforms of the 1990s prioritized market-driven skills and vocational training, reflecting the government's focus on economic liberalization and global competitiveness. However, while these reforms improved access to vocational education, they also created new challenges. The narrow focus on economic outcomes often neglected the broader educational goals of critical thinking, creativity, and academic excellence, leading to a decline in the quality of education in more academically-oriented subjects (Ngoma & Kalaba, 2020). This shift highlights the tension between national political agendas and the need for a well-rounded education that equips students with a diverse set of skills for both national development and global participation.

These findings underscore the need for a more balanced approach to curriculum development, one that takes into account both national and global priorities. While political ideologies are an inevitable part of education policy in any nation, the challenge is to ensure that they do not undermine the stability and quality of the education system. This requires a curriculum that is flexible enough to adapt to changing political and economic conditions, but also coherent and consistent enough to provide students with a stable and high-quality education.

6.2 Impact on Educational Outcomes: The Tension Between National and Global Priorities

The study's findings also reveal the complex relationship between national and global priorities in curriculum development. Zambia, like many other post-colonial nations, has had to balance the need to promote national identity and social cohesion with the demands of a globalized economy. This tension is reflected in the curriculum reforms of the past few decades, which have often oscillated between these competing goals.

During the early post-independence period, the focus on national unity and cultural identity was seen as essential for nation-building in the wake of colonial rule. However, as Zambia became more integrated into the global economy, the need to align education with international standards and market demands became increasingly important. The neoliberal reforms of the 1990s, which prioritized vocational training and economic competitiveness, were a direct response to these global pressures (Simuziya, 2021). Yet, as the findings show, these reforms sometimes came at the expense of broader educational goals, leading to a decline in the overall quality of education.

This tension between national and global priorities is a common challenge in curriculum development, particularly in post-colonial contexts where education is often seen as a key tool for both nation-building and economic development. The study's findings suggest that while aligning with global standards is important, it is equally crucial to ensure that the curriculum reflects local values and needs. This requires a more nuanced approach to curriculum development, one that balances the promotion of national identity with the need to prepare students for participation in a globalized world (Matafwali, 2022).

The recent curriculum reforms, which have sought to balance these competing priorities, represent a step in the right direction. However, the study's findings suggest that more work is needed to ensure that these reforms are effectively implemented and that they address the challenges identified by educators and curriculum developers. This includes providing adequate resources and training to support the implementation of the new curriculum, as well as involving a broader range of stakeholders in the curriculum development process.

6.3 Depoliticizing Curriculum Development: Strategies for Future Reforms

One of the most significant challenges identified in this study is the need to depoliticize curriculum development in Zambia. The findings reveal that the frequent changes to the curriculum, driven by political ideologies, have often resulted in instability and inconsistency in the education system. This has had a negative impact on both educators and students, who have struggled to adapt to a constantly changing curriculum that is often more reflective of political agendas than educational needs (Ngoma & Kalaba, 2020).

To address this challenge, the study proposes several strategies for depoliticizing curriculum development and ensuring that future reforms prioritize educational quality and stability. These strategies include:

- **Establishing Independent Curriculum Development Bodies:** One of the key recommendations from the study is the creation of independent curriculum development bodies that are insulated from political influence. These bodies should be composed of education experts, educators, and representatives from civil society organizations, and should be responsible for developing and revising the curriculum based on educational best practices rather than political agendas. By removing the curriculum development process from the direct control of the government, this approach can help to ensure that the curriculum is more stable, coherent, and focused on long-term educational goals.
- **Involving a Broader Range of Stakeholders in the Curriculum Development Process:** Another important strategy is to involve a wider range of stakeholders in the curriculum development process, including educators, students, parents, and representatives from civil society organizations. This can help to ensure that the curriculum reflects the needs and perspectives of those directly affected by it, rather than being dictated solely by political leaders. The findings of the study suggest that many educators feel excluded from the curriculum development process, which makes it difficult for them to implement the curriculum effectively. By involving educators and other stakeholders in the process, the government can create a more inclusive and participatory approach to curriculum development (Chishiba & Simbeye, 2020).
- **Balancing National and Global Educational Goals:** The study also highlights the importance of balancing national and global educational goals in curriculum development. While it is important to align with global standards, this should not come at the expense of national priorities and local cultural values. Curriculum developers should strive to create a curriculum that is flexible enough to adapt to global changes but that also remains rooted in the national context. This requires a more nuanced approach to curriculum development that takes into account both the demands of a globalized world and the need to promote national identity and social cohesion (Matafwali, 2022).
- **Providing Adequate Resources and Training:** Finally, the study emphasizes the importance of providing adequate resources and training to support the implementation of the curriculum. One of the key challenges identified in the study is the disparity in resources between urban and rural schools, which has led to uneven educational outcomes. To address this, the government should ensure that all schools have access to the necessary materials, infrastructure, and training to implement the curriculum effectively. This includes providing ongoing professional development for educators to ensure that they are equipped with the skills and knowledge needed to deliver the curriculum successfully.

6.4 Theoretical Implications

The findings of this study also have important theoretical implications for understanding the relationship between politics and education in post-colonial contexts. The study draws on several theoretical frameworks, including Critical Pedagogy, Neoinstitutional Theory, and Structural Functionalism, to analyze the impact of political ideologies on curriculum development.

- **Critical Pedagogy:** The findings support the argument of Critical Pedagogy that education is inherently political and that the curriculum often reflects the interests of those in power. In the case of Zambia, successive political regimes

have used the curriculum as a tool for promoting their ideological goals, whether it be national unity, economic liberalization, or alignment with global standards. This has often resulted in a curriculum that prioritizes political indoctrination over critical thinking and academic excellence (Freire, 1970). The study's findings highlight the need for a more critical approach to curriculum development, one that empowers students to question and challenge existing power structures rather than simply reproducing them.

- **Neoinstitutional Theory:** The study also supports the argument of Neoinstitutional Theory that educational institutions often conform to the norms and expectations set by political and economic elites, even when these norms may not be in the best interest of students. In Zambia, the curriculum has often been shaped by the political priorities of the ruling government, leading to frequent changes that reflect shifting political ideologies rather than long-term educational goals (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). The findings suggest that creating more independent and autonomous educational institutions may help to reduce the influence of political ideologies on curriculum development.
- **Structural Functionalism:** Finally, the study's findings align with Structural Functionalism's emphasis on the role of education in maintaining social stability and transmitting cultural norms and values. In Zambia, the curriculum has been used as a tool for promoting national unity and social cohesion, particularly during the early post-independence period. However, the study also highlights the tensions that arise when education is used to serve competing social and economic goals, such as promoting national identity while also preparing students for participation in a globalized economy (Parsons, 1959). This suggests that curriculum development in post-colonial contexts requires a careful balancing act between these competing priorities.

6.5 Practical Implications

The practical implications of this study are significant for policymakers, educators, and curriculum developers in Zambia and other post-colonial nations facing similar challenges. The findings underscore the importance of creating a more stable and coherent curriculum that balances political, national, and global priorities. By implementing the strategies proposed in this study, policymakers can help to depoliticize curriculum development and ensure that future reforms are driven by educational needs rather than political agendas.

The study also highlights the importance of providing adequate resources and support to educators, who play a critical role in implementing the curriculum. By involving educators in the curriculum development process and providing them with the necessary training and resources, the government can help to ensure that the curriculum is implemented effectively and that students receive a high-quality education.

Finally, the study's findings have broader implications for the role of education in post-colonial development. By understanding the ways in which political ideologies have shaped curriculum development in Zambia, policymakers can develop more effective strategies for using education as a tool for promoting social and economic development in a rapidly changing world.

7. Conclusion

This study has explored how political ideologies have shaped Zambia's secondary school curriculum, influencing educational outcomes, stability, and overall quality. By examining the impact of various political regimes, this research highlights the interplay between politics and education in Zambia and provides recommendations for future curriculum reforms.

7.1 Summary of Key Findings

- 1. Kaunda's Humanism and Nation-Building:**
During the early post-independence period, Kaunda's government emphasized national unity and social cohesion through the curriculum, focusing on civic education, Zambian history, and African culture (Carmody, 2020). However, the strong ideological focus often led to an overemphasis on political indoctrination at the expense of academic rigor, especially in technical subjects.
- 2. Neoliberal Reforms and Vocational Training:**
The 1990s shift towards neoliberal economic policies brought a focus on vocational training, improving access to technical education. However, this narrow focus often neglected broader educational goals like critical thinking and academic excellence (Ngoma & Kalaba, 2020), highlighting the tension between national development priorities and a well-rounded education.
- 3. Balancing Global and National Priorities in Recent Reforms:**
Recent reforms have sought to balance global educational standards with national priorities, influenced by international organizations such as UNESCO and the World Bank (Matafwali, 2022). Despite these efforts, there remains a need to ensure that the curriculum reflects local values and needs alongside global benchmarks.
- 4. Challenges of Curriculum Instability:**
Frequent curriculum changes driven by political ideologies have caused instability, negatively impacting both educators and students. This has led to inconsistencies in content delivery and disparities in educational outcomes between urban and rural schools. The findings emphasize the need for a more stable curriculum that focuses on long-term educational goals.

7.2 Contributions to Existing Literature

This study contributes to the understanding of the relationship between political ideologies and education in post-colonial Africa. It highlights how political agendas have influenced curriculum design and implementation in Zambia, often exacerbating challenges in balancing national identity with global educational standards. Additionally, the research provides insights into the perspectives of key stakeholders, offering a foundation for further exploration of politically-driven education reforms in similar contexts.

7.3 Recommendations for Future Curriculum Reforms

1. **Depoliticizing Curriculum Development:**
Establish independent curriculum development bodies, insulated from political influence, to ensure that the curriculum reflects educational best practices rather than political agendas. These bodies should include diverse stakeholders, such as education experts, educators, and civil society representatives.
2. **Involving Educators in the Curriculum Development Process:**
Educators, who are central to curriculum implementation, should have a more direct role in the decision-making process. Their input is vital for creating a curriculum that is practical and effective in real classroom settings.
3. **Balancing National and Global Educational Goals:**
The curriculum should reflect both global standards and local values. Promoting Zambian history, culture, and civic education alongside global subjects such as STEM and digital literacy will create a well-rounded education that is both locally relevant and globally competitive.
4. **Ensuring Adequate Resources and Training:**
Address disparities in resources between urban and rural schools by providing the necessary materials, infrastructure, and ongoing professional development for educators to implement the curriculum effectively.
5. **Monitoring and Evaluation:**
Implement a robust system for monitoring and evaluating curriculum implementation and educational outcomes. Regular assessments will help ensure that the curriculum meets its objectives and effectively prepares students for both national and global challenges.

7.4 Limitations of the Study and Areas for Further Research

The study is limited by the availability of historical documents, particularly from the early post-independence period. Additionally, the semi-structured interviews involved a limited number of participants, which may not fully capture the diversity of perspectives on curriculum development in Zambia. Future research could expand the scope to include a larger and more diverse sample, particularly from rural areas, and explore the long-term impact of recent reforms on student outcomes.

7.5 Final Reflections

The findings of this study underscore the complexity of curriculum development in post-colonial contexts, where education serves as a tool for both national development and political ideologies. In Zambia, the curriculum has been shaped by successive regimes, contributing to nation-building but also creating challenges in terms of stability and coherence.

Moving forward, Zambia must depoliticize curriculum development to ensure that future reforms are driven by educational needs rather than political agendas. By involving a broader range of stakeholders, providing adequate resources

and training, and balancing national and global priorities, Zambia can create a stable and effective education system that meets the needs of its students in the 21st century.

In conclusion, while the relationship between politics and education is enduring, it can be managed through thoughtful policy-making and a commitment to inclusivity and excellence. With careful planning, Zambia can navigate the complexities of curriculum development and build an education system that serves all its citizens effectively.

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