

# Assessing the extent to which teachers apply thematic approach in the teaching and learning of history in Malawi

By

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## **Declaration**

I, Oscar Evans Nyirongo, declare that this dissertation on “Assessing the Extent to which Teachers Apply Thematic Approach in Teaching and Learning of History in Malawian Secondary Schools” was properly researched and is my original work. It has not been submitted to any institution of higher learning in whole or in part for any academic award. All quotes and sources have been acknowledged through referencing.

**Sign**.....

**(Student)**

**Date** .....

**Sign**.....

**(Supervisor)**

**Date**.....

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## **Dedication**

This piece of work is dedicated to my late Father Evans and late Brother Martin who went to rest a week and three days respectively, before I began this two-year journey, for the seed of education they planted and moral encouragement they gave since I began schooling. Special dedication too should go to my mother, Sally Violet Nyadaire, My Wife, Vitu, my son, Agape and all my brothers and sister for their moral and financial contribution towards the completion of this thesis.

May the good Lord bless you abundantly!

## **Abstract**

*This study aimed at assessing the extent to which teachers apply thematic approach to teaching and learning of history in the Malawian. Secondary schools. It was a qualitative case study which aimed at finding out how thematic curriculum was introduced to teachers, how they integrate themes, the challenges, and its effectiveness in improving learners' performance. The study used oral interviews, classroom observation and document analysis where interview guide, classroom observation forms, and document analysis checklist were used on a sample of one History QAO at Northern Education Division, 10 teachers of history and 18 students in six secondary schools within the Division. The results of the study indicate that teachers are trying their best in implementing the new curriculum innovation. Only that they face a number of challenges. This has been attributed to the ambiguity in the design of the curriculum, shortage and in availability of authentic teaching and learning resources, and lack of proper orientation of teachers to authentic curriculum pedagogies. These have led to problems in the applicability of the approach resulting into continued teacher centered approaches to the teaching of history content to prepare students for national examinations. The study recommends that for thematic curriculum to be successfully implemented, the curriculum developers should be clear in what they intend to achieve in the model of the curriculum chosen and provide authentic teaching and learning materials. This study has expanded current gaps in the literature with respect to attempts to*

*develop an innovative curriculum, implementation process and the benefits students would get from a well-designed history curriculum.*

**The key words:**Thematic curriculum, intended curriculum, enacted curriculum, authentic learning, qualitative outcomes

## **Abbreviations and Acronyms**

CA	: Continuous Assessment
MoEST	: Ministry of Education Science and Technology
OBE	: Outcome-Based Education
PCAR	: Primary Curriculum Assessment Reform
SSCAR	: Secondary School Curriculum Assessment Reform
MANEB	: Malawi National Examinations Board
MIE	: Malawi Institute of Education
MSCE	: Malawi School Certificate of Education
NESP	: National Education Sector Plan
INSET	: In-Service Training
CPD	: Continuous Professional Development

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# Chapter 1: Introduction and Background of the Study

## 1.0 Introduction

History is one of the subjects being taught in Malawian secondary schools. The teaching of this subject started way back during the missionary and colonial era in the 1940s. It was included in the college curriculum for the first time at higher institution level at Soche College in the 1960s (Kalinga, 1998). Its inclusion in the curriculum responds to one of the rationales that it provides a mirror of peoples' achievements and challenges which help them to effectively plan for their future.

## 1.1 Background

Since the introduction of secondary school history education in the 1940s, the subject has undergone several changes to suit both educational and political philosophies of the government of the time (Banda, 1982). Before democratic dispensation the pedagogical approaches emphasised on content mastery and memorisation of facts as presented by teachers, and the role of students was to receive, digest, organise and replicate what the teacher or the textbook tells them, a key characteristic of the Great Tradition of chronological teaching (Kalinga, 1998). Critical tradition in teaching of history on the other hand is said to be more recent and takes a different pedagogical approach, where pupils play the role of active constructors of historical knowledge through primary research (Klein, 2005; Olemaet *al.*, 2021). From this pedagogical approach comes thematic teaching and according to Alipin and Wibawa (2019), it emerged from an integrated

curriculum where students learn a theme of various perspectives. Freeman and Sokoloff (1995) argue that its vision is to see teachers able to identify a topic, developing a visual representation of ideas and facts related to the topic, and then identifying materials and designing curriculum activities. Klein (2005) on the other hand, states that thematic approach helps in instilling the required historical skills, values and attitudes.

In 2012, the Ministry of Education re-sounded a call for history teachers to use a thematic approach in the teaching and learning of history in Malawian secondary schools. By this call, the ministry wanted teachers to do away with the chronological approach since the edge of its introduction in secondary schools in the 1940s. An assessment of the extent to which this call has been adhered to is the main thought of this study.

By definition, Zinet *et al.* (2019) defines thematic teaching as a way of planning, organising and implementation of educational curriculum around an idea or topic that is relevant to the time, place, interests, background and level of development of the learner. Jackman (2002) and Saraswathi and Stanly (2018), further highlight that the approach stresses on one topic or context or a group of closely related contexts that forms the foundation of a unit for students' learning at a particular time. Min *et al.* (2012) also defines thematic approach as a teaching and learning strategy that incorporates themes to create active and meaningful learning.

It is difficult to come up with a single definition of thematic teaching and learning since there are a number of ways how curriculum is designed. For instance, Fogarty (1991) highlights ten ways to integrate curriculum, which include different models such as fragmented, connected, nested, sequenced, shared, webbed, threaded, integrated, immersed, and networked. From the ten proposed models in which some of them (Threaded, Integrated, Immersed and Networked) are interdisciplinary models, while thematic learning refers to Webbed model and integrated learning refers to Integrated model (Chumdari *et al.*, 2018). A thematic approach therefore, is a strategy of managing the curriculum, using variety of teaching techniques, methods, teaching approaches, learning materials, learner's activities, and context, organised around a single theme to promote students' development of skills, values and attitudes.

There are different curriculum approaches that have been designed from the concept of themes depending on the intended outcome each education system espouses to realise. Wardani *et al.* (2019) argue that thematic instructions involve the use of themes as the main point for students, strengthening ties to knowledge and the approach makes the teacher to effectively use strategies that not only involve students in a funny way, but also that makes a strong connection between abstract ideas and understanding. This therefore demands a teacher who has a clear understanding of the material and be aware of what ideas need to be taught and the best way to teach them. This is different from the traditional approach which is typically based on units, subjects, and chapters or topics which are usually

delivered to students using teacher centered approaches. Thematic curriculum according to Wardani (2019) regulates these parts.

Countries have chosen different models of thematic curriculum. In Malawi, the integration model was adopted in the 1990s for the primary school curriculum. In this model, different subjects were grouped together in one subject. For instance, at primary school, history, geography, and civic studies were grouped into what was called social studies, which later was changed to social and environmental sciences. In secondary schools, while taking a unilateral stand, history syllabus took a topical approach arranged in sequential model. In this model, topics acted as themes. Later in 2001, a nested model was adopted where curriculum was viewed in three dimensional terms of themes, topics and content as envisioned by Freeman and Sokolof (1995).

The 2001 curriculum contained themes like, technology, migrations, systems of government, religion, economics, imperialism, nationalism, and cooperation. These themes covered a wide range of topics and learning areas or even case studies. For example, the imperialism theme, had topics such as the Assyrian and Roman invasions of Egypt, the Arab occupation of the East Coast and Portuguese and Arab-Swahili settlements in Central Africa, the scramble for and partition of Africa, Jihads, Hitler's and Mussolini's policies of expansion, and the spread of communism. The theme of nationalism covered topics like the Balkans and the German annexation of Austria in the context of the study of the two world wars, and



independence movements and decolonisation in India, Ghana, Zambia and Malawi. However, what is noteworthy with this syllabus is that in some cases, it was incidental and deliberate to match a theme with a particular topical area.

The 2012 review saw a more elaborate syllabus with themes which have been called as core elements, written against each topic under study. The integrated themes were called core elements (MoEST, 2015). In this case, several topics were grouped around a particular central theme and the theme acted as a big idea of the topics and the content to be taught. There are five core elements (themes) namely; interrelationship among the individual family and society; interdependence between Malawi and the world; patriotism and nationalism; economic and social issues in history and lastly, leadership styles in history. Each of these themes are attached to two or more topics within the syllabus both at Junior and Senior secondary school level, and being an Outcome-based education Curriculum, its corresponding outcomes have also been incorporated. From this arrangement, students are expected to develop values, skills, attitudes and knowledge through history as a subject (MoEST, 2014).

Turan (2020) highlighted advantages of thematic teaching and these included: good for teaching multiple perspectives, allows students to be creative, enables students to catch up with current issues, focuses on skills and not knowledge, more suitable for citizenship education and supports historical learning beyond the textbooks. Ain and Rahutami (2018) also states that a the theme is the center or

development of several integrated lessons in that, it is the focus of material development, major concern in learning and a tool for understanding the subject matter. Collins (1993) also observed that thematic curriculum enhances the quality of education as examined through three outcomes namely, instruction of critical thinking skills, and motivation of students to be self-directed and assume responsibility for their own learning, and the empowerment of teachers to become educational leaders. The experiences of history teachers and learners since the introduction of the thematic approach in Malawi, is yet to be scholarly appreciated.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Since the adoption of thematic curriculum in secondary schools in Malawi from 2001 and in 2012, no meaningful scholarly attention was paid on teachers' experiences and effectiveness in the teaching and learning of history. Dzikanyanga (2018) also called for research on the practicality of the approach in secondary schools in Malawi. Lack of research-based evidence of its implementation and effectiveness poses a risk in the education system that its outcomes might not be desirable or may not be what is anticipated in the education policy. For example, there is a general outcry about dwindling moral, ethical values and human dignity in the country (Kang'ombe, 2021; Nhlane, 2018; Shara, 2017) despite these being the intended outcomes of the thematic curriculum. Performance of students in history during national examinations has also remained poor, and there is always a call for teachers to cover the syllabus in time to improve the same (MANEB, 2019).

&2020) which paradoxically has overwhelming content and the opposite of thematic approach. The inclusion of new assessment standards in other curriculum subjects again are said to have not contributed to improvement in students' performance (Chiziwa and Kumkwezu, 2021). For the history curriculum, little is known too. One wonders therefore, whether teachers apply thematic approach to teaching and learning or not, and whether the curriculum has an impact to address the social ills of the society.

### **1.3.0 Aim of the Study**

The study, therefore sought to assess the extent to which teachers apply thematic approach in the teaching and learning of history in the Malawian secondary schools.

#### **1.3. 1 Study Objectives**

The study,

- i. explored how thematic curriculum approach was introduced in history teaching and learning,
- ii. investigated how teachers have been implementing the thematic teaching and learning of history,
- iii. analysed the challenges experienced in the implementation of thematic history curriculum, and
- iv. evaluated the effectiveness of thematic approach in improving

learners' performance in history education.

### **1.3.3 Research Questions**

The study responded to the following research questions:

- i. How was the thematic curriculum approach introduced in history teaching and learning?
- ii. How have teachers been implementing the thematic approach in teaching and learning of history?
- iii. What are the challenges faced in the implementation of thematic history curriculum?
- iv. How effective has the thematic approach been in improving learners' performance in history education?

### **1.4 Significance of the Study**

The results of this study are of great importance to curriculum developers to think on how best the new methods and approaches can successfully be implemented. From the study, one can see the efficacy of thematic pedagogical approach in improving history students' performance. The study has also explored ways of improving teacher classroom practices in view of its findings to suit the demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The study has also added to scholarly discourse among educationists on how they can improve quality delivery of education in Malawi after

curriculum reform.

This information will also guide research on how teacher-training colleges in develop history teachers. This will help to understand the entry knowledge student teachers have before they join the profession.

This study has added a voice on the columnists on the existing knowledge on the application of thematic approach and tries to fill the gap on the application of the learned skills, values and attitudes in real life. This would help curriculum designers to ensure the transfer of knowledge in a practical manner basing on the strategies which are used in the classroom situation, compatible with thematic curriculum. For example, clear activities in the curriculum should be developed to address the outcomes of a particular theme such as leadership, and this needs to be reflected in the scheme and lesson plan (theme-based planning).

The study has also illuminated two key options that are considered in designing thematic approach, which are content and context options, if in practice are followed in both design and implementation of the curriculum. It is also worth noting that most of the studies on thematic teaching focus on the influence the curriculum have on students' learning outcomes than on the teachers' actual pedagogical practices.

## 1.5 Theoretical Framework

The study is grounded on Frame-Factor-Theory (FFT) by Kallos and Lundgren (1979) which describes frame factors as components of the teaching-learning environment that establishes the structure of the teaching process. These are factors which are said to be beyond the control of teachers who formulate their teaching strategies and patterns of interaction in line with the frames available to them (Persson, 2014). The theory gets explanatory power through a focussed and realistic evaluation of the educational processes that take place as a consequence of the actors' moves and underlying perceptions and intentions within the constraints set by the organisation and different kinds of frames. The main corpus of frame factor theory is built around the idea that changes in external frames limit and regulate changes in internal processes indirectly. Unlike in direct cause-effect relations, it is argued that changes in frames enable or disable certain process possibilities (Persson, 2014).

According to Backstrom (2023), the FFT forebodes that there are three major frame factors that will direct and limit teachers' instructional practices in class. These include, (i) prior knowledge of students, (ii) the curricula, and (iii) time at hand. It is contended that if the time needed surpasses time at hand, then the learning in class will be affected and the teacher must act in some way. One of the alternatives in this case would include lowering demands or alter the content

covered (Backstrom, 2023).

Lundgren argued that frame factors and teaching process together set the level and type of students' learning that reflect the knowledge, skills, and attitude the students do acquire (Raza *et al.*, 2012). This sequence, according to Perrson (2014) establishes a direct relationship between frame factors, teaching process, and students' learning. While it can be assumed that the quality of students' learning and performance depend largely upon frame factors outside the classroom and teaching process, Backstrom (2022) argues that the composition of students in a class also affects the teachers' instructional independence and limits the selection of strategies and content and the current study highlights this connection.

This theory describes the process of formulation, transformation and realisation of knowledge within educational settings. It is noted that frame factors exert forces on teachers as well as learners who become able to evolve patterns of their resultant behaviour (Bernstein, 2003). Teachers' strategies about content, delivery protocol, assessment, and interaction with students and students' strategies about participation, acquisition, and realisation all are governed by frame factors (Raza *et al.*, 2012 and Saxell & Svensson, 2005).

Maxwell (1985) finally states that frame factor theory is important in understanding the limits of decision making at all levels from administrative to the classroom arena. It is argued that in the process of curriculum implementation, the framing of

decisions carried out by teachers is affected by decisions higher up the decision-making structure such as the Ministry of Education, and even curriculum developers. According to Maxwell, in this line of decision making, higher levels have greater power by virtue of their economic control and legally backed position (Maxwell, 1985).

Perrson (2014) argues that it does not mean that institutions prevent change; rather, they contribute to change by way of formal and informal regulations on the actions they take. It is from this perspective that Lundgren (1999) stated that, teaching is not based merely on the discretion of the teacher. Rather, it is limited by the forces of organisational and curriculum frames. Lundgren stated that organisational frames or measures provide the tangible components employed in the teaching process. Whereas the curriculum frames, besides providing the textual materials, establish the goals to be achieved through teaching. In this way, these frames delimit the teaching process and teachers' performance accordingly. It can therefore, be concluded that these frames shed light on the relationships established between the frame factors and the variables of the teaching process and learning outcomes.

In the context of this study, the researcher evaluated the following frames; thematic history curriculum approach, Secondary schools, Curriculum framework, and curriculum administrative frames. Teacher attributes, learning pedagogies and facilitation, pedagogies of teaching and learning resources and students'



feedback acted as sub-frames. The discrepancy between the frames and actual practices provided the bases to identify the challenges, and then to judge whether the curriculum was effective or not, based on the prevalent conditions. It is these analyses that informed the studies implications and recommendations.

On introduction of the curriculum, the frame factor theory was used to analyze decisions and activities that took place and the involvement of teachers, learners and other stakeholders in the process. Secondly, the theory was used to analyse different teacher and learner practices in the implementation stage. Practices during the implementation process illuminated the challenges teachers and learners faced in the implementation of the thematic history curriculum in secondary schools. It is from the evaluation of implementation process, and the challenges incurred, that informed the judgment on whether the curriculum is effective or not, as matched with the intended precepts in the curriculum framework.

All in all, the theory is used to protest the popular view that teachers are naturally resistant to change. However, in this context of pedagogical reform, are different frame factors that have been pointed out to be the underlying factors for lack of meaningful change. This is a view that is supported by some scholars like Chimbi and Jita (2021).

## **1.6 Layout of the Study**

This thesis is presented in several chapters as follows:

In **chapter one**, an introduction to the thesis has been set. It states the background of the study, statement of research problem that justifies the basis of this research. It has also outlined the aims, objectives of the study and research questions that were used to address the existing problem under this study. The chapter has also outlined the significance the study has to the academia, and other educational stakeholders in filling the knowledge gap and influencing policy changes. Lastly, the theoretical framework that guided the research in different themes has been highlighted.

In **Chapter two**, existing literature on thematic teaching and learning is reviewed. It looks at how the curriculum approach has been introduced in other countries, its implementation, challenges and effectiveness it has registered. This has been discussed thematically, based on the objectives of the study. It is from this chapter, that the study recognises some research gaps, which this study attempts to address.

**Chapter three** describes the methodology that the study opted. It focuses on research design, research paradigm, research sample and sampling technique, data collection tools and methods, data analysis procedures, limitations of the study and ethical considerations taken into account during the study. These are the guiding frames that were used to situate the study, data collection and presentation and discussion of the findings. They also acted as the basis on which conclusion were made.

In **Chapter four** results and their discussions are presented based on research objectives. Within this chapter, the researcher presents the raw data, interprets it and relates it to the theoretical framework of the study and existing literature.

**Chapter five** is a concluding chapter of the thesis where a summary of the findings has been made. It also draws the attention to several issues that can be used on which further research can be conducted. It concludes by presenting some recommendations which different stakeholders might view them of practical use in various areas.

## **1.8 Conclusion**

In this introductory chapter of the thesis an attempt has been made to introduce the research problem, which highlights the failure of an educational reform to address challenges of the society despite the fact that it was planned for the same. The chapter has also articulated the objectives and research questions that aimed at addressing the purpose of the study. It has also presented the significance of the study to the academia in terms of filling the knowledge gap and also to the education policy. Theoretical framework on which this study has been grounded has also been introduced. Lastly, the layout of the chapters of this thesis has also been outlined to give the reader an overview of the whole thesis. The next chapter will present a discussion of relevant literature review on thematic teaching and learning.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### 2.0 Introduction

Curriculum reform has been part of education processes in most countries with the view of trying to find what would work with the changing and dynamic world. This chapter reviews the existing literature on thematic teaching and learning. Overall, the chapter highlights how different curriculum reforms including thematic approach have been introduced and issues related to their initial preparation activities during orientation and in-service training, affects the actual implementation process. It reviews the literature on the effects of thematic approach and similar curriculum approaches on learners' outcome. In the final analysis, the chapter engages literature on the challenges this approach has faced in countries like South Africa, Uganda and other countries in Asia. The chapter observes that most of the studies are general to curriculum reforms while some have focused on other subjects rather than history.

## **2.1 Introduction of Thematic Curriculum in History**

One of the themes that have been studied on thematic curriculum has been on the introduction of the principle in schools. For example, one of the scholars who reviewed the introduction of thematic curriculum is Wahlstrom and Sundberg (2015) who considered that discussions with work teams were most relevant compared to the rest. However, there is no one-for-all direction through which different countries used to bring the curriculum to teachers and other stakeholders.

Arguably, a study by Maharajh *et al.*, (2013) contended that training and orientations are valuable at this level in the sense that it provides teachers with the skills that

would enable them to implement the curriculum efficiently though in most cases, teachers are not involved in the planning stage. A reflection by Bojanic (2004) showed that the major purpose of orienting teachers to the prescribed curricular is for them to easily translate the aims and outcomes into their operation plan. This supports the proponents of the frame factor theory, who observed that most of the curriculum implementation processes in developing countries is taking a top-bottom approach. According to Perrson (2014), institutions beyond the classroom arena do not prevent change; rather, they play a role in influencing any change to take place through either formal or informal regulations on the actions they take. Through staff-orientations, teachers are informed about the aims, tasks and outcomes of the new curriculum, its structure, planned operation modes and evaluation system. Seminars are conducted in conjunction with authors of the curriculum for teachers to have a clear picture of the possibilities of instruction process' realisation at school level.

In Zinet *al.* (2019)'s study, on top of orientations, modules were prepared that guided teachers on the application of thematic approach in the curriculum. It is argued that the modules assisted in providing practical guide arise in how the curriculum would effectively be implemented in the actual teaching and learning process, especially for some teachers who had not attended orientation sessions organised by the ministry of education. This matches with the view by Kadzamira and Rose (2001) who observed that for any new curriculum reform, teachers need to be well trained for implementation.

In Malawi, Chirwa (2013) evaluated the introduction of theme-based expressive arts curriculum at primary school under the framework of Outcome-Based Education (OBE) and noted that it was meant to reflect the society needs and skills required to the learners to live a meaningful life in their communities. It is contended that in its initial training course MIE followed a practical and participatory mode of training (Mchazime, 2003) and an observation by Chiziwa and Kunkwezu (2021) showed that the same PCAR model was adopted in secondary schools, especially on the element of continuous assessment.

Another focus by scholars on the introduction of thematic curriculum has been on the model it takes. For example, Freeman & Sokolof (1995) and Yaganhar (2016) looked at themes as broad questions for learners to integrate information, and the topic or several topics within the learning experience. Reflecting on the same, Lung (1999) observed that themes are used to integrate units and provide relevance to the subject. While there are many thematic curriculum models and approaches popular among scholars across the world in different curriculum subjects, there are numerous subtle variations found in the terminology used in the literature. Some of the terms used are: “thematic approach” (Min *et al.*, 2012; Handal & Bobis, 2004), “thematic programme” (Lung, 1999), “thematic teaching approach” (Dilek, 2002), “thematic instruction” (Cloutier, 2013), “theme-based courses” (Lisa & Jack, 2015), “thematic teaching and learning” (Retnawati & Arlinwibowo, 2017), and “thematic, integrative content” (Adi, 2017). Nuelaela *et al.* (2018) and Anshory

and Isbadrianigtyas (2019) named it “learning model” and “thematic learning strategy” respectively while Yugandhar (2016) termed it “theme-based instruction”. Lastly, Bolak *et al.* (2017) called it “thematic units”. These terminologies, illuminate the approach in curriculum organisation and implementation as regards the type of approach it takes to meet its outcome.

Fogarty (1991) and Morris (2003) contextualised thematic curriculum in what is called curriculum integration. They outlined ten popular curriculum integration models namely, fragmented model, connected model, nested model, sequence, shared, webbed, threaded, integrated, immersed, and networked model (see appendix 14). While it is common in all, but one of the above models that there is need for two or more subjects some need themes to be combined so that students should see a bigger picture. A similar understanding was submitted by Drake and Reid (2018) who presented a continuum for curriculum integration in which the following aspects were highlighted; Fusion, multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary, and trans-disciplinary.

On the issue of being a theory and implementation, Hamidah (2018) argues that thematic curriculum was framed along aspects of five orientations to curriculum organisation which include academic rationalism, cognitive process, self actualisation, social reconstruction, and utilitarianism. According to Wahlstrom and Sundberg (2015), advocates of academic rationalism believe that curriculum should develop students’ intellectual abilities in distinct areas or subjects of study. The



cognitive process on the other hand conceptualizes curriculum that aims at developing students' ability to think and stresses on the learning process rather than curriculum content or subject matter (Tanrıverdi and Apak, 2013). Those who propose for self actualisation orientation propound that learners should be at the core of any curricula organisation and should be the crucial source of all the planned curricular that would develop rewarding experiences for personal development (Schiro, 2013). Social reconstruction support the notion that the purpose of curriculum is to enhance the reconstruction of the society and the school should help students to develop a critical consciousness and a sense of social responsibility. Utilitarian orientations according to Salleh *et al.* (2015) are generally concerned with functional competencies, performance, procedure and instructional efficiency.

However, a close look at these ideological perspectives, thematic curriculum takes more after the learner-centered proponents who according to Schiro (2013), believes that students have to be helped to develop naturally according to their innate abilities. In this case, the role of the teacher is to facilitate the development of meaningful learning experiences, where learners themselves will engage in, through their interaction with each other. This has a foundation from the self-actualisation curriculum orientation as already alluded to above.

From the literature, it can be concluded that different countries choose different models to introduce the thematic curriculum. According to Raza *et al.* (2012), the

type of the model chosen would act as a frame that will determine teacher–learner interaction in the classroom arena and the outcomes realised at the end. It is therefore important to pay attention to the constructs of each model chosen, to understand the level of application in a particular setting. However, all the models are framed to provide learners with skills, values and attitudes not forgetting democratic principles. These are said to be important as they make learners survive after they leave school.

## **2.2 Implementation of the Thematic Teaching and Learning of History**

The other topic that attracted scholarship is the Implementation of thematic approach. It is argued that a new curriculum enacted at school level, mostly implies changing teachers’ practices, their beliefs, and the materials used, and includes shared understanding among participants concerning the implied presuppositions, values and assumptions that underlie the whole process (Viennet & Pont, 2017). Among the determinants of curriculum implementation include availability of resources (human, cultural & material), training of teachers and finances (Maharajhet al., 2013). These, in other words are frame factors in any curriculum implementation.

The implementation of the current thematic history is among different curriculum reforms the Malawi education sector has implemented since the 1960s. Scholars have argued that the first curriculum review during the presidency of Dr Kamuzu Banda between 1960s and 1980s seems to have perpetuated the old colonial and

imperial narrative and pedagogy (Kalinga, 1998). The post-independence curriculum review of 1969 and 1987 on the other hand, focused on content decolonization, with calls on the importance of centring the new curriculum that serves the local needs and socio-economic development aspirations. With concerns on the introduction of local history and meaningful engagement of learners in the history classroom through the principles of constructivism, it is noted that prioritisation of examinations by the MCE Board over shadowed the anticipated reform outcomes of curricula.

However, the curriculum is said to have introduced an innovation of historical thinking skills reflected from briefly outlined assessment objectives that required students to explain and interpret historical events and ideas. Students were also required to relate historical events to contemporary issues. In addition, they were asked to discuss causes and consequences and evaluate historical information. This reform in history syllabus however had its own weakness in that it had no reference to the civic uses of history. .Also worth highlighting is the fact that, teacher-centred methods of teaching predominated in the teaching and learning arena, hampering the very purpose of developing historical thinking skills in students (Bentrovato & Dzikanyanga, 2022).

The 1995 to 2000 history curriculum review saw the emergence of the teaching syllabus that replaced the examination syllabus. Apart from the content to be covered, the syllabus also prescribed teaching methodologies, books and

assessment procedures. In terms of Historical skills, the reviewed history syllabus had objectives that required students to describe, analyse, compare and evaluation of historical events. Also worth mentioning is the fact that the curriculum took a thematic approach to teaching and learning, and was maintained in the 2007 curriculum review. This was a key departure to curriculum structure followed since the 1940s. However, Dzikanyanga (2018) states that this approach which signaled an innovative pedagogy was not completely followed in the actual teaching and learning.

Among the studies on thematic curriculum implementation is that of Zin *et al.* (2019). They outlined different strategies in the implementation of thematic teaching, which may act as a frame to guide teachers in deciding the learning experiences. These strategies are: firstly, as the basic framework of the curriculum; secondly, as one of the teaching approaches; and thirdly, as a teaching resource based on the current needs of the activity. In the first strategy, teachers are required to design all aspects of the curriculum, including lesson planning, child-centered teaching and learning methods selection, teaching and learning resources. In the second strategy of thematic teaching, is used as a single approach and is commonly known as the thematic approach and is used in situations where teachers are bound by existing curriculum requirements and therefore, are compelled to designing and implementing thematic teaching for the entire programme (Zin, *et al.*, 2019). The third strategy for implementing thematic teaching uses the theme as a learning resource and is implemented in the context of the

existing rigid curriculum that must be adhered to as a whole but the difference from the second strategy however, is that in this situation, thematic teaching employs following the occurrence of a particular event.

Key to thematic curriculum implementation is authentic teaching and learning materials. The study by Hamidah *et al.* (2019) alluded to the fact that the presence of learning material has the capacity of helping to carry out the curriculum, guiding teachers to determine the learning methods, and giving knowledge both for the students and teachers. With this in mind the following were some of the recommendations and considerations when one wants to choose good learning materials for the thematic curriculum: (1) stimulate reading interest; (2) explain the objectives to be achieved; (3) arranged based on flexible learning pattern; (4) the structure is based on final competency to be achieved; (5) focus on students' chance to practice; (6) accommodate learning difficulties of the students; (7) give summary; (8) presented in the instructional process; (9) have mechanism of collecting students' feedback (Hamidah *et al.*, 2019).

Another sub-theme on thematic curriculum implementation is to do with authentic learning resources. Adi (2017) stated that in thematic curriculum, learning resources, and learning media assist students in the activities of discovering and establishing knowledge holistically and acquisition of the required outcomes such as attitudes and skills, as from a particular theme to realise the desired outcomes. Adi argued that good learning material, clear maps basic competencies of attitudes

focused on each learning process and that desired attitudes or skills are instilled in students due to the help of such type of material resources. This at the end helps in conveying life-long learning experiences. This according to Sebbowa and Ng' ambi (2020) and UNICEF (2019), involves integration of emerging technology in history lessons such as phones and wiki which exposes students. This is part of endeavours different educationists try to explore to make sure that history lessons match with the thematic approach, and move away from chronological approach to instruction.

In conclusion, it can be contended that while all education reforms undergo an implementation process that anticipates producing effective intended results, policy makers themselves do not necessarily grant much attention to their implementation as also argued by Viennet & Pont, (2017). From the frame-factor theoretical perspective, depriving teachers CPDs or in-service trainings, limits them from delivering the expected subject matter at the same time using the right pedagogical approach. This makes them to resort to the old traditional methods.

### **2.3 Challenges Experienced in Implementing Thematic History Curriculum**

The third major theme that required review concerns the challenges faced in thematic history curriculum implementation. There is limited literature on the challenges facing the implementation of thematic history curriculum.

The first challenge to thematic history curriculum implementation has been on the nature of the subject itself. Turan (2020) observes that although the thematic approach has been around for almost a hundred years, to a larger extent, history continues to be taught within the framework of the chronological approach. According to Turan, perpetuation of chronological history teaching hinges on two justifications; that history cannot be understood and comprehended if chronology is taken out, and that it is a more effective method in teaching historical chronology because it is easy to understand and appropriate for all ages. The first claim according to Turan, has been emphasised by many historians and even some defined chronology as the backbone and basis of the science of history. The question which can be asked now is; to what extent can history be taught thematically? This leads to the second challenge of ambiguity in curriculum design.

Ambiguity of curriculum design, according to Finch *et al.* (1997) is another challenge to the implementation of thematic curriculum approach. It is noted that there is confusion where the designs do not provide a clear bench mark on what the teachers are supposed to do and what students are expected to achieve at the end of the lesson. This has resulted teachers to resort to the traditional approaches. Pomeroy (2011) also submits the challenge in applying thematic approach that many studies about the approach had failed to reach an agreement on the correlation between thematic teaching and student outcomes such as achievement and attitude towards learning. Despite the introduction of thematic approach in history to correct the justifying challenges and stresses of covering an

overwhelming amount of content in the history curriculum which prompts the use of more teacher-centered instructional methods, as argued by Anderson and Cook (2014), in practice there are still issues related to the full implementation due its ambiguity. It is argued that these teacher-centered methods, mostly textbook-driven, tend to result in students, not engaged to experience any real-life connection to the lessons being imparted to them (Pesikan &Lalovic,2017).

Different studies have linked curriculum ambiguity in most developing countries to curriculum borrowing (Chirwa & Naidoo, 2014 & Olema*et al.*, 2021). This, to some extent as argued by Mkandawire *et al.* (2017) is influenced by global change in the development agenda and politics which have no specific implication to the needs of the society. This is argued to have led to misalignment of curriculum in consonance with the needs of the society in Malawi and Africa. This is a perspective that is in agreement with what Ali Mazrui called a paradox that Africa produces what it does not consume and consumes what it does not produce (Mkandawire *et al.*, 2017). Chirwa and Naidoo (2014) too, argued that Africa and Malawi in particular, has become a laboratory of foreign curriculum implementation and not designed for the large numbers of students who drop for whatever reason or are pushed out due to low performance. These issues raised, further subject the curriculum to further future reviews but without tangible evidence of its impact.

Thirdly, Scholars like Gruber, Marmara and Cranford looked at lack of curriculum knowledge and practice by teachers as another challenge facing the



implementation of thematic curriculum approach. In their studies, they all contended that effective history teaching requiring knowledge of subject matter and understanding how to link content to students; knowledge of various teaching and assessment approaches; knowledge of the school culture and understanding how to make ones space in that culture; engaging students in critical and higher-order thinking, teaching students lifelong learning skills, and presenting students with multiple perspectives or interpretations by comparing events and processes, is scarce among teachers (Cranford, 2013; Gruber, 2007; Marmara, 2009). This is a drawback from the espoused prospect of history as observed by Freeman and Sokoloff (1995), who argue that designing curriculum around themes creates an opportunity that helps the teacher to engage students in a celebration of life and through this, knowledge, skills and values can be inculcated. It is therefore imperative for history teachers to understand the concepts for the success of any curriculum reform.

There is also a challenge in teacher preparation that has hampered effective implementation of thematic history curriculum too. For instance, Retnawatl and Arlinwibowo (2017) unveiled teachers' difficulties and resentment in implementing the approach in elementary schools because they were not conversant with the approach. This made them default to the old teaching tradition. Scholars like Badly (2009) and Chirwa (2013) also agree that many institutions where teachers are trained do not demonstrate to the pre-service teachers in terms of instruction practices in view of what they will find in the real work places. For example,

Chirwa's study on implementation of thematic expressive curriculum in primary schools in Malawi bemoaned teachers' challenges coming from lack of deeper content knowledge and productive pedagogical strategies. Similar findings were also echoed by Altinyelken (2010), Geoffrey (2021), Hamidal (2018), Mabilizi (2018) and Sophia (2018) in Uganda did not depart from these findings as observed in teachers' challenges on scheming, lesson planning and assessment of learners. One can conclude therefore, that some problems teachers face in the implementation process of a curriculum are beyond the mere tenets of the curriculum itself, but starts from the initial teacher preparation in teacher training colleges.

Furthermore, thematic curriculum faces the challenge of assessing learner's outcome. Most scholars on thematic approach have tried to challenge an old fade of traditional assessment methods and advocate for authentic assessment. Among them are Taufina and Chandra (2018) in which they submitted that Authentic assessments provides assignments and problem solving tasks done by students related to reality outside the assessment itself. It is argued that these assessments test students' attitude, knowledge and skills.

Dikli (2003) argues that the tools used in the process include portfolios, independent projects, contextualised test tasks, and continuous, longitudinal assessments. Mueller (2005) came up with a distinction between the two in the following: in traditional assessment, students select a response while in authentic

assessment, they perform a task; traditional assessments are contrived while authentic assessment, are reflect real life application; in traditional assessment emphasis is on recall while in authentic assessment emphasise on application; traditional assessments are teacher structured while authentic assessments are student structured and; there is indirect evidence in traditional assessment while in authentic assessment there is direct evidence. Chakwera *et al.* (2004) and Cook (2004) observed that continued use of traditional assessment standards limit teachers from applying authentic thematic instruction in their classroom arenas and deprives students of its benefit.

A discrepancy that has been noted in thematic curriculum designs and instructions so far has been a perpetuation of traditional assessments applied, hence making it ineffective. It was therefore imperative to explore effective practices and context through which authentic assessment procedures can be applied in history instruction. This starts with the assessment of actual classroom teacher practices if they align with the approach.

Lastly, thematic curriculum, like most curriculums have faced challenges of inadequate authentic teaching and learning resources. For example, in Uganda, the adoption of thematic curriculum in the teaching of local languages showed a lot of challenges ranging from poor teacher orientation to inadequate teaching and learning materials, and hard to translate from textbooks (Altinyelken, 2010; Geoffrey,2021; Hamidal, 2018; Mabilizi, 2018 & Sophia, 2018). Cunningham (2018)

argued that although teachers were trained, it was deemed severely inadequate. It was observed that while guidebooks were available, but textbooks were not and none of the many prescribed materials, such as flash cards, wall charts were available. These inadequacies, according to Cunningham, had serious impact during the implementation. This was reflected in poor delivery and the confusion teachers had in the implementation process making the curriculum reform, deemed as over ambitious and too frequently designed for a reality that does not exist.

Little is known about the challenges of the current thematic history curriculum in Malawi. The study by Dzikanyanga (2018) just highlights that history teachers continue to use traditional methods of teaching. The study by Chirwa *et al.* (2022) looks at the general problem of the whole process of curriculum reform being a failure from the onset and ineffective. The highlighted challenges included inadequate curriculum manuals and the fact that even some facilitators were also not conversant with the changes in the curriculum as portrayed in their failure to train the managers and teachers available.

## **2.4 Effectiveness of Thematic Approach to Learners' Historical Outcomes**

One of the scholars who looked at the effectiveness of thematic approach in history education is Andrukhima. According to him, the teaching of history in schools bear the full strength of both social influences and reforms, and has to respond to its aims and tasks, fundamental values, content and techniques which are all changing

(Andrukhima, 2000). His view agrees with studies conducted both in Malawi and abroad on the importance of history education to the society in the promotion of values of citizenship and democracy (Gallagher, 1996; Oztas, 2018). Ideally, it can be concluded that its inclusion in the curriculum fills and addresses a specific need of the society. However, as submitted by Straaten *et al.* (2018), the tools to realise this goal of history' s main contribution to educating future citizens are scarce and putting a deaf ear on pedagogical approaches has created challenges to any history curriculum reform as discussed below.

Highlighting the value of thematic history instruction, Finch *et al.* (1997) came up with the following summary: Opportunities to learn through more contextualised learning experiences, exposure to linkages between school-based learning and learning that occurs in real life, opportunities to explore a wide range of authentic experiences and in-depth exposure to a broad field of interest. In other words, even when teaching within subject-oriented boundaries, teachers bring their students in the community, so they can link school-based learning with what occurs in the real world. This can be seen as one of the major outcome from advocates of thematic instruction.

Other scholars have also looked at the effectiveness of thematic curriculum on the basis of utility history education espouses to the society in general. For instance, Sebbowa and Ng' ambi (2020), Marwick (2001) and Goh (1988), argued that different countries nowadays call for history departments to show the utility of their

teaching with respect to finding jobs and demonstrating practical and innovative skills to solve the challenges societies face. This puts academicians in history education to take the challenge of demonstrating the disciplines' significance in training students and such has been one of the rationales for placing history, like in the Malawian education curriculum (MoEST, 2015). However, little is known about how history can demonstrate its utility that is, providing practical solutions to the challenges countries face in modern times.

Effectiveness of thematic curriculum also received scholarly discourse from Collins (1993) who highlighted that it facilitates the instruction of critical thinking skills by helping students see the connection of subjects. In his study, he observed that this was possible also, when students did hands-on projects and worked together in groups where they applied what they had learned to simulated real-life situations. In this, he argues that students were forced to use higher order thinking skills such as evaluation, synthesis, application, inductive and deductive reasoning.

Proponents of thematic history curriculum also argue that the approach enhances students' historical knowledge, historical reasoning, historical skills, attitudes and values. Writing on historical reasoning and significance, Cloutier (2013) and Straaten *et al.* (2018) asserted that thematic approach to history instruction, this can happen when students organise information about the past, describe, compare and explain phenomena in history. It is this process as contended by Sumathi and Kumar (2021), develops students into critical thinkers as well as good decision

makers who would assess their decisions and choices made in the past to interpret the present. This is against the traditional way of teaching history that emphasises on teacher-centered approaches, content coverage and memorisation, that often times convey superficial information, and does not lead to great learning.

It is also noted that a thematic approach to teaching is said to benefit students because it has the power to capitalise on students' real-world knowledge and experiences, and enhance cognitive and affective outcomes (Handal & Bobis, 2004). As a learning method, recommended by the Office of Learning and Teaching (2010), the skills and knowledge in students were developed through aligning content into themes like global citizenship, civic literacy, health literacy, and environmental literacy and innovation skills.

Thematic curriculum is also known to be effective in instilling citizenship values and attitudes. In studies by Nasibi (2015) and Handal and Bobis (2004) they submitted that history should not only emphasise on inculcating cognitive skills like critical skills, social and analytical skills, but also promote social justice, morality, social obligation and responsibility to develop full talents, personality of an individual and positive attitude and achievement in learners.

Opportunity for implementation of thematic curriculum was also echoed from the study by Varun and Venugopal (2016), in which their results showed that children develop a sense of sound structure of language, story-telling and other understandings about language that contribute to their good comprehension of text.

These results are similar to the findings from the research done by Yvonne (2015) where it was stated that apart from improvement in reading, students' behaviour had improved, as did their attitude towards learning. In history however, literature on the same is scarce.

Thematic approach has also been argued to provide the practicality and usability of history as a subject. This is echoed by Reye (2014) who advocates that currently, history teaching supposes a shift from knowledge based curriculum to a more pragmatic use in what has been called the outcomes-based practical output of historical knowledge. It is argued that this is a departure from the past where there was a lot of feeding information. This usability of history has also been linked to what is called 'doing history'. In this, learners analyse the chosen theme which contains learning ideas and the teacher as an educator provides activities which are relevant and contextually meaningful for the students (Hamidah, *et al.*, 2019). In addition to this, learners have to be exposed to different sources of historical information. The approach is similar to what Misco and Patterson (2009) called reverse chronology and Rye (2014, p.174) states that it emphasises on the historical thinking skills which include the following: "Chronological thinking, Historical comprehension, Historical analysis and interpretation, Historical research capabilities, and Historical issues analysis and decision-making.

Studies on the adoption of thematic curriculum in Uganda also seem to have registered success results. For example, studies undertaken by Altinyelken (2010),



Geoffrey (2021), Hamidal (2018), Mabilizi (2018), and Sophia (2018) showed minimal improvement in literacy levels by students. The study by Duran (2009) also revealed that the teaching activities which are designed according to the thematic instruction have effects on the students acquisition in language and social studies on the permanence of the knowledge learned. In Malawi, little has been written on what history curriculum is supposed to yield in learners. Much focus has been put on what the curriculum as a whole has to offer and evaluation is done on the same.

The goals of history education beyond critical thinking and employability, development of innovative pedagogies and emotional dimension of teaching and learning of history, and on-going professional development of history teachers have all been neglected, as also portrayed by Ludrigson and Booth (2015). Also, worth noting is the fact that critics have disagreed vigorously about the goals and features of an improved pedagogy in history. The language of reform reflects the polarity in history instruction where history teachers are faced with a task of choosing either student-centered or teacher centered pedagogies, an emphasis on facts or concepts, hands-on learning or lecture, textbooks or primary sources, depth or breadth, inquiry or direct instruction (Bain, 2005). Teachers therefore, are confronted with the dilemma of which of the pedagogies mentioned can work to yield the intended results of the curriculum. In this line, what is said to be a reform does not yield any change in the classroom situation. Mismatches have existed in many cases where a curriculum has been evaluated against its frame factors, starting from the context in which it is implemented up to the output.

A study by Tew (2014) stated that unless history is organised or re-organised, the cause it cherishes to explain the facts to the world will have less or no meaning. However, there has been debate on which approach is effective. As noted by Turan (2020) that one of the most debated issues when trying to search for the solutions to the long-standing problems of history teaching is whether history should be taught chronologically or thematically. The debate generated for the adoption of the approach provides an insight on opportunities available for reform in history teaching pedagogies and implementation of thematic curriculum as a whole. Based on constructivist perspectives, McDaniel (2018) argues that thematic approach allows significant freedom for students to interpret the material according to their own values, and current emerging trends in the society in political, social or economic landscape in an active manner, different from the chronological approach.

Ogutu (1984) states that changes in education tend to come as a result of the reaction against irrelevance of much the traditional curriculum teaching approaches. However, despite constant messages to change history pedagogies from traditional and embrace learner centered approaches as argued by Steeves (1998), countries like Malawi where National examinations system is used for grade advancement and as a basis for university admission, it is noted by Chiziwa and Kunkwenzu (2021), that rote learning and memorisation has been promoted. Decreasing priority given to history also puts the potential for schools in promoting values of history not fully realised. This is supported by Chang' achi (2011), echoing a similar situation in

Kenyan education system that there is an unthinking bias in favour of science in the schools.

Active learner engagement is one of the outcomes of thematic approach. In the actual teaching and learning situation, Anshory and Isbadrianingtyas (2019) argue that for thematic approach to have meaningful outcome, indirect learning strategies have to be prioritised. These, according to Barton and Smith (2000), provide authentic learning experiences in the classroom situation and provide a lot of opportunities for multiple responses to content, and allow teachers to assess learning in more varied ways. These authentic activities simulate real world situations, learning takes place in meaningful situations that are extensions of the learner's world, and the learner is at the center of instruction while the teacher acts as a facilitator (Anshory&Isbadrianingtyas, 2019; Bolak *et al.*, 2005; Rule, 2006; Taufina& Chandra, 2017).

It is argued by Mctiche and Seif (2011) that teaching for understanding needs a shift from content coverage approaches to approaches that emphasise on transferable ideas. This, according to Anderson and Cook deprives students to life-long learning. In addition, Stephens (2007) states that it makes students to develop negative attitudes towards the subject.

In Malawi, studies have focused on academic performance of students in curriculum subjects as a whole or in specific subjects. For instance, Sobola(2017)

looked at how the revised secondary school curriculum was managed with reference to poor students' performance in Social and Development Studies. Chirwa *et al.* (2022) on the other hand looked at challenges facing the implementation of the new curriculum in general. Chiponda and Wassermann (2016) looked at women representation in literary history textbooks and no emphasis was made on the pedagogies. Dzikanyanga (2018) focused on the evolution of different pedagogical practices. In history no study has been conducted to evaluate the thematic approach the curriculum has taken in the teaching and learning of history.

## **2.5 Conclusion**

To sum up all, not much research has been conducted on thematic teaching of history as compared to other subjects, despite some studies look at history being integrated in what is called thematic, integrated curriculum. Different models have been used to get leaders to understand their focus. While some have used it as a curriculum approach by integrating different subject areas in one lesson, some have used it as a methodological approach where themes or units are used to develop learning experiences that would at the end help to inculcate the desired skills, attitudes or values (Zinet *et al.*, 2019). However, evaluating whether students develop the desired values, attitudes and skills, has been scarce in literature. Not only that, literature has shown that there is loose application of thematic curriculum approach which needs to be explored to develop best practices in future that would align to its frame factors and achieve its espoused goals.

## Chapter 3: Research Methodology

### **3.0 Introduction**

This chapter describes the methodology that the study opted. It focuses on research design, research paradigm, research approach, study area, study population, research sample and sampling technique, data collection procedures, data analysis procedures and ethical considerations taken into account during the study.

### **3.1 Research Design**

Being a phenomenological, this research used qualitative design. This was meant to provide pre-eminence to the importance of peoples' interpretations, and sense-making of their experiences to understand the social reality of phenomena occurring naturalistically (Haradhan, 2018). The researcher chose this design basing on the nature of the study in which attitudes, behaviour and experiences through such methods as interviews were explored in depth in agreement with Dawson (2002).

Informed by frame factor theory, the design was used due to the view that human beings are essentially self-referential and reflexive and as inescapably responsive and participative, and the researcher wanted to gain deep insight of their experiences and attitudes in the implementation of history curriculum reform at educational division, school, classroom, teachers and student level.

### **3.2 Research Paradigm**

There are many research paradigms namely, positivism, constructivism, critical theory and post structuralism. However, looking at the nature of this study, it was right to situate the research in the constructivist paradigm. This approach, according to Neuman (2014.p.102) “emphasizes meaningful social action, socially constructed meaning, and value relativism.” The researcher therefore, expected to get new information and interpret basing on the participants’ views and understanding about the phenomena under study. Ideally, in constructivism the knowledge is subjective in nature where every participant’ s view was taken as part of the reconstruction of the phenomena under study and any conceptual understanding generated in the field of this study on the topic therefore, was taken into consideration. From this perspective, participants’ views on how the new curriculum was introduced, how they implement it, its challenges and effectiveness was sorted and assessed to get meaningful interpretation.

### **3.3 Study Population, Sample and Sampling Technique**

The choice of study population for this research was informed by Sidhu (2004) who argued that it should include a group of individuals that have one or more characteristics in common that are of interest to the researcher. In light of this, the study was interested to get information from history teachers, students, and methods advisors at the Northern Education Division (NED). These provided the much-anticipated information for the study.

Since most populations of interest were large, diverse, and scattered over a large

geographic area, finding, let alone contacting, all the members could have been time consuming and expensive. For that reason of necessity, the researcher selected a sample to study in line with Fraenke *et al.* (2012).

A sample size of Fourty participants was targeted comprising of 10 history teachers, 29 students, 1 history method advisor at the Northern Education Division (NED). In identifying individual stakeholders, snowball sampling technique was used where participants or informants with whom contact was already made used their social networks to refer the researcher to other people who had the potential to participate in the study.

### **3.4 Study Area**

This study was done in selected secondary schools in the Northern Education Division (NED). NED is one among the six education administrative divisions in Malawi in which the new history curriculum has been implemented and the researcher randomly selected it from the six divisions. Using a case study, the researcher wanted to have an in-depth understanding and experiences of the participants in thematic history curriculum implementation process. Six schools, from Northern Education Division were selected purposively. One district Boarding Secondary School and 4 Cost center Community day Secondary schools and 1 non-cost centre community Day secondary School. Purposive sampling was used because according to Fraenke *et al.* and Hamta (2016), it ensures that the researcher gets a sample that is well suited to the intent of the study at hand and



provides important information that cannot be provided from other choices.

### **3.6 Methods and Tools for Data Collection**

The data collection process was done through a variety of methods. These included face to face in-depth oral interviews, focus group discussion, lesson observation and document analysis on thematic teaching and learning of history in secondary school that involved secondary schools in the northern region, and other stakeholders in the northern region of Malawi revealed a lot as regards the issues under study.

#### **3.6.1 Oral Interviews**

In this method, the researcher used semi-structured interview targeting, history teachers, learners and Quality Assurance Officer at the education division. For easy comparison and contrast between information collected from other participants, an interview guide with specific questions was used. This, in line with Dawson (2002), was meant to ensure continuity while at the same time ensuring flexibility of participants to provide information on other quite important areas of the study. In total, the researcher interacted with forty participants to solicit their views about the study. The use of interview assisted the researcher in the study to collect detailed information from the sample chosen in establishing the understanding of teachers, students and other stakeholders of the current pedagogical approach in history in secondary schools and exploring the challenges and opportunities on the practices in the teaching of history thematically (Kabir, 2016).

### **3.6.2 Focus Group Discussion**

Three focus group discussions were conducted in three different schools among students and comprised of five participants in each group. Through Focus group discussions, the researcher sought to understand their general learning experience in relation to the frames of thematic curriculum approach. In this context, the research asked the participants on their experiences in learning history, the challenges and specific questions that sought their understanding of skills, values and attitudes, as some of the outcomes of thematic history curriculum. The researcher used the FGD in line with what Dawson (2002) stated that they help participants to remember issues they might otherwise have forgotten if interviewed individually.

### **3.6.3 Lesson Observation**

The researcher also observed five history lessons to appreciate teacher-learner interaction and pedagogical approaches employed in the process. On teacher practices, the researcher assessed teaching methods, resources if they were in line with thematic curriculum. The researcher also evaluated whether teachers integrated themes as highlighted in the syllabus in the actual teaching and learning situation.

### **3.6.4 Document Review**

Document review was conducted on primary written sources such as school syllabuses, student text books, examination papers, schemes and records of work, lesson plans and chief examinations reports, among others. The researcher also analysed documents like curriculum framework, assessment guideline for secondary school handbook, National Education Standards Booklet, National Education Policy among others. These documents were analysed as part of understanding if they match with the frame factors of thematic history curriculum and then relate with the actual practice and situation in the implementation process.

### **3.6.5 Data Collection Tools**

The following tools or instruments were used in data collection; voice recorders, notebooks, interview guides, lesson observation checklist, and digital cameras. Using interview guides with open ended questions, the researcher administered one to one interview with the participants in the study in line with research objectives and research questions. The interviews were recorded digitally to ensure a natural flow of conversations. Field notes were also recorded in researcher's note books while visiting and after visiting the research sites. On document review, a document analysis checklist was used to analyse different translation of curriculum framework issues and to understand their alignment with what is happening in the actual practice. A lesson observation checklist was used during the actual lesson observation highlighting key areas from both, teacher and learner behaviour in the classroom arena.

### 3.7 Data Analysis Procedure

As regards this study, data was analysed through discipline related to documents, interviews, and classroom observation checklist. Data was managed by recording interviews using a digital recorder and was transcribed word by word after listening to recorded files. The transcript was cross checked with document analysis notes. The data collected went through systematic qualitative analysis method which according to Cohen *et al.* (2005) and Saini (2015) involves organising, accounting for, aggregating, integrating, explaining and interpretation using various forms. This process helped the researcher to make sense of the data in relation to what was collected and what is already in the literature. The researcher then performed data reduction which as observed by Creswell (2012), helps in eliminating data overload and redundancy. In this process, data was classified and categorised repeatedly to come up with usable data.

Being a qualitative study, thematic analysis was used, which according to Kiger and Varpio (2020) and Maguire and Delahunt (2017), entails searching across a data set to identify, analyse, and report repeated patterns. According to Kiger and Varpio, thematic analysis is an appropriate method of analysis for seeking to understand participants' experiences, thoughts, or behaviours across a data set. As recommended by Maguire and Delahunt, and Braun and Clarke (2006), the researcher subjected the data to both semantic analysis by describing what the respondents actually said and latent analysis by focusing and examining the underlying ideas, assumptions and conceptualisations. Kiger and Varpio presented

the following six-step process which was followed; data collection, data familiarisation, generation of codes, reviewing themes, naming and defining themes and producing the report.

Coding was done as per the guidance of research questions and objectives, and bounded by the theoretical frame work, literature reviewed, and issues raised as mentioned by respondents. This was done by carefully listening to interviews and transcribing texts. From the transcript, codes were generated and compared, looking for similarities and differences which later, were used to come up with themes and sub-themes. According to Maxwell (2012) the goal of coding in qualitative research is not to come up with number counts like in quantitative research, but to fracture the data collected and rearrange it into categories. Coding was also done during content analysis of field notes and documents so as to elicit meaning from the data collected and to draw realistic conclusion from it. Triangulation was done between data collected through oral interviews and documents to establish its trustworthiness. As recommended by Guion (2002), information from different respondents, data tools and sources was evaluated.

Lastly, the researcher reported and interpreted data for its meaning as derived from all the data collection tools. The data was reported in a narrative manner highlighting themes and within the narration extensive samples of quotes, and any important part of documents that emerged from the process of data analysis. The interpretation of data involved relating and comparing the findings to the previous

published studies and literature relevant to the study. This helped the researcher to make inferences and at the end present reconstructions of meanings derived from the data collected.

### **3.9 Trustworthiness of the Study**

The following concepts were highlighted in ensuring trustworthiness of the study; credibility, conformability and transferability. Haradhan (2018) describes confirmability as the establishment of verifiable evidence from the experiences of respondents of the research while transferability shows how relevant can the study be replicated to similar situation, conditions and context. For this study, a variety of data collecting methods and instruments, like documents, oral interviews and focus groups, interview guides, recorders, observation checklist and field notes was used and cross-triangulated to enhance the credibility of the data collected. Direct responses from the participants have been highlighted to ensure confirmability. In addition to these, the study also triangulated the response from participants to ensure consistence and true value of the information given in line with the advocacy of Klopper (2008).

The researcher also utilised the three months period observing the setting and situation of interest in the study to determine reliability of the information being collected. This is in line with what Fraenkelet *al.* (2012) stated on qualitative research reliability where it was asserted that the length of an observation is very crucial as consistency over time as regards what the researcher sees and hears is

a strong indicator of reliability. Consequently, this helps to indicate transferability of the study. Voice recordings and pictures also helped to ensure confirmability of the information collected by the researcher. To ensure validity and reliability of this study, appropriate, meaningful and useful data was collected and the consistency of inferences over time, location and circumstances respectively as advocated by Fraenkel. Rich, detailed and valued data that provided a revealing situation of what is going on was collected using digital recorder and in-depth interviews and where necessary, respondent validation was done. Research objectives and research questions were also used to equip all the data collecting instruments to measure the study aims, hence ensure content validity. The oral interview guide and lesson observation checklist were structured and critically looked and analysed by external judges to evaluate content.

### **3.10 Limitations and Delimitations of the Study**

Being case study research, it was difficult to generalise the findings of the study to other areas outside the scope and area of study. This is so because the results may vary with individual perception about the topic under study. However, rich data was collected from both participants and document analysis that would provide a basis for one to come up with inferences.

In addition, being a qualitative study, some of the outcomes from the thematic teaching and learning cannot be quantified or observed within the designated period of the study, like values and attitudes which takes time to be developed and

observed for assessment and comparison. However, assumptions based on the outcomes of history education in Malawi have been used as standards to be met, matched with the advocated methods to attain them. Both junior secondary and senior secondary students were targeted for interviews. Interviews from students in the junior section helped the researcher to draw the understanding of comparisons between historical knowledge at entry level and their current status quo looking at the impact of teacher's methodologies and the implementation of the curricular approach. On the other hand, Form 3 and 4 students were targeted for interviews considering their long experience in the learning of history and they were expected to have knowledge of the skills, attitudes and values learnt, in the teaching and learning process.

The other limitation was a challenge to access past documents, and history books at individual school level. However, the researcher used different data collecting methods to still understand the phenomena at hand and come up with the correct judgment about the issue that was being studied. On the issue of history books and history past papers, the researcher used other schools and libraries outside this study scope.

### **3.11 Ethical consideration**

The researcher observed good ethical principles when conducting this study. Gibson and Brown (2009) highlight four general issues that need to be thought through when a researcher wants his or her study to be in line with ethical



consideration namely, informed consent, confidentiality, avoiding harm and integrity and professionalism. In this regard, the researcher got the research authorisation letter from Mzuzu University to the education Divisions and secondary schools. The researcher also got informed consent from the participants, like on interviews and lesson observation. This is in line with Mack *et al.* (2005) who states that it is important to get consent from the participants so that they understand the reason for their involvement in that particular research and decide whether to participate or not. Since the study took a case study approach, the researcher made sure that its records would be kept confidential. This is in agreement with the characteristics of a good case study research as portrayed in Sidhu (2004).

Participants' anonymity was ensured where no name was used to identify them, while at the same time, encouraging them to be as honest as they could. The participants were also given the freedom or chance to withdraw their participation in the study at any given stage. This is in agreement with one of the universal principles and concerns of "research ethics", such as honesty and respect for the rights of individuals (Cohen, *et al.*, 2005). Integrity and professionalism was ensured too in all the processes of the research in agreement with Bernard (2006) who state that a researcher should at all times and under all circumstances report the truth, and should never present the truth in a biased manner. Consent on lesson observation, access to official documents and interview was also sought as required.

## **Chapter 4: Presentation and Discussion of Findings**

### **4.0 Introduction**

The discussions are based on the research questions of the study. The questions include: How was the thematic curriculum approach introduced in history teaching and learning? How have teachers been implementing the thematic approach in teaching and learning of history? What are the challenges faced in the implementation of the thematic history curriculum? How effective has the thematic approach been in improving learners' performance in history education? The results have been presented and discussed under four subheadings namely, introduction of thematic approach in NED, implementation of thematic history approach, challenges faced in implementing the approach and effectiveness of thematic approach in achieving learner's performance in history.

## 4.1 How the Thematic Curriculum was Introduced

The following themes emerged from the document analysis and respondents of this study including, aims of the new curriculum, nature of orientation, familiarisation of the new thematic curriculum, availability of curriculum supporting materials like textbooks, outcome from the orientation and Continuous Professional Development(CPD).

On the nature of the curriculum, it was noted that most teachers took part in the orientation either at JCE or MSCE level. The Ministry of Education used a cluster system policy to disseminate information about the new curriculum. This, as per plan was to be done through in-service training and CPDs. One of the schools in the clusters with adequate resources was chosen to be cluster leader. In Northern Education Division new thematic curriculum introduced to history teachers through national orientation programmes. This took place in three super clusters namely, Katoto, Mzimba and Maghemo Secondary schools.

History teachers were grouped together with the rest of colleagues from the humanities department which included subjects like geography, social studies, life skills and bible knowledge. The actual pattern of orientation included the following as indicated in both junior and senior orientation manuals;

*Familiarisation with the history syllabus, Approaches to New and Challenging topics, Teaching, learning and assessment*

*methods, Teaching, learning and assessment resources,  
Planning to teach, Skills required to write essays and reports.*

From the first unit to the last, there was no special detailed focus on the design of the curriculum. For example, unit one just explains thematic approach as curriculum design model and not a pedagogical model and after this, no further reference of the approach is mentioned apart from highlights of themes in the syllabus, lesson plans, schemes of work and some core textbooks. In other words, the reason why the history curriculum took the thematic approach, and the means and outcome of the same are not clear from the orientation manual booklet. Being one of the major documents in curriculum implementation, its content acted as a guide and frame of reference during the orientation process, hence the facilitators followed what was prescribed in it. One participant in this research when asked about the nature of the orientation they had, he stated that there was no emphasis on the importance of the themes in the actual teaching and learning.

There was an opportunity for effective implementation as it was not the first time for a history curriculum to be organised thematically. As noted from document analysis, the principal aspects of the themes in the old syllabus were not far from the current one. However, the fact that no attention was put by teachers in the old curriculum was shown in the way they were given a deaf ear during the rolling out of the current curriculum. There was no mention that the old curriculum had themes such that the reviewed curriculum should not be seen as a complete diversion from

the former.

Another participant, T2, when asked whether the curriculum was bound to be implemented as intended, she strongly doubted as reflected from this statement: *mmm not really, time was not enough to thoroughly go through important issues in the curriculum. But also, not all teachers were oriented...*. The submission above is consistent with the curriculum orientation plan devised by the Malawi Institute of Education (MIE) and the Ministry of Education (MoE). It proposed that for those who did not participate in the orientation at super-cluster level, it was proposed that a cascading system was supposed to be used, where cluster and school-based INSETs were to be conducted. However, according to other respondents in this study, this did not happen. The following excerpt between the researcher and T8 attests to the views shared by a majority of teachers.

#### Box 4.2 Participants' Views on Orientation and Insets

**Teacher**..... *there are no insets through which history teachers can share knowledge on how to teach students properly, like the way you are saying that this curriculum is thematic, I hope most people don't understand it.*

**Researcher**.... *were you not oriented on the new curriculum?*

**Teacher**..... *for me I was not, but even if I was oriented, there was*

These findings can be explained in two ways: Firstly, there was loose application of

the term thematic curriculum approach in all curriculum documents. This is demonstrated from lack of emphasis on the core elements of thematic curriculum approach and theory, both in the design, curriculum framework, orientation manual and core text books. This context ineffectively equipped teachers who are the core implementers of the curriculum with enough and correct knowledge of the curriculum approach. This situation is different from what Zinet *et al.* (2019)'s study on the introduction of a thematic curriculum noted, that teachers were oriented and curriculum modules were prepared in advance to guide teachers on the application of the approach. This, as argued did not only serve the purpose during orientation time but also beyond, especially, for student teachers who were still colleges and for those who had not attended the orientation sessions organised by the ministry of education.

The situation in this study is also similar to the findings by Cunningham (2018) in Uganda where it was argued that apart from the fact that teachers were oriented, the trainings were deemed severely inadequate. It was observed that the availability of guidebooks did not lead to an improved situation during implementation because other prescribed materials such as core textbooks flash disks and wall charts were not available. These inadequacies, led to poor delivery and the confusion of teachers in the implementation process, a clear reflection of the impact of frame factor theory as regards teaching and learning resources is concerned.

On the availability of training manuals, the study's findings are silent which would

provide an impression that they were in good supply. This is a departure from the study by Chirwa *et al.* (2022) that curriculum reforms are faced with a “born dead” situation insufficient knowledge by some about the changes in the curriculum that makes them fail to train the managers and teachers available.

Secondly, the study has also re-sounded the deficiency that comes with curriculum management as portrayed in lack of INSETs and Continuous Professional Development (CPD) trainings despite they were ably planned in the curriculum framework. Few teachers had the pedagogical content knowledge about the new curriculum. Therefore, judging from the frame factors put for this curriculum, it was bound to face problems during the actual implementation process. The findings on this aspect are in support of the study by Ruth and Ramadas (2019) who cited the observation by several scholars that teachers in most African countries were ill-trained in CBE for even the policy developers have no clear understanding of the curriculum framework.

The study has also illuminated possible discrepancy between curriculum expectations in secondary schools and how student teachers are prepared in colleges and universities have to be explored in future research studies. This comes with revelations that the entry knowledge about history curriculum approaches and pedagogies the teachers seem to be aware of the curriculum orientation process or the expected Continuous professional development or subject-based insets. With guidelines in the current curriculum as one of the frame factors, for example, that

direct the teacher to use primary sources and to initiate students into the methods of historical inquiry, there was need to start a re-conceptualisation of the history classroom. Bruno-Jofre and Schiralli (2002) reaffirm this by stating that this re-conceptualisation process would be possible by considering the relativism that students also bring to the class.

Relativism brought by students in classroom situation according to Saxell and Svensson (2005) is also a frame factor that would affect the choice of teaching and learning experiences in the history classroom. With this put into context, different pedagogical approaches were supposed to be integrated in the glooming process of the history teachers for thematic curriculum implementation. Apart from orientation trainings, this could have been done achieved through continuous professional trainings in respective schools.

Lastly, the findings also are in agreement with the observation by Handal and Bobis (2004) on the application of thematic approach which observed that the lack of explicit guidelines increased the difficulty teachers faced when trying to implement mandated courses requiring a thematic approach. While the government through the Ministry of Education and other stakeholders are trying their best in the implementation of the curriculum policy, the study agrees with findings by Lhomi (2020) that governments who propose to implement thematic curriculum do not have clear concept. This then militate against all the reform and implementation process.



## **4.2 Implementation of thematic curriculum in Malawian secondary schools**

This was the second key question of the study which was aimed at finding out how history teachers implemented the new thematic curriculum. Two broad themes emerged in this namely, teachers understanding of thematic approach and translation of the approach in actual teaching and learning.

### **4.2.1 Teachers' Understanding of Thematic Curriculum**

In this theme, the researcher wanted to understand if teachers and students understood the current curriculum in terms of its design. This had an impact in their implementation process. While some understood it in line with how the curriculum was organised some looked at its prescribed elements in terms of teacher-student interaction, not forgetting different models that could be drawn from those who knew thematic approach in general.

The above revelation has a bearing on the performance of a curriculum, especially during the implementation process. Some in-adequacies attributed to the nature and context of orientation of teachers to the new curriculum, were seen in their knowledge of thematic curriculum. There were however, a lot of variations in terms of whether the teachers knew the two curriculum approaches or not, and whether

they understood the current curriculum approach that it is designed in a thematic way. For instance, the following respondent from T6 seemed to understand what it meant when it comes to thematic approach:

*.....its theme-based while the old one they were using the chronological approach whereby we called it, the old system, the traditional approach where we used topics, we could follow topics the way they are using a book, but in thematic, you can take in any theme in a topic and you can connect that topic based on the topic which you have. So you can teach a lot of things in a short period of time. For example, if you are teaching the topic, civilisation, you can just put all civilisations at the same time, and, you can start from the rise, factors which let their rise...*

His knowledge however, was said not to be from these orientation trainings as by then, the participant was teaching at primary school. His knowledge therefore, was based on the integrated approach of Social and environmental sciences at primary school of PCAR. This type of understanding was also echoed by T1, who further highlighted a general overview of the current history curriculum in the view of what themes are in history:

*... history now is into two broader themes, African history and World history, and then in terms of actual topics have also been broken down into minor themes. Some topics are under the theme of interrelationship*

*between Malawi and the other world for example.....The other theme is patriotism and nationalism..... The other theme is about governance.....In the syllabus the language is not themes as such, they are using what they call Core elements..... the core idea of something.*

The above responses give a vivid picture of the current history curriculum as also demonstrated in the history syllabus in that, the 2001 history curriculum and its predecessor was divided into Central African history and World history. This was especially observed in MSCE while the other themes would come in within the two. At JCE level, the demarcation was not clearly highlighted as the focus was not only central Africa but the whole African kingdoms and other ancient world history topics, unlike the current curriculum which has clearly divided the whole curriculum into African and World history, and further the topics are grouped into themes as already highlighted. The following respondent was not explicit in his definition of thematic teaching or thematic curriculum. The participant rather went direct into the design of the current curriculum as reflected in the following revelation:

*It' s like they have grouped as the topics in history according to the core elements, a good example, patriotism. That means by the end of that topic learners have to develop or appreciate the importance of being patriotic to the country. Then we are talking of economic and social issues in history..., then interdependence how do we relate with neighbouring countries.....(T2).*

The respondent above seemed familiar with the themes as outlined in the history syllabus. However, it was noted that she had problems in highlighting all the themes stipulated in the syllabus. This was observed in the need to refer to the syllabus for proper explanation as evidenced in the following:

*Then we have another theme, what is it... the other theme,.. mmm interrelationship among the individual family and society, learners should be able to appreciate their origin, they should be able to know their identity, they should be able to value ones culture, ... that's how I understand them (T2).*

An observation from respondent T8 indicates that he had knowledge of what thematic curriculum entails when it comes to classroom practices and involvement of learners. The following highlights his observation:

*the thematic approach to the teaching of history, mmmmm I think it relates to the teaching of history whereby the teacher or I should say that the teaching and learning process should be done in the way that students are involved and that it is integrating so many themes, yaa, so that when students are learning should not be looking at an isolated item, but the approaches, we are looking at approaches and what are the aims or outcomes that should come after them, it has to concern that the students are involved in such a way that they are integrating so many*

*themes.*

There was a similar response like the one above which came from T3 who did not just focus on his understanding of thematic curriculum, but continued to explain the design of the history curriculum of Malawi in which during teaching and learning, the teacher need to contextualise the content to the everyday life of the people.

Relating thematic curriculum as an approach to teaching and learning got striking evidence in teacher' s understanding of the current history curriculum. Respondent T5 also had the following to say:

*... Thematic teaching or approach eeee I understand that ...Learners have to be involved thoroughly in the lesson. So, it' s like we are moving from that old style of teaching, from lecturing to learner centered where we are trying to make sure that the learners are active,... in those days, we were much concentrated lecture method whereby the teacher was just talking, but with this approach, we are trying to see that the learners are also involved in group discussions... That is how i understand.*

As seen above, the respondents' understanding of the current curriculum design is based on the view that it is learner centered and nothing more. This is a general perspective this study got from the majority of teachers interviewed. Participant T10 just highlighted that in the past, they were using chronology, and currently, they are

using themes before explaining which of the two is better. It is worth noting that even mentioning the two approaches was after a revelation from the researcher that we have the two approaches in the design of history curriculum and we are currently using the thematic approach. This was her response on her understanding of the two approaches:

*We are using thematic and previously we had chronological, I think the curriculum we are using now at least is better off ...because History when we look at chronological, it needs students to memorise some years and some places, but of this time, memorising is there but is not much needed.....*

From the above excerpt, it is acknowledged that the current curriculum approach is good but does not elaborate further beyond the difference with the former on learner engagement. The other two responses from interviewees were clear that they do not have knowledge about thematic history teaching or even thematic curriculum. This lack of experience and knowledge of thematic approach was also seen among learners as some when asked about the themes in history, they could mention topics. This was a reflection of what their teachers bring in the classroom situation, and in this case, students just know about topics and not themes.

Another element of thematic curriculum which became dominant in the responses of participants is the issue of contextualisation of lessons into real life situation.

Most respondents acknowledged that they contextualise their lessons into students' real-life situation. The first observation of this can be seen from the response by T2:

*I feel like when you get the topic, for example one of the causes of the second world war was appeasement policy..... So you start from there, then you give concrete examples. This country was doing this to appease this....then get those children in our today's circumstance in our everyday life. so you will relate them to current affairs, whether you will be able to relate it to politics....I do give examples in politics, whether you are going to give examples in churches.....so basically I do follow current issues.... I should be able to relate what happened in the past with what happens today.*

In all the cases above, it shows that teachers had limited understanding about thematic curriculum design and approach to the teaching and learning of history in Malawi. This affected actual practice in the classroom arena. This is in line with the findings by Okoro and Okoro (2016), where it was found that teacher's insufficient understanding affected the actual implementation of the approach in the classroom arena. In contrast, the findings by Min *et al.* (2012) which acknowledged that teachers had sufficient understanding of the approach in teaching and learning of social studies, eventually, led them to use it in their teaching and learning process. In view of this, teachers understanding could have reflected their knowledge about thematic approach as described by some scholars like Min *et al.*(2012), Handal &

Bobis (2004) and Lung (1999) just to mention a few.

In the context of the findings of this study, lack of sufficient understanding by teachers can be attributed to lack of proper orientation on the design and implementation of the curriculum approach which tend to lead to the inconsistency between the intended and the assessed curriculum practices. For instance, it can be noted that one of the reasons why teachers do not use thematic approach in their history instruction is due to lack of knowledge in the curriculum approach the subject has taken so far. This agrees with the findings by Retnawati and Arlinwibowo (2017), where it was observed that teachers found challenges due to lack of understanding about the curriculum design.

On the same issue of design, this lack of understanding by the teachers was due to under-specification of the curriculum content as far as thematic approach is concerned. This corresponds to the Case Study Report of education reform in South Africa of the 2005 curriculum which stated that the curriculum had challenges such as a highly inaccessible and complex language; the under-preparation of teachers and large-scale discrepancies in resources with respect to implementation (Jansen & Taylor, 2003). All this supports the finding by Yvonne (2015) on the implementation of thematic curriculum in Trinidad and Tobago that showed that prospective teachers were more effective in meeting the needs of all students when trained compared to the prospective teachers implementing the curriculum without training.



#### 4.2.2 Translation of the Curriculum into Actual Teaching and Learning

This second broad theme was explored looking at a number of sub-themes. The sub-themes that emerged included integration of core elements (themes), schemes of work, lesson planning, examination pedagogy, learner engagement and pedagogy of textbooks, contextualisation of lessons and pedagogy of place. The major focus was to look at teachers understanding of the approach and how they translated it in actual practice.

On the theme of integration, many teachers indicated inconsistencies with the intended curriculum practices. For instance, when asked whether they integrate themes in the actual teaching and learning of history, T9 had this response:

*mmm not that much because we just use them for scheming like the interrelationship between Malawi and other countries, such kind of themes but we don't go deep into such kind of themes yaa we only focus on the topics which are there, to be serious with the themes, we are not serious about that.*

This view was really evidenced in the schemes of work and lesson plans as depicted in the observed documents the teachers possessed during their encounter with the researcher. This practice is in line with what is portrayed in the history orientation manual and the SCAR framework which, it is argued that the new

curriculum in terms of schemes of work and lesson plans has to contain elements like core elements among others (MoEST,2015).

As regards classroom engagement, there were variations on how teachers attempted to provide a classroom environment that was in line with the intended curriculum reform activities. A perspective presented by T1 in the following extract unveils a general practice and view history teachers have on the themes:

*I should confess that when we are teaching, we do not necessarily teach those themes and it is difficult for the learner to understand that now, we are learning about patriotism and nationalism. But we emphasise about the topic for example, when we are teaching about the Chilembwe uprising as a sub topic. That sub topic is under patriotism and nationalism. As a teacher, it is my role to emphasise when discussing Chilembwe uprising that the essence of that topic is to promote the spirit of love for your nation...*

From the last statement, it can be seen that sometimes teachers' attributes influence the type of learning experiences for the students. Similar sentiments were presented by T6 on whether they integrate the themes in the actual teaching and learning:

*... most of the students don't know that there is this theme connected*

*to this topic. Its only the teacher who knows, that this theme is there and you cannot tell the learners that the core element for this lesson is this……. They will understand better when you say we use topical approach……yaa because exams are at the centre; it' s the hub. …..*

The participants' lack of integration of the themes in their lesson was attributed to their view of what is examined, especially by the Malawi National Examinations Board (MANEB). For example, T1 contended that:

*We mostly focus on the subject matter of the topic probably because it' s what is examined at the end of the day. They don' t examine the themes, we examine the content...*

T6also stated that as a teacher he looks at some quick observable outcomes after teaching and learning and this includes passing examinations which were said to be the check points that teaching and learning has taken place.

Pedagogy of core history textbooks was another theme that emerged in this study. Apart from the focus on examinations, other respondents had other reasons why they do not integrate the themes in their lessons, as evidenced in the following argument by T1 ….. *it is because the link between the core element and the content is weak and remote, is difficult to understand.* On the part of difficulty T2 reiterated the same: *… in some topics it' s easy to integrate and some topics, it' s difficult to*

*integrate*. This was a view which was shared by T3 and T5 who acknowledged that it is difficult to integrate the themes. For instance, T5 had this to say: “ ... *it is hard somehow, but still more we are trying to integrate...* ”

There is also misalignment reflected from curriculum documents. For example, history textbooks, there is no mention of the themes or core elements. From the topic, authors just go straight to content or some starts by highlighting success criteria or specific objectives. One of the textbook analysed clearly indicated what students are expected to achieve at the end of the topic. However, there is a mismatch between the expected outcomes from the textbook and the syllabus or curriculum framework. **Table 4.1** below affirms the disparities as discussed.

**Table 4.1 Comparing Expected Outcomes from the Syllabus and Text Books**

Topic	Core Element	Corresponding Outcome from the syllabus/curriculum Framework	Expected Outcome from Textbook
Iron Age in Malawi	Inter-relationships among the individual, family and society	The student will be able to demonstrate an understanding of personal identity in terms of family life, location and historical background through inquiry into origins, cultural beliefs, values, attitudes and	This information will enable you (students) to appreciate the technological and socio-economic changes through a historical perspective

		practices	
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As seen in the table above, the expected outcome highlighted by the author does not correspond to the core element as found in the curriculum framework. T9 lamented that she does not even use them as evidenced in this response:

*...as for me I don't even use them, one because am not familiar with them, two I don't see them as relevant may be because I have not been oriented on them... that is why I don't look at them as something which is relevant.*

When asked whether students are aware of the themes during teaching and learning situation OIT5 shared this comment which again was dominant among participants in this study:

*...that is in another problem. Many of us teachers do not necessarily want to let the students to know, even the syllabus we do not want students to know what is contained in the syllabus, but I feel it is really important if students to know, and that is why in my personal point of*

*view...it is important, for example, if you find that I will teach this lesson tomorrow, ... to give them maybe something to read, or just let them know that we are going to learn about this can you search about this...*

The above response correlated with students' responses in which they showed ignorance of the themes in history, with some mentioning themes in English literature.

Lesson contextualisation also emerged as a theme among the participants. In striving to present authentic learning as an aspect of thematic curriculum, teachers utilise the availability of historical sites, museums and memorials as part of pedagogy of place. This provides students with real experience and exact interaction with the primary sources and the past events through their historical imagination.

Some participants acknowledged the importance of this pedagogy of place in the learning of history and indicated that they do patronise them for some specific topics. For instance, when asked whether they can relate the examples the teachers give with what is found in historical sites in their area, S6 had this to say:

*... when we were in Form 2 we were learning about iron age, he was saying that some people were living at Mantchewe falls, they came there.*

From the above excerpt, the student was able to remember some concepts about

Iron Age due to the experience they had when they visited Mantchewe falls. While acknowledging the value of historical places in history instruction, one of the teachers however, revealed that this aspect of place pedagogy depended on the closeness of the school to these places. Not only that, the financial stand, the schools are in, also matters. When asked to elaborate on this, he had this to say:

*...relating to museum visits.. not everything can be for the museum, but topics... like Christianity..yes students we do take them there to see ok this is Dr. Laws, ... in terms of contextualising the text to relate with the society, that much I do, that much I do.*

When asked whether as students are involved in activities that would help develop research skills in history, one form 3 student agreed that their teacher tries to involve them as positively commented by the participant below:

*sometimes we are introduced in groups and we contribute our idea, they give us a question like when the topic may be they we say we should do something about the topic, when he introduces the topic we are asked about how we understand about the topic, and we say the way we understand about the topic, and when we are telling him about the answers, he explains many things in vernacular which makes the whole class laugh and many students do not desert history class because our teacher teaches in a good way (S4).*

About learner engagement in classroom activities, students showed varied experiences with different teachers. However, the following provides a dominant picture which the researcher found during interviews and lesson observation.

#### **Box 4.6: Learner Engagement in Group Work**

<p><i>Researcher: Are you involved in group work?</i></p> <p><i>Student: Yes</i></p> <p><i>Researcher: Role play?</i></p> <p><i>Student: Role play. Mmmm yes, role play yes I did it in last time</i></p> <p><i>Researcher: okay when was that, last term?</i></p> <p><i>Student: Yes last term.</i></p> <p><i>Researcher: What about this term?</i></p> <p><i>Student: No.</i></p> <p><i>Researcher: Group work?</i></p> <p><i>Student: mmm Group work we have, we are doing it</i></p>
--

From the excerpt above it can be seen that history teachers prefer teacher-centered methods as compared to learner-centered ones. This is collaborated with the following findings from different lessons the researcher observed. It was noted that many a time teachers use lecture and question and answer methods in their classroom practices. This can be evidenced from the progress of the lesson observed in the excerpt on **appendix 10**.

However, there are some teachers who used group work in teaching and learning, as a way of involving learners. This is despite the observation that most of the explanation of what was presented by students after discussion was done by the



teacher. One student even said that teachers also just read the events of other countries of distant past; instead the current events help the teachers to explain the content well because:

*...they have some clues but during Aztec empire they are also just reading, they don't even know if those things really happen but if they can stick to things that are happening now or those that happened in their days, I think they can explain much better than sticking to the past.*

The above comment reflects a general outlook about how the students view the kind of learning they are exposed to and the approach most history teachers take when teaching the subject. When asked about the best practices or learning experiences they expect teachers to present to them, S4 said that:

*I think when teaching they should be comparing or relating the importance of world history and our own, how are we involved.*

In the actual teaching and learning process, pedagogy of authentic teaching and learning resources was also a theme that emerged in this research related to thematic curriculum. Students acknowledged that their teachers mostly use textbooks which they use during group discussion in the classroom situation. This is supported by researchers' observation notes that the common resource the teachers use during teaching is a textbook. However, through the face-to-face

interview with one of the students when asked how the teachers make the history lessons appealing and interesting to them, it was revealed that in some instances, teachers use authentic teaching and learning materials in form of artifacts and demonstrated how it was used in the past. The excerpt from T6 below is a testimony to this:

*interesting, may be when we were learning history, when we were learning about the Ndebele kingdom, she takes some shields and he made it an arrow and she made it and showed us things looked like that and the way they were spearing on the wars.*

From the above submission, it can also be concluded that attitudes and values as outcomes are not stressed because there are no criteria to assess them. This is despite the fact that the Ministry of Education came up with continuous assessment guidelines that would guide teachers and learners on assessment criteria. **Table 4.3** below summarises some of the methods highlighted on how to assess learners in secondary schools.

### ***Table 4.3 Assessment Guidelines***

<b>Method</b>	<b>What to Assess</b>
<i>Observation</i>	<i>It can either be planned or unplanned. Unplanned observation may be called for by the behaviour of students as the lesson in a class progresses or decide on what behaviours or skills to look for</i>
<i>Learning log</i>	<i>A learning log is a student's commentary upon completion of a particular task, process or procedure and it focuses on recording learning as it occurs.</i>
<i>quiz/oral questioning</i>	<i>These are used to assess students' ability to listen, interpret and communicate ideas orally.</i>
<i>Interview</i>	<i>Assessing students' thorough understanding of the knowledge of the students on a particular concept or learning area</i>
<i>Writing Journal</i>	<i>Students can be asked to imagine that they are leading a demonstration on rights they feel have been violated. How would they organise the demonstrations and lead fellow students during the demonstrations differently from the way other people organise.</i>
<i>Written Test</i>	<i>Teachers can give tests to students and give feedback to the students after marking the tests so that they have a picture of their performance.</i>
<i>Project</i>	<i>It is a teacher facilitated collaborative approach in which Students apply knowledge and skills to define or solve realistic problems in natural environment.</i>

Source: MoE. (2020). *Assessment Guidelines for Secondary Schools in Malawi*

Looking at the description above of the assessment methods as outlined in the assessment guideline framework, the methods look authentic that they can also yield authentic qualitative outcomes but the prescribed targets of what to assess seem misaligned. It can be observed that mostly the target is student mastery of the subject content to do well in the final or national examinations.

On monitoring how teachers implement the curriculum in the classroom situation, teachers acknowledged that they are visited by Quality Assurance Officers from the Education Division. However, it was noted that this is not done as often as is required. This is done on top of school-based or departmental based lesson observation practices. The comments by teachers, on the school-based strategies for effective curriculum implementation showed that head of departments are given the tasks to ensure classroom observation schedules are organised as often as possible. When asked about this, T4 said that:

*Yaa... my head of department, yes so he really tries, ... he encourages us[during] departmental meetings, we do regularly. ...he also introduced, what was known as lesson observation week, whereby history teachers were able to observe lessons for our friends so that when we see a weakness we try to encourage our friend maybe to improve on certain areas. We do that every term.*

A similar approach was observed at school F where it was noted that they even came up with an observation form (**see appendix 13**) which was used for assessment and evaluation of best teacher practices for effective learning in the classroom arena. Another strategy which was not common practice in the schools under this study was team teaching which was aimed at covering enough content in preparing students for examinations as reflected from this comment:

*We also do team teaching. For example, the syllabus we have said is too wide, so what we do, maybe I can start from the first topic, maybe Iron Age, wile, or maybe in form three we start on the Yao and the other may will start last topic maybe Communism. So, it' s like one starts this one goes down so that we meet. Of course, I have seen that maybe students are pressurised but somehow it is good.*

From his last statement the teacher acknowledged that the practice puts learners under pressure of covering much content over a short period of time. This would again reveal a lot about the experience students undergo due to the effect of teacher centered approaches.

This also further echoed what Badley (2009) articulated, that, loose usage of the term integration or thematic curriculum to the users generate confusion about and possibly engender resistance to the innovation. It has therefore been noted that with this superficial application of the curriculum approach in history curriculum in

Malawi, the pedagogical knowledge has not changed over time to match with the framed curriculum.

Lack of deliberate focus on the themes as highlighted in the history curriculum, the study suggests, led to monotony in teacher's employment of teaching and learning methods. It was noted that traditional lecture method and question and answer method were prevalent in most lessons. This is despite the fact that the syllabus clearly presents the suggested teaching and learning methods which are learner centered.

The other outcome from the absence of theme-based approach was seen in the passiveness of learners in history lessons, which continues to present history as a boring subject in secondary schools. It is due to sticking to the old tradition that the results of this study revealed significant gaps between the intended curriculum and the enacted curriculum in terms of design of learning experiences, methodologies, pedagogy of resources for learning and also assessment procedures of intended outcomes. This was seen as a mismatch with the frame factors of the intended thematic curriculum.

The above resounds earlier revelation by Kadzamira and Rose (2001) who observed that while in theory, the curriculum was designed to be child-centered, teachers appear not to be conversant with the same due to poor training and lack of proper teaching and learning resources. This is the trend that is still in existence

now as observed in this study, and it has been a recurring problem that has remained unaddressed as raised by different researchers on curriculum implementation. As such, the history curriculum fails to meet the criterion of relevance in meeting its desired outcome.

According to White (1995), thematic curriculum approach requires a lot of resources beyond the prescribed textbooks such as newspapers, documentaries, legal documents, quotations from speeches, excerpts from literature, and visual work products such as pictures and cartoons. These resources would be part of what Lombardi (2007) calls authentic teaching and learning materials which most teachers under this study indicated that their school does not have to facilitate meaningful learning in the classroom and prepare learners for the role of effective citizenship. All in all, it would be difficult to challenge or agree that thematic approach evokes student engagement and a deeper understanding of content in history as advocated in the observation by White (1995) because of the contextual and sometimes lack of history resources.

On the same issue of pedagogical resource materials, there has been little change so as to match with the demand of the reviewed curriculum approach. Although the syllabus indicates the suggested authentic resources but schools are not supplied with the same apart from the history text books which are also in short supply. The outcry both from history teachers and students has always been the shortage of core textbooks in history that would facilitate learning against the necessity of other

resources that would facilitate the retention of historical information and instill the desired values and attitudes in them. This is in contrast to some studies that have registered effectiveness of new innovative approaches to instruction attributed to availability of a variety of resources (Gaikwad, 1991).

The outcome from this lack of these authentic resources was not good as seen from observation where students seemed to lack demonstration of multiple perspectives in their discussion of events. This finding supports Turan (2020) assertion that a variety of resources in history lessons help to bring in learners' multiple perspectives. The prioritisation of textbooks barely comes as a result of teachers and students' perception that without them, performance during the national examination will not be good. This therefore gets back to the signature of the old pedagogical tradition which was text-based and encouraged rote learning and memorisation of facts which according to many educationists, does not tally with the educational needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

On the perspective of integration which teachers in the study pointed out, seems to match with two models as highlighted by Fogarty (1991) and Morris (2003), which included nested and fused model respectively. Surprising, this study and like in many research studies on thematic approach, both the two models are not used in classroom situation by history teachers. Instead, topical approach is prevalent. Where they are used especially the fused model, it is not deliberate but incidental due to the focus on examinations, which require students' retention of information.



This supports the argument by Barton & Levstik (2003) and Barton & Smith (2000) in their quest to explain why teachers with good pedagogical content knowledge, who even understand that the subject has to be taught in an interpretative way and involving multiple perspectives, they do not do the same in a classroom situation with the reason being that the kind of teaching is in conflict with what they see as their primary tasks of covering content. Similar challenges were echoed in Uganda during their process of thematic curriculum implementation studies by Altinyelken (2010) and Mibirizi (2018).

On the issue of aligning the curriculum design with textbooks, the results highlighted above show a divergence. This development is in line with findings by Sophia (2018) which among others, was established that the thematic curriculum faced challenges in that it was hard to translate from textbooks and inadequate reference materials. Apart from the above factors that puts history teachers in problems to integrate themes in their lessons, this study has found out that mainly, it is out of lack of knowledge of the themes and their use in the curriculum. This still affirms the findings by Retnawati and Arlinwibowo (2017) who acknowledged that the development hampers teachers practice in the classroom situation in trying to engage learners in meaningful learning experiences.

### **4.3 Challenges of Thematic Teaching and Learning of History in Schools**

This responds to the fourth research objective in which factors that militate against

meaningful teaching and learning which consequently, are at odds with thematic approach to history instruction have been highlighted and discussed. These include shortage of teaching and learning materials, difficulties to assess qualitative outcomes, difficulties to fuse themes into the lesson, weak link between topics, shortage of qualified history teachers and limited curriculum support.

Firstly, lack of resources was one of the major challenges which most respondents both history teachers and students highlighted. For instance, in CDSSs, shortage of history textbooks with authentic textual illustrations was said to be a challenge from most teachers which they said was also affecting the choice of methods employed in the classroom situation. For instance, as indicated by T2 from one of the CDSSs in Mzuzu, one cannot opt for group discussions where you have few books against many students in a class;

*...you look at resources, we have few books, in sciences its better. There is EQUALS programme they gave them a lot of books, 100 plus for every subject. For humanities, geography we have 5 against 80 or 75 plus students, do you think leaner-centered approach can work there?*

The same view was presented by students at school A who upon being asked on how they were engaged in the classroom situation, it was revealed that shortage of history books led to inefficiency in the operation of group work and research. In other words, the purpose of group work was not actualised since they acted as

symbolic as still more, one person would be asked to read for the whole class before the teacher comes in for the summaries. This is what was said; *“...she just distributes the books and ask volunteers to read...”*

A slight divergent view on the availability of resources was presented by one respondent who argued that the issue of resources sometimes depends on the topic one is expected to teach. He contended that some topics are easy to find resources while some, it is difficult. Below is his excerpt:

*And again, on integrating, the other challenge is resources, so there are some topics its almost difficult to access resources to help the teacher to integrate the skills but, in some topics, as I have already alluded to, it' s easy. So, for example, you talk of Christianity and Islam, they practice them, you can even use them, students themselves as part of the resources but things of a distant past is very challenging (T3).*

As regards thematic teaching and learning approach, textbooks are not the only resources for authentic learning. Pictures are part of essential resources that help to bring primary historical information. It can be observed from different history books that are in the new curriculum have embedded pictures, maps and cartoons though teachers pay no or less attention in helping students develop the sense of historical understanding, skills and intended attitudes these resources entail to provide. These are also depicted in the history syllabus on the suggested teaching, learning and assessment resources as highlighted in **Box 4.5** below:

#### **Box 4.1: Suggested Teaching, Learning and Assessment Resources**

*Textbooks, resource persons, maps, archaeological sites, museums, pictures, stories, students' experiences, internet, songs, folktales cartoons and illustrations, films, journals, charts, documentaries, students' experiences, sign language interpreters, radio drama/play, monuments, old newspapers, archival materials, quizzes, teacher observation, TV programmes, documents, political speeches, recorded radio plays, biographies, reports, magazines*

#### **Source: History Syllabus for form 3 and 4**

Availability of the above resources would go in a long run with the article statement in the SSCAR framework on managing and resourcing of the current curriculum, history in particular, that states that:

*Provision of adequate and appropriate resources to support teaching and learning remains an important ingredient in the effective implementation of the secondary school curriculum and assessment procedures P.55*

However, the situation on the ground indicates that the indicated intended or suggested resources are still not available and when teachers complain about the same, they focus much on textbooks. The other essential resources which are very important for the outcomes of thematic curriculum are videos and documentaries. Some textbooks clearly highlight the need to use video resources like activity 19 in the extract from one of the books below.

## Activity 19

### Watching a film on the life of Dr Hastings Kamuzu Banda

1. Source a film from either museum or somewhere. Your teacher will assist you to get one.
2. Watch the film on the life of Dr Hastings Kamuzu Banda.
3. As a class, discuss the lessons learnt about Dr Banda.

### Figure 1: Films as Historical Resource

*Source:* Arise with history book 2

However, respondents from schools under this study lamented the in-availability of these resources. One of the teachers was echoed in the following;

*challenges are there, but the major one is resources,…… if you look at this curriculum is centered on skills, outcome –based, so you will find that when you want to teach some topics, you…… need to break down that content, to the level that the learner would understand, so resources, for example, there are some that you would need to use videos, so imagine a school like this in rural area where would you get, and then you need documentaries, where would you get those documentaries…….(T3).*

T5 noted that even in situations where the school had these resources, some of the schools have no electricity and sometimes those schools with electricity would also

be affected due to load shedding and lots of blackouts affecting the country. This is what the respondent said;

*.. but electricity is a challenge in our country, how can you show a video where by the whole of the day, ... don't have electricity, what about at ... CDSS, (Name omitted) there is no electricity, yes we understand the issues of TALULAR, using the available resources, but it's not easy.*

Secondly, thematic history curriculum faces a challenge that relates to the assessment of its qualitative outcomes such as values and attitudes. This was also an observation by some respondents in this study as highlighted by T1 below:

*.. but for the attitudes whether students are patriotic to the country so far it may be difficult to give a definite answer, sometimes maybe it has to do with developmental stages because currently students are going through formative stage through which you are introducing the basics of history okay, so it may be difficult to judge the attitudes...even if the attitudes have changed but how will you assess the changed attitudes in the learners about patriotism.*

The above response from the participant came despite the ministry of education in conjunction with the Malawi Institute of Education rolled out an orientation on assessment standard guidelines which stipulate different assessment procedures

so as to have the desired outcomes as indicated in **Table 4.3**. The impact imposed by the national examination body cannot be underrated in this aspect. From the respondents, it can be noted that the focus of their teaching was based on ensuring that students pass the national examination which unfortunately does not assess qualitative aspects as valued in thematic curriculum of history. This has been one of the misalignments within the curriculum which exposes the discrepancy between the intended and assessed curriculum.

Thirdly, difficulties to fuse themes in lessons were among the challenges, history teachers find in their teaching and learning process. T5 noted that thematic teaching and learning, especially in trying to fuse themes into the lesson, becomes a challenge due to time factor especially in relation to cover much content in the syllabus. Some explained that they do not integrate the themes because they are not assessed by the National examination body as stated in the following; *We mostly focus on the subject matter of the topic probably, because it is what is examined at the end of the day. They don't examine the themes; we examine the content (T6).*

The fourth challenge presented by respondents in this study was the weak link; between the topics from form one to form four. The way the curriculum has been framed, respondents from this study indicated that there is a weak link between topics so as to instill the espoused attitudes, and values of patriotism, interdependence and others. The following excerpt presents the views of most

respondents:

*It' s because the link between the core element and the content is weak and remote is difficult to understand. I will give an example of the JCE syllabus, kingdoms Aztec empire, Chinese are under Malawi, the theme interrelationship between Malawi and the world and you wonder the relationship which is there between Malawi and the Aztec, for example in terms of time and geography I think the events happened long time ago and far away. The subject matter itself, names and how...the link becomes so abstract, so weak. In such cases emphasising the themes becomes a very big hustle and you are teaching only form 1 and 2 who are still developing, and their thinking may not be abstract, so you better go down to understand the basics because at that level the themes are very abstract.*

This weak link between the topics can be seen to be as a result of in-adequacies in planning that could have linked the curriculum framework, developmental outcomes and classroom activities in a practical sense. When asked how the curriculum could have been framed, the same respondent had this to say:

*I think there is a missing piece in how our history is framed. I wish the link would have been stronger...if the content had a lot of information on the local history of Malawi and then expanding from there into the*



*neighbouring countries and the region as a whole like the country e.g., Malawi, Zambia, Zimbabwe and Mozambique our history could have been growing from there(T1).*

The fifth challenge for the current implementation of thematic curriculum to teaching and learning of history as submitted by respondents in this study is shortage of qualified teachers. This has been a recurring problem in secondary schools and respondents from this study also indicated the same. For example, in 2018 the secondary schools in the Northern Education Division had 2,817 teachers in total with 1680 being untrained, against 56,123 students (MoEST, 2018). This represented a 20 percent Teacher Pupil Ratio (PTR). History is among the subjects that have the lowest number of qualified teachers. In some cases, especially in rural CDSSs, teachers from other subject disciplines are asked to handle the subject as indicated in the chief examiners reports of 2022 MANEB examinations. This affects the quality of classroom delivery and relevance of the subject to students. For example, when asked whether teachers contextualised their lessons to real-life situation of their learners, T1 from a CDSS in Mzuzu had the following to say:

*ya the challenge is there, one is lack of history specialist teachers, that 's a key challenge, ...I think contextualising history requires history specialist teachers, who can relate the past, the current problem or who can relate the present to the past, both ways that require a natural historian who has natural prerequisite skills in handling or understanding*

*or approaching history, we don't have a lot of specialist history teachers, as we are talking to day here, we have only two specialist history teachers and in some cases, non-historians are forced to handle history subject, so that creates a challenge in terms of analysing history , in terms contextualising history because of ----*

The above is consistent with an observation made in 2022 MANEB chief examiners report for history where it was stated that in order to improve the performance of students in history especially in Community Day Secondary Schools (CDSS), there is need for the ministry of Education to deploy more qualified history teachers in schools (MANEB, 2022). This does not correspond to one of the reasons why the current curriculum was adopted. For example, the route system was in one way or the other meant to overcome the problem of availability of qualified teachers in this case.

Apart from the above-mentioned challenges, participants in this study bemoaned limited support to curriculum as one of the challenges that face history education in secondary schools. One of the support history as a subject would get as highlighted in the syllabuses and even curriculum framework is the museum. These historical centers provide the basis for authentic learning. However, participants in this study lamented that these museums are not well developed, despite the fact that schools also have their own financial challenges to patronise these important places. For instance, the following interviewee said this; *you talk of a museum; we are lucky*

*here we have a museum, but it is not up to the standard (T3).*

The above highlighted problem was in harmony with many respondents despite the historical places forming one of the key of history teaching and learning approaches called doing history—the act of constructing historical interpretations using the historical method or inquiry, which engages historical evidence, particularly primary and secondary sources, and analyzes them. Echoing on the same curriculum support are the comments by a teacher at School C whom while adding on the issue of financial resources, he stated that resources for history teaching and learning are scarce. His revelations can be seen from this submission:

*ya so is a challenge because sometimes you would want to go the museum to see the artifacts, so we cannot manage, so maybe it's because of the finances, we need to go there. But also, the resources in history are so scarce; you cannot easily find resources in history.*

The other participant also highlighted this lack of curriculum support, especially for history as a subject in the following excerpt:

*...the government, should make deliberate measures to motivate history teachers, yaaaa, so...; you talk of other subjects like sciences, languages... you hear now and again that we will have an inset... but for history, I can't remember when such inset happened, so it's like*

*teachers, they don't use the best of their ability because they feel that they are behind their colleagues...*

T5 of school C also lamented lack of support especially by the ministry of education as a challenge to the current history curriculum implementation. His submission is portrayed in the following:

*.....we don't have support from the ministry itself. Recently, we have seen that our friends in the science have been involved in so many INSETs, the EQUALs, but for us from the humanities, they have forgotten us. We need some career development skills, we need to learn new knowledge, but there is nothing like that. In the past we used to have... INSETs, but this time there is a problem. So, I think it will be hard for us to achieve whatever they want from this curriculum. But still more we are trying (T5).*

From the excerpts, it can be noted that lack of INSETs for humanities in which history is included has a bearing to teachers' classroom practices. The same respondent also bemoaned the government for not considering recruiting humanities teachers in the just ended teacher recruitment exercise in the division. This is reflected from the following: *...so for example, the recruitment which has just happened, you find no teacher for humanities has been recruited or promoted, so as a teacher you are there working, how would you feel?*

The above was said to be the evidence that history as a subject is given less attention and support subjecting it further to its delineation. When asked whether as history teachers, they are being supervised by the Quality Assurance Officers from the division, T5 presented this:

*yes.. Once, they visited us, but that was in the early days... In the early days, yes at least you know when things are just starting..but since then aaa, because we are saying knowledge is not static.. each and every year you need to learn new things, you need to update. So in the early days at least it was fine, we are talking of years like 2017, 2018 but since then aaa...*

Lastly, the challenge related to failures of teachers to implement thematic approach to history instruction in secondary schools has been attributed to lack of emphasis by teacher education institutions on these pedagogical approaches. One of the participants in this study stated that;

*Much focus in universities is on history content rather than methodology, yaaa of course what we were learning at the university it ' s what we are doing now, but there, the content was too much, but coming here things are well demarcated (T2).*

In the above extract, it can be observed that what pre-service teachers are exposed to in the teacher education programmes are general not related directly with the history teaching profession. More of what is learnt is general history and not history for secondary school teachers.

The findings indicate that history teachers try their best in the implementation of the history curriculum with the meager resources and the knowledge they have. On the challenges they face in implementing the thematic history curriculum as highlighted in the precepts above are consistent with different studies from other countries. For example, a study done by Geoffrey (2019) in Uganda showed that despite some teachers were trying to implement the policy, they still faced challenges like scheming and lesson planning. It was also noted in the same study, that even assessment was quite hard for them.

An earlier study by Collins (1993) and Mbirizi (2018) in Michigan and Uganda respectively, also revealed similar findings on factors that militated against successful thematic curriculum implementation. The factors included financial incapability' s of the school, lack of enough instructional materials and competent teachers among others. In line with thematic curriculum, findings from this study on resources concurs with the study by Collins, who noted thatlack of variety and unique teaching and learning materials that can help to realise the goals of the approach are inadequate or sometimes non-available in schools. This, as also observed in this study became one of the major constraints in the implementation

of the approach in history instruction regardless of the nature of the school visited by the researcher. On the issue of time factor, the study by Sophia (2018) recommended that increasing the hours given to teach thematic curriculum would help to mitigate the problem among other solutions related to policy activities during curriculum planning and implementation such as; training of teachers; obtaining reference books, and increasing on the motivation of teachers.

Both studies in Malawi and abroad on assessment, agree that the perceived standards on the ground do not reflect the curriculum demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. For instance, the emphasis on passing national exams is a major challenge facing the effective implementation of thematic curriculum. The findings of this research from this aspect are consistent with that of Chiziwa and Kumkwezu (2021) on the PCAR in Malawi and that of Geoffrey (2021) that the inclusion of formative assessment and competence-based standards are just symbolic than practical in classroom situation.

The continued use of traditional assessment standards, affirms the findings by Cook (2004) and Chakwera *et al.* (2004), that they limit teachers' application of the authentic thematic instruction in their classroom arenas. The attributing factors to this has been lack of adequate teacher preparation and the fact that National examination bodies still assess content and cognitive knowledge at the cost of intended authentic skills, values and attitudes. As a result, teachers defy curriculum guidelines and resort to teacher centered and examination-based pedagogical

approaches. This results in a mismatch between the examinations and history course objectives because only selected parts of the curriculum are assessed, and therefore taught.

Another major challenge observed in the implementation of the current thematic history curriculum in secondary schools in Malawi is lack of authentic teaching and learning materials. In order to realise the desired outcomes from a thematic curriculum, authentic materials that are systematically designed with specific consideration of enhancing meaningful and contextualised learning are required. Unfortunately, the study has found that the focus so far, has been on the supply of textbooks. Similar observation on lack of authentic thematic learning materials was also echoed by Mulyasari, *et al.* (2017), which like in the current study was not appropriate as per what is entailed in the intended curriculum approach. This therefore signifies a mismatch or misalignment that cannot achieve the desired outcomes in the classroom arena.

A majority of the textbooks too, are designed using the traditional approach that supports a single narrative of historical information. In line with the argument by Misco and Patterson (2009), textbooks rarely help to create connections between what students learn in classroom environment with the outside and present environment.

Bain (2005), History teachers tend to be charged with making their students learn a



history that others have already written; thus they typically begin with course outcomes in hand, determined by curricular mandates. Like in this study, it has been found that while some textbooks do contain engaging activities that can enhance the development of other outcomes rather than content mastery and skills, teachers do not focus on them. This is due to lack of clear emphasis provided by curriculum framework. This supports the findings of the study performed by Collins (1993), where it was stated that there was lack of an assessment tool for measuring students' basic skills and attitudes. And as noted in this study, even students do not look at such type of activities as worth pursuing, but rather, focus on the content. All in all, this misalignment has created conflict between the knowledge and skills that are valued in the syllabus, and what is being assessed in the classroom environment and beyond.

Lack of proper and specific monitoring and quality assurance standards to the teaching and learning of history is another problem that this study has unpacked. What has been observed is that stakeholders responsible in the monitoring of curriculum implementation, use National Educational Standards (NES) which are general and cut across all subjects both at primary and secondary. Despite employing subject-based specialists, but the standards are vague as regards the assessment of one's specific knowledge of curriculum demands in a specific subject, in this case, thematic history curriculum. Quality and relevance of the curriculum is assessed by looking at National examination pass rate (Ministry of Education, 2019). The principal assumption is that history as a discipline or subject

is not different from other subjects such as mathematics or English, a view that is different from the advocates of disciplinary approach to history instruction (Furner, 1995).

From the understanding of Frame Factor theory, implementation of thematic history curriculum has been affected by various frame elements within the curriculum itself which seem to be in conflict of each other. For instance, there seem to be two curriculum approaches within one curriculum framework but the other, in this case thematic approach is not amplified in practice despite being the one being championed by instructional approach in the curriculum framework.

#### **4.4 Effectiveness of Thematic Curriculum on Students' Performance**

This fourth key question was meant to evaluate effectiveness of the reformed curriculum in improving learners' performance. Evaluation of effectiveness was based on whether the expected goals or outcome of history thematic approach is aligned with the actual practice and outcome in the classroom situation or not, and the focus of this study was much on qualitative than quantitative outcomes.

The first area of inquiry with the students was on historical understanding. It was observed that students found challenges to connect different events across the curriculum. This was noted in their confusion and sometimes misplacing of events

and other historical developments. This was supported by the following extract from the JCE Chief Examinations Report of 2021 examinations commenting on students' responses to a particular test item on the significance of the royal fire in the Mwenemutapa Kingdom:.....*some students confused the significance of the royal fire in the Mwenemutapa, with the general use of fire, hence missed the target...*

When students in the focus group were asked about the better way they thought about learning history, S3 said that there is need for a syllabus that would contextualise the topics with the contemporary events happening in Malawi, and not just dwell in the past despite acknowledging that these events of the distant past such as contribution of Aztec can help a country. S5 shared similar sentiments on the contemporary study of history while adding another comment on the coverage of topics as indicated in what he said in the following: *we should learn something that is of our own country...like many topics, are about other countries.*

Being an outcome-based education curriculum, thematic curriculum advocates for qualitative outcomes. This is in contrast to examination pedagogy perpetuated by traditional curriculum which is characterised by mastery of content and quantitative outcomes. From the data collected, it is clear that there has never been a shift from the status quo. Teachers continue to teach for examination's sake. In some instances, teachers tried to orient their students in research skills, but learners seem to be used with the traditional approach in that they do not become comfortable

with this productive pedagogy. One of the form 4 students from school D showed his dissatisfaction in the way his current teacher approaches the subject in that he gave them a lot of work to do on their, own instead of just giving them information since they also have other subjects to concentrate on too. He said that:

*history needs information she just comes here and say, I will teach here and there without any guidance, because any subject needs guidance, so it gives me tough time because I have more subjects to be reading and now I am concentrating on history, so each day we are given work ...*(S10).

From the above view, it can be seen that the student was after content mastery in preparation for the final examinations than on research skills. Further it was revealed by T7 that, *the curriculum is still exam oriented; hence the values and attitudes cannot be actualised...research skills depend on the teacher*. This was even affirmed by expertise recommendations as observed in the chief examiners reports of the Malawi National Examinations Board (MANEB) for 2021 and 2022, where teachers were encouraged to fully cover the content of the syllabus to ensure that students get familiar with it and hence, able to answer questions correctly during examinations. It is equally noted that schools were encouraged to have both, the teaching syllabus and the examination syllabus, and the absence of examination syllabuses is said to be a contributing factor for poor performance of students.

This view was supported by other respondents like T1 who argued that for students to develop the right attitudes or values, it depends on how a particular teacher is acquainted with history, the values and attitudes he or she holds, and how he or she was taught. In other words, teachers' view of developing events of the country or at world level, will determine the impartation of the same to the students in the classroom interaction. The following excerpt is a submission of the perspective by T1:

#### **Box 4.2: The Role of Teachers in the Impartation of Values in Students**

*Researcher: Where did the approach you are taking come from?*

*Respondent: it's a combination of all those..i have a natural interest in history I think from my background...There are three factors*

*1. My primary school teacher (Name withheld), he was teaching us Agriculture, mathematics and English, but he was talking a lot of history ...He used to talk a lot of Professor Kings Phiri, .....he said when you will go to University you will see Professor Kings Phiri.*

*2. The second factor was my brother, we used to discuss a lot about history... so through that my interest in history grew so rapidly*

*3. The third factor was our secondary school teacher,..*

An analysis of the success criteria from the senior history syllabus shows that they do not reflect students' affective outcomes. Most of them lead the students to develop cognitive skills. The following represent a set of success criteria from two topics, Partition of Africa for the junior and European occupation and Administration of Southern Rhodesia for senior secondary history syllabus, respectively.

#### **Table 4.3 Success Criteria for Junior and Senior History Syllabus**

Junior secondary syllabus	Senior secondary syllabus
<p><i>1. define the terms “scramble for Africa” and “partition of Africa”</i></p> <p><i>2. explain factors that led to the partition of Africa</i></p> <p><i>3. describe the events that led to the Berlin Conference of 1884</i></p>	<p><i>1. locate the position of Southern Rhodesia in British Central Africa</i></p> <p><i>2. outline the factors that led to British interest in Southern Rhodesia</i></p> <p><i>3. explain the role of the British South African (BSA) Company in the British occupation of Southern Rhodesia</i></p>

From the above table, represents the nature of many topics in the syllabus. It can be observed that topics which are meant to help instilling the spirit and attitudes of nationalism and patriotism have success criteria limited to knowledge level rather than affective domain. This has been the case even before the change from chronological to thematic curriculum. This can be revealed from the excerpts of MANEB questions of 1995 and 2022 on **appendix 16** and **17** respectively. The extracts, show that despite the change from the old chronological to the current thematic history curriculum approach, there has never been any change in the style, nature and format of formulating the test items. In other words, MANEB still provides the frame through which history as a subject needs to be assessed, which is at odds with the tenets of thematic curriculum.

In terms of applying the knowledge gained from history lessons to other contexts, other respondents in this study had a positive view about the current curriculum.

For example, T3 argued that he saw a difference between students who took history and those who were not taking, in terms of acquisition and application of the necessary skills as a result of their encounter with the subject, especially on literacy skills. This is what he presented:

*yes in some areas it pays dividends... for example, one of the skills that history is there to promote is critical thinking. We also talk of writing skill, so it really provides the platform for that, especially when we engage in essay writing, so they do, sharpening their writing skills and then in terms of thinking, am saying this because am also teaching English, so you find those students who are good in history and in English you give them poetry, they don't find difficulties in analysing literary texts, unlike those who do not take history.*

On the importance the subject has to real life situation of students and those who study it, most students focused on career prospects such as journalism, law and teaching. Few like S9 acknowledged that the study of history had already helped them to demonstrate leadership skills and other values like the need for cooperation and unity. This is a consequence of the nature of the subject itself and the place it has in the national curriculum. For example, the secondary school history curriculum was intended to help students develop research skills; promotes the important skills of critical thinking, problem-solving and decision-making; promotes local, regional and international understanding which encourages

tolerance.

It is also contended that history has a utilitarian dimension that unearths a catalogue of indigenous knowledge, skills and values which can be utilised for personal advancement, employment and the general development of the society (MoEST, 2013). However, knowledge about this was also supposed to be reflected in actual teachers' practices and approaches than being incidental.

Fourthly, the teachers in this study also expressed internal conflict as regards to letting go of traditional, high content-driven instruction for thematic, student-centered instruction. It was noted that students, especially when coming from primary school, do not possess the required historical content knowledge since at primary school level, history is integrated with other subjects like geography hence its content is superficial. With this, teachers felt students would not be able to engage in higher level thinking without knowing the basics. It was therefore noted by some teachers that there was need for students to first, be exposed to historical content knowledge and later when they go to college or university that is when they could be exposed to these historical approaches. One of the teachers commented like this:

*...but for the attitudes whether students are patriotic to the country so far, it may be difficult to give a definite answer, sometimes maybe it has to do with developmental stages because currently, students are going*



*through formative stage through which you are introducing the basics of history, ok so it may be difficult to judge the attitudes...even if the attitudes have changed but how will you assess the changed attitudes in the learners about patriotism(T1).*

Authentic qualitative outcomes are crucial to thematic curriculum. More, as already noted from assessment guidelines, much focus is on quantitative outcomes than qualitative. However, this study has observed that to some extent, students benefit positively, in their experience with learning history. This can be seen from the findings from focus group discussion at school A as unveiled in the student's comment below by S4:

*In my case, history has a positive impact. It's like it reminds us of an event of what has already happened and enables us to give a good and final judgment e.g. without studying history, what has already happened, we can't judge the action that maybe it was right or good, but because we had kept what happened, then we are able. That is how I think is good to learn history.*

A similar comment that showed that the current history curriculum at least helps to instill some values in learners besides the fact that the curriculum does not have conventional means to assess them, came from students during focus group interview at school A, whom, when asked about the rationale of learning different

tribes in history, it was discovered that unity appeared to be an outcome.

In addition, thematic curriculum approach is designed to inculcate historical reasoning skill as its outcome. In evaluating the thematic curriculum, it was also necessary to assess if students demonstrated this skill as an outcome from thematic curriculum. On how this could be achieved in the actual teaching and learning, a note from teacher practices during the teaching and learning process presents a challenge in how question and answer techniques were used. It was observed that teachers could not probe more on student's responses to see their reasoning capability at the same time finding out if they really mastered the content. The observation portrays the teachers' quest to complete the answers given by learners instead of probing further so that the learners themselves finish off explaining the answers. This could deter the development of reasoning skills in students. However, the following excerpt from the interaction between the researcher and the student respondent demonstrated a little bit of historical reasoning that existed among students after learning a particular topic in the history lesson on Iron Age.

#### Box 4.3: An Excerpton Students' Reasoning Skills

**Researcher:** *In fact the basic definition of history is that it is the study of the past. How do you relate the past to what is happening today?*

**S9:** *Okay, one of the topics is like iron age... so there are some of the things that were done in the past, like iron smelting, ...they have just... improved nowadays and we are able to see some metals which are used to make cars, bicycles, a lot of things...*

**Researcher:** *.....have you ever heard that in Malawi today we have iron smelting*

**S9:** *No, ...the smelted tools are just imported into the country, like most of the things are already made outside and are just imported. So, in those countries they just took that idea of Iron Age and just improved it*

**Researcher:** *so what is the importance of Iron Age which happened in the past for Malawi?*

From the above discussion, it can be seen that the participant had a limited reasoning beyond the content knowledge on the impact of Iron Age period activities to modern life.

Based on the data analysed, it can be concluded that the product realised from this curriculum is general to history as a discipline and not due to the thematic approach the curriculum took. It is from this reason that it can be highlighted that based on its design, it has been ineffective to realise its espoused and intended goals. The reason behind this deficiency is due to the challenges this study has unmasked. Similar findings were presented by Straaten *et al.* (2018), who indicated that there is need for well explicit standards that specify the kind of historical knowledge, skills and attitudes students should gain at the end. They further state that the compilers of the curriculum documents should not apparently assume that learning about the past yields insights into the present and the future as a matter of course, transferring knowledge beyond subject specific contexts for granted by not providing any explicit learning activities directed at achieving the same. In this context, the means to effectively realise the goals of thematic curriculum were

overshadowed in the thinking that it is not a different curriculum from the rest of the discipline. This led to neglecting of the key principles of thematic curriculum and hence, resorting to the old tradition.

As framed by Salleh *et al.* (2015), the current history curriculum and its means of achieving the goals of education in the country are skewed to academic and cognitive orientation than on social reconstruction-relevance, self-actualisation and technology. Less emphasis of course is put on cognitive orientation where there is stress on the learning process.

The study has also affirmed unresolved debate on how to assess students in history. While the curriculum assessment framework advocates for the integration of formative assessment which is in line with what is envisioned by Davies (2011) in trying to settle the debates, this study has revealed a discrepancy with the rationale for thematic curriculum. As observed, the current assessment criteria especially authentic methods indicated in the Assessment guidelines are not being used in the classroom practices for all the lessons observed in all the schools. The focus is on student content mastery and skills. This is contrary to what Taufina and Chandra (2017) and Palm (2008) advocate as far as thematic history curriculum and life-long learning is concerned.

It has also echoed the fear which was there in the initial feasibility study on the establishment of continuous assessment in the curriculum done in 2003, which

contended that its introduction would produce far reaching consequences on the entire country, considering that MANEB has been administering norm-referenced type of examinations hence to suddenly drop it, would even require a redefinition of its role (Kamangira, 2003). This is also revealed in the conflict of interest between curriculum developers and the government through the examination board on whether to assess academic skills only or include values and attitudes as reflected in the outcomes of the curriculum.

The results of this study, also support, research carried out by Sophia (2008) on the implementation of thematic curriculum in Uganda on the aspect of the curriculum being translated in textbooks. This study has revealed that there is weak link among the curriculum framework, the syllabus and the textbooks as regards the integration of the themes known as core elements. History textbooks do not show the themes under which the topics fall. Since most classroom experiences are textbook-driven, the implication has been the delineation of these themes in the actual classroom practices. This comes on top of the common view by most teachers that these themes are not examinable, hence not important as compared to content mastery.

The study has portrayed a contrary view of what Mohamad *et al.* (2020) asserted which most teachers acknowledged and concurred. They asserted that values in the History curriculum are made possible through the integration process, which is a combination of cognitive processes, affective processes, and values, this view of History's morals, values, and civics function has long persisted. However, as

portrayed in this study, it has been a challenge to integrate them into the teaching and learning situation.

It has been known through this study too, that the history curriculum generally contains success criteria that target outcomes at the level of knowledge and conception. Rarely do the success criteria target students' perception, attitudes and value development. Even at national level, there has been no change in the format of test items even though the curriculum changed to thematic approach. With this challenge, students lack ability to apply the knowledge to real-life context outside the classroom situation. These revelations are in contrast to what Greenleaf (2008) argues that with a curriculum that targets the development of skills, values and attitudes, the success criteria have to show how they would measure the development of the same. Therefore, apart from mastery of content, the success criteria were supposed to be framed in a manner which would be able to assess the development of skills, values and attitudes of the learners.

The research has also found that students' understanding of history as reflected from their responses is still poor. This seems to be in contrast with data collected from interviews with teachers and the chief examiners reports from MANEB which indicates a slight improvement in the performance of students in history in the recent times. One would believe that with good students' outcome during the national examinations, it indicates good historical comprehension, but a perspective that this study would support regarding the issue comes from Shing *et al.* (2015)

who argue that students learn either by rote learning or by understanding and can be trained to provide correct answers without understanding during the final examinations.

Newton (2000) also states that the cost of fighting for high scores and quantity is lack of learners understanding of the subject matter. This is concurred by Mctiche and Seif (2011) who state that teaching for understanding needs a fundamental migration from content coverage approach to emphasis on transferable ideas and processes. The stress on covering an overwhelming amount of content prompts teachers to adopt more teacher-centered instructional methods which are textbook-driven. These have little or no impact in developing the attitudes and values and as observed by Anderson and Cook (2014), they also result in students developing negative attitudes towards the subject, as they are not engaged or are experiencing any real-life connection to the material. This is also in agreement with what Stephenes (2007) commented that the failure pattern of non-engagement of students in lessons by teachers creates a cycle that reduces the likelihood of life-long learning and hence, at odds with thematic pedagogy.

For this study, the results just confirm the correlation between the learned curriculum and assessed curriculum unlike the intent of thematic pedagogy. In this view this research still gives an opportunity that is missed by students if thematic curriculum was implemented as intended especially in the area of contextualisation and qualitative outcomes. This is in line with the outcome from research by

Stephens (2007) where it was observed that thematic instruction does not only help students improve in standard tests but also are able to use the knowledge to successfully perform tasks requiring critical thinking and life beyond classroom confines.

It has been revealed that though the new curriculum includes learning outcomes that deal with the thinking processes involved in historical understanding, those learning outcomes are rarely addressed in assignment tasks given to students in secondary schools. Instead, a disproportionately large part of the tasks focuses on the reproduction of facts. While it is contended that thematic curriculum improves learning as observed from different responses and research studies among them is by Varun and Venugopal (2016). This research has found that the curriculum has just improved learning experiences than the learning of history itself. Unfortunately, outcomes from these learning experiences are not assessed authentically, but rather, traditional approaches are still being used.

It is also worth noting that students are not exposed to meaningful learning as evidenced from the classroom practices the researcher observed regardless of the type of school and the qualification of teachers. Teachers still use lecture methods which are not engaging and result in passive participation of learners. In this case, teachers continue to assume the role of master of historical information, an element which is at odds with thematic curriculum principles. It is from this that it has been found that the content, skills, values and attitudes as the intended outcomes from this curriculum are not being actualised. If they are being actualised,



then it is incidental than as intended.

## **4. 5 Conclusion**

From the above results, it can be concluded that there is a discrepancy between the intended and assessed curriculum. To a large extent therefore, the thematic approach to history instruction in Malawi has been in-effective in unleashing the value it espouses at the end. This has led to failure to unseat the long-standing tradition of chronological approach to history instruction as earlier on revealed by other scholars like Dzikanyanga (2018).

## **Chapter 5: Conclusion and Recommendations**

### **5.1 Conclusion.**

In general, despite the mandatory requirement to teach history thematically, teachers typically utilised more traditional methods through topical approach. The change in pedagogies from traditional to innovative, or what others have called alternative pedagogy, continues to experience resistance due to ambiguity in the curriculum design that worsens with the poor orientation of teachers and the attached traditional assessment. It can therefore be concluded that challenges to thematic history curriculum implementation are rooted in the policy planning stage rather than in the actual implementation stage. This has rendered the curriculum implementation ineffective. In short, through the frame factor theory, the problems can be grouped into three headings namely, instructional factors, curricular and organisational. From the study, it can also be concluded that, these frame factors do not have equal influence on the processes and practices of an educational program. In this case, instructional factors seem to exert the smallest influence,

seconded by school organisation factors.

This study is a digression to many studies about curriculum development that have singled out challenges mainly coming from the implementation process. In this study, it can be concluded that problems faced in the implementation of thematic history curriculum are deep rooted in the planning stage.

### **5.2.0 Recommendations**

The study unveils through literature reviewed that opportunities to harness the outcomes from it are there and can be achieved through proper organisation of the curriculum where all the stakeholders and gatekeepers in history education are involved, including students themselves during the actual implementation process. It is for this reason that this study would like to put forward the following suggestions for proper implementation of the curriculum approach.

#### **5.2.1 On Curriculum Leadership**

In the context of this study, it is high time that leadership at all levels in curriculum implementation takes into consideration, the value of history in the curriculum and with this in mind, be able to support all activities meant to promote and achieve the desired outcome from the subject which has suffered and pushed to the edge of marginalisation. History, if well supported in terms of both curriculum design and implementation, can help to inform citizens about all these and hence, a holistic and plausible approach to deal with the challenges facing the country can be taken.

### **5.2.2 On the Design of the Curriculum**

As it has been revealed, there are many models of curriculum integration and thematic approach is one of them. The curriculum design and its framework were supposed to be explicit and clear on how teachers would approach the curriculum in the actual teaching and learning process. Clear understanding should even go to the authors of textbooks and other instruction material developers about what the curriculum entails, so that important elements have to be integrated in them. Core to this is the integration of qualitative assessment tools and practices. In other words, educators should not adopt any curriculum approach so radically different from the status quo if they cannot specify precisely the salient features of that approach. This would help to have a proper link among curriculum developers and the actual translation in the classroom arena. Above all, it will diffuse problems leading to resistance curriculum implementation.

### **5.2.3 On Continuous Professional Development (CPD)**

Concerning professional development, the study suggests that a demonstration-modeling implementation strategy is needed to enable student-teachers and those new in the profession to assimilate any new pedagogical approach, apply it in practice and assimilate it into their repertoire of teaching protocols that they can draw upon. This can be done by consolidating practices by ambitious history teachers who are committed to engage students in authentic, evocative and personally relevant history tasks through insets and other history forums. This, if

consolidated, would help in finding out what can work to solve issues surrounding the teaching and learning of history in secondary schools in the Malawian setting.

#### **5.2.4 For the Malawi Institute of Education**

On top of the need for enough teaching and learning materials for history, Malawi Institute of education, which is mandated to provide for the same, should make sure that there is production of history workbooks and teachers guides that would provide a universal curriculum guide to expected classroom activities and outcomes for each theme and learning experience in history. Teachers guide should not be textbook-based, but the whole curriculum. This would help to avoid textbook centered instruction and ensure uniformity among teachers in the way they implement the curriculum across the country.

#### **5.2.5 On Curriculum Funding**

The study advocates for a holistic approach to dealing with challenges facing the country, where there is need to understand the contribution of history in the curriculum to the fulfillment of the country's dreams and expectations. With this in mind, there is an urgent need for aligning financial support to history activities in the country that would see the involvement of history teachers and students, supporting history field trips, revamping history centers like museums and also supporting Continuous Professional Development (CPD) for history teachers so that all are aware of the demands of the new innovations of the history curriculum.

### **5.2.6 On Teacher Education**

Two recommendations have been put across from this study to ensure that the new curriculum reform and pedagogies are supported. Firstly, special attention should be put on history teacher education by all stakeholders. There is need for re-orientation of teacher education curriculum so that it should be matching with what happens in the world of work. It should delineate history education from a general curriculum framework of teacher training where special topics should be included for pre-service teachers to be equipped with knowledge of secondary school history curriculum and how to handle it. This would be part of making sure that pre-in-service teachers not only familiarise themselves with the curriculum but also the context in which the curriculum is being implemented.

### **5. 2.7 On Curriculum Coordination**

There is also need for proper coordination among all stakeholders involved in curriculum development and implementation such as teachers, Ministry of Education, teacher education institutions, Malawi National Examinations Board (MANEB) and the Malawi Institute of Education (MIE), so that they all have the same focus and goals on how to handle any curriculum reform. All these and other stakeholders have to be aware of what goals are intended to be achieved and the means to reach them.

### **5.3 Areas for Further Studies**

### **5.3.1 Assessing Teacher Preparation for Thematic Approach to Teaching and Learning of History**

From the research results, it has been noted that most teachers have complained that they lack knowledge in the curriculum approaches in history despite going through colleges and Universities, and have a professional training to teach history in secondary school. One would therefore wonder if student teachers of history are exposed to history pedagogical approaches such as chronology and thematic for effective practice once they are deployed to teach history in secondary schools. Therefore, a study can be conducted to assess how teachers are prepared for the development of PCK while in colleges and universities to teach history in secondary schools in Malawi.

### **5.3.2 How Can the Thematic History Curriculum achieve its Intended Outcome within the Standard-Based Curriculum Framework**

There has been a great interest in the outcome-based curriculum reflected in students' demonstration of the attitudes, values, and beliefs in real life situation. Paradoxically, schools are subjected to increasing pressure for accountability seen in the quantitative outcome from high-stakes testing, standardised and most times scripted teaching lessons (Vars & Beane, 2000). This trend makes someone wonder whether the thematic curriculum can survive under such circumstances since it is clearly at odds with many of the teaching and testing methods that have been advocated within the standards-based curriculum reform. Research can

therefore be conducted on how schools, at the same time, reap both the benefits of genuine student-centered, thematic curriculum and instruction, and also develop student competences in state-mandated standards so that students can make acceptable scores on typical standard-based tests.

### **5.3.3 Applicability of Authentic Assessment in History Curriculum in the context of Malawian secondary schools**

One of the perspectives of authentic assessment has been on Curriculum and classroom practice. As argued by Mueller (2005), it captures the constructive nature of learning, and provides multiple paths to demonstration of learning which the traditional assessment model does not allow. With most educationists agreeing that the current assessment practices in history are at odds with the alternative pedagogies with a suggestion of aligning the curriculum, it is high time that a study would be carried out to see the applicability of authentic assessment features through curriculum alignment and concordance with students' working conditions during assessment and classroom practice.

### **5.3.4 Determine the Relevancy and Appropriateness of History Taught at Secondary School Level in Relation to Socio-Economic Needs of the Country**

There has been a general view that education must aim at helping the students develop skills and knowledge that can help to transform the countries socio-



economic and technological landscape. This has created a drum support to science subjects by both the government and international agencies that support the education sector at the expense of humanities subjects with some sectors questioning the relevance and appropriateness of other subjects like history in the educational curriculum and the overall cause of development of the country. Research is therefore needed to determine the relevance and appropriateness of history taught at secondary school level in Malawi in relation to the socio-economic and scientific needs of the country.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Interview Guide for History Teachers

1. What is your understanding of thematic curriculum approach?
2. What classroom pedagogical practices changed with the review of the history curriculum?
3. How do you integrate themes in your history lessons?
4. What impact has thematic teaching on you as a teacher and the students?

5. What is the advantage of the current thematic approach of history instruction in comparison with the previous curriculum approach?
  
6. What challenges have been faced in the implementation of the thematic approach?

## **Appendix 2: Interview Guide for History Methods Advisors**

1. What is your understanding of thematic approach to history instruction?
  
2. What need was there to review/change the history curriculum approach from chronological to thematic approach?
  
3. What is the link between the current curriculum approach to the achievement of outcomes of the curriculum and history education in Malawi?

4. What has been your role in facilitating the implementation of the current curriculum?
5. What challenges do teachers face in the implementation of the current history curriculum?
6. What measures are put in place to mitigate challenges in the implementation process of the curriculum?
7. What do you think can be done to improve history teaching and learning to meet both curricular and goals of history education in Malawi?

### **Appendix 3: Interview Guide for Students**

1. How engaged are you during the teaching and learning of history?
2. What has been your experience since you started learning history at secondary school?
3. What historical themes would you remember from the classroom arena that has

shaped your view about issues in real-life context?

- 4. What does the teacher do to make the subject more appealing and easy to understand?
  
- 5. In what ways would you apply what you learn from a history classroom?

### Appendix 4: Classroom Observation Checklist

SCHOOL NUMBER : \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

OBSERVERS' NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ CLASS: \_\_\_\_\_

#### A OUTCOMES FOR STUDENTS

1	Learning in Lessons	YES	NO	REMARKS
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	Are able to solve problems working in small groups and on their own;			
	Are enthusiastic;			
	Enjoy being given challenging tasks			
	Ask relevant questions;			
	Understand how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve;			
2	Students' outcomes in the curriculum			
	Most students achieve the learning outcomes set down in national curriculum guidelines and in the syllabus for their stage in learning			
	Students' behaviours and involvement in school life			
	Show respect for the rights of other people;			
	Understand the standards of behaviour expected within the wider community			
	Are making very good progress towards developing the social skills and attitudes which they will need as good citizens, parents and workers.			
B	THE TEACHING PROCESS			
1	A curriculum which is appropriate and relevant			
	Reflects the national priorities outlined in the Education Act 2013 and takes account of cultural context and students' educational needs			

	Develops the skills, values and attitudes for students' future lives as responsible citizens, workers and parents;			
	Develops active participation by all students and encourages them to think for themselves;			
	Makes connections between subjects and curriculum areas and takes account of cross-cutting and contemporary issues			
	Themes are integrated in the lesson			
	Students are exposed to multiple perspectives			
2	Teachers with good professional, subject and curriculum knowledge			
	Are aware of developments in their subject and curriculum areas;			
	Are interested in learning, continue to develop their own knowledge, understanding and skills and encourage their students to value learning;			
	Reflect on and, discuss the most effective ways of helping children to learn;			
3	Well planned lessons			
	Teachers plan for a range of teaching methods as appropriate to the topic, the focus of individual lessons, the classroom environment and students' needs			



4	Teaching for effective learning		
	Adjust their teaching methods to class size, facilities available, what students need to learn and how well they understand		
	Encourage students to think for themselves;		
	Engages students in authentic, real world experience		
	Learning is contextualized		

## Appendix 5: Letter of Approval from Mzunirec



**MZUZU UNIVERSITY**

**DIRECTORATE OF RESEARCH**

Mzuzu University  
Private Bag 201  
Luwingu  
Mzuzu 2  
MALAWI  
TEL: 01 320 722  
FAX: 01 320 648

### **MZUZU UNIVERSITY RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (MZUNIREC)**

**Ref No: MZUNIREC/DOR/22/38 1st April, 2022**

Oscar Nyirongo,

Mzuzu University, P/Bag 201,

Mzuzu.

Email: [nyirongooscar2@gmail.com](mailto:nyirongooscar2@gmail.com)

Dear Oscar,

### **RESEARCH ETHICS AND REGULATORY APPROVAL AND PERMIT FOR PROTOCOL REF NO: MZUNIREC/DOR/22/38: THEMATIC TEACHING AND LEARNING OF HISTORY IN MALAWIAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

Having satisfied all the relevant ethical and regulatory requirements, I am pleased to inform you that the above referred research protocol has officially been approved. You are now permitted to proceed with its implementation. Should there be any amendments to the approved protocol in the course of implementing it, you shall be required to seek approval of such amendments before implementation of the same.

This approval is valid for one year from the date of issuance of this approval. If the study goes beyond one year, an annual approval for continuation shall be required to be sought from the Mzuzu University Research Ethics Committee (MZUNIREC) in a format that is available at the Secretariat. Once the study is finalized, you are required to furnish the

Committee with a final report of the study. The Committee reserves the right to carry out compliance inspection of this approved protocol at any time as may be deemed by it. As such, you are expected to properly maintain all study documents including consent forms.

**Committee Address:**

*Secretariat, Mzuzu University Research Ethics Committee, P/Bag 201, Luwingu, Mzuzu 2;*

*E-mail address: [mzunirec@mzuni.ac.mw](mailto:mzunirec@mzuni.ac.mw)*

Wishing you a successful implementation of your study.

Yours Sincerely,



**Gift Mbwele**

**MZUZU UNIVERSITY RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATOR**

**For: CHAIRMAN OF MZUNIREC**

## Appendix 6: Letter of Introduction



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**1<sup>ST</sup> APRIL 2022**

### **TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN**

Dear Sir/Madam,

**LETTER OF INTRODUCTION: MR OSCAR NYIRONGO**

Mr Oscar Nyirongo is a registered Master of Education (Teacher Education) Program student at Mzuzu University. He has been cleared by the Mzuzu University Research Ethics Committee (MZUNIREC) to collect data for the research study he is conducting as a requirement for the program.

Kindly assist him accordingly.

Yours faithfully,

**Dr Margaret M. Mdolo**  
**Program Coordinator**

## Appendix 7: Informed Consent Form (Part I)

Mzuzu University Research Ethics Committee (MZUNIREC)

Informed Consent Form for Research in History Education

I am Oscar Evans Nyirongo. I am doing research on **Assessing the Extent to which Teachers Apply Thematic Approach in Teaching and Learning of history in Secondary Schools in Malawi**. This consent form may contain areas or words which you may not understand. Please ask me to as we go through the information and will clarify. If you have questions later, you can ask them of me.

The purpose of the research is to find out how effective has been the implementation of Thematic Approach in History instruction and this research will involve your participation in the oral interview. You are invited to participate in this research due to your role in the implementation of this reviewed curriculum that you can provide important information.

Your participation however in this research is entirely voluntary and you will not be given any incentive to take part. You have the choice whether to participate or not and you may choose not to respond to some of the question. In the same vein, you may choose not to answer questions that you feel are personal or which you may not be comfortable with. The interview session will not take more than 1 hour.

The knowledge I get from this research will be shared with you and your school before it is

widely available to the public. Following that, the results will be published for the interest of others who might have interest to learn from the research. If you have any questions, you can ask them later and if you want to ask later, you may contact Ass. Professor Bryson Nkhoma, Head of Department, Mzuzu University, P/Bag 201 Luwinga, Mzuzu 2, phone 0991 50 18 34.

The proposal has been reviewed and approved by Mzuzu University Research Ethics Committee (MZUNIREC) which is a committee whose task is to make sure that research participants are protected from harm. If you wish to find about the committee, contact Mr. Gift Mbwere, Mzuzu University Research Ethics (MZUNIREC) Administrator, Mzuzu University, P/Bag 201, Luwinga Mzuzu 2, and Phone 0999404008/0888641486.

Do you have any questions?

## Appendix 8: Certificate of Consent (Part II)

*I have been invited to participate in research about* **Assessing the Extent to which Teachers Apply Thematic Approach in the Teaching and Learning of history in Secondary Schools in Malawi.**

I have read the foregoing information, or it has been read to me. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about it and any questions I have been asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study.

Print Name of Participant \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Participant \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Day/month/year

## **Appendix 9: Statement by the Researcher/Person Taking Consent**

I have accurately read out the information sheet to the potential participant, and to the best of my ability made sure that the participant understands the research project. I confirm the participant was given an opportunity to ask questions about the study, and all the questions asked by the participant have been answered correctly and to the best of my ability. I confirm that the individual has not been coerced into giving consent, and the consent has been given freely and voluntarily.

Signature of Researcher /person taking the consent\_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Day/month/year



## Appendix 10: Characteristics of Thematic Learning

Characteristic	Description
Efficiency	Good use of time, methods, and learning resources to provide a real learning experience to each student to achieve competence
Contextual,	contextual learning approaches rely on real problems;
Student Centered	Students are active and teachers are to act only as facilitators
Provide a direct experience (authentic)	Students are faced with concrete learning;
The separation of blurred subjects	The teacher focuses on the discussion on the themes that are considered closest and related to the lives of the students
Holistic	Teachers present concepts of various subject matter
Flexible	The learning process is supple (should not be stiff)
Learning outcomes	Develop according to students interests and needs
The learning activities	Are very relevant to the needs and more meaningful

Selected activities	Depart from students interests and needs
Develop students thinking skills	
Pragmatic learning	Presenting learning activities that are appropriate to the problem;
students are active	Thematic learning emphasises the activity of students in learning;
Using the principle of play while learning;	Develop social interest in learners and reduces boredom

*Source:* Straaten, D. *et al.* (2018). Exploring pedagogical approaches for connecting the past, the present and the future in history teaching

## Appendix 11: Core Elements and their Corresponding Outcomes

Core Element	Corresponding Outcome
Inter-relationships among the individual, family and society	The student will be able to demonstrate an understanding of personal identity in terms of family life, location and historical background through inquiry into origins, cultural beliefs, values, attitudes and practices.
Inter-dependence between Malawi and the world	The student will be able to demonstrate an understanding of the position of Malawi within its regional and global contexts through an investigation of historical, ideological and geographical aspects.
Patriotism and nationalism.	The student will be able to demonstrate an understanding of issues of patriotism and nationalism and their socio-economic and political impact on society and nations and how these have evolved over

	time.
Economic and social issues in history	The student will be able to appreciate the present socio-economic situations at the local, regional and global levels from a historical perspective.
Leadership styles in history	The student will be able to demonstrate an understanding of the emergence and evolution of various leadership styles and how they have impacted society and international relations overtime.

**Source:** MoEST. (2015). Secondary School Curriculum and Assessment Framework

## Appendix 12: A sample lesson plan

<b>Class:</b> Form 3	
<b>Date:</b> 18 <sup>th</sup> September, 2017	
<b>Time:</b> 8:10 – 8:50am	
<b>Subject:</b> History	
<b>Core Element:</b> Leadership Styles in History	
<b>Topic / Theme:</b> Political developments in Central Africa from The Colonial Period to Independence: The role of African Independent Churches in Nationalism	
<b>Teacher activities</b>	<b>Students' activities</b>

<p><b>Introduction (5minutes)</b></p> <p>Ask students the following questions:</p> <p>Name the churches that you know which of the mentioned churches were started by Africans?</p>	<p>Answering questions</p>
<p><b>Developmental steps (30minutes)</b></p> <p>Step1</p> <p>Ask a few students to role-play African coming from a mainstream church ceremony where the white pastor was castigating African cultural beliefs and practices.</p> <p>The disgruntled Christians should discuss what to do in light with the current church teaching.</p>	<p>Role-playing</p>
<p>Step2</p> <p>Ask students the following questions:</p> <p>Why were the African converts unhappy with the preaching by the white pastor?</p> <p>What suggestions would you offer to help the disgruntled Africans</p>	<p>Answering questions</p> <p>Offering suggestions</p>
<p>Step3</p> <p>Ask the class to brainstorm the meaning of <i>African Independent Churches</i>.</p>	<p>Brainstorming the meaning of the term <i>African Independent Churches</i></p>

<p>Step 4</p> <p>Ask the students to be in groups</p> <p>Ask the students to discuss the factors that led to the formation of African Independent Churches</p> <p>Ask the students to display their responses in a Galley Walk</p>	<p>Forming groups</p> <p>Discussing factors for the formation of African Independent Churches</p> <p>Displaying their responses in a Galley Walk</p>
<p><b>Conclusion (5 minutes)</b></p> <p>Ask the students the following questions:</p> <p>What are African Independent Churches?</p> <p>Mention factors that led to formation of African Independent Churches</p> <p>Summarise the main points in the lesson</p>	<p>Answering questions</p> <p>Listening</p> <p>Taking down notes</p>
<p><b>Lesson Evaluation</b></p> <p>The lesson was successful as 70% of the students were able to define the term African Independent Churches and explain the factors that led to their formation. However, 30% of the class could not clearly relate the factors to the formation of the churches. Therefore, a remedial class on this will be arranged.</p>	

**Appendix 13: A school-based Classroom Observation Form for School F**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ of  
teacher \_\_\_\_\_

Class \_\_\_\_\_ Subject \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Time \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

No of learners' \_\_\_\_\_ Female \_\_\_\_\_ Male \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## NOTES FOR THE OBSERVER

Remember that you are only an observer, and you must never interrupt the lesson or ask questions once the lesson starts.

Remember to only focus on the elements of the lesson that are requested to be observed.

You should ensure you stay as attentive as possible to the lesson noting anything down that will help you answer the questions and ensuring you complete any gaps in the observation forms in full straight after the lesson ends.

### GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

What do you think went well?

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What do you think could be improved?

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<b>PLANNING</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>REMARKS</b>
		<b>O</b>	
Are schemes of work and lesson plans available and up to date?			
Is the lesson plan showing a variety of learning activities?			
Does the lesson plan show the resources to be used to enhance students learning?			
Do the plan reflect the teaching methods to be used during the lesson?			
<b>TEACHING AND LEARNING</b>			
Are learners involved in a variety of learning activities?			
Are learners using resources appropriately during the lesson?			

Are the resources used relevant?			
Are learners able to ask and answer questions during the lesson?			
Is critical and creative thinking demonstrated by learners?			
Is the teacher logically following the steps in the lesson plan?			
<b>CLASS MANAGEMENT</b>			
Is the teacher able to control and manage noise and unnecessary movements?			
Is the teacher able to manage the behaviour of students?			

**ASSESSMENT**

Are different forms of assessment (Initial, formative etc.) used during the lesson?

Does the teacher use a variety of assessment techniques e.g class exercise, group work, peer assessment etc.



## Appendix 14: Ten models for Curriculum Integration

Model	Description	Relationship with the curriculum
Framed model	This is the traditional design for organising the curriculum, dictates separate and distinct disciplines.	Views the curriculum through a periscope, offering one subject at a time.
Connected model	This model does not integrate various subjects, but focuses on integrating skills or concepts within a subject. For example, a science teacher can relate a geology unit to an astronomy unit by emphasising that each has an evolutionary nature.	view through an opera glass, providing a close-up of the details, subtleties, and interconnections within each subject area.
Nested model	The nested integration model focuses on natural combinations. For instance, a lesson on the circulatory system can integrate the concept of systems.	Views the curriculum through three-dimensional glasses, targeting multiple dimensions of a lesson.
Sequenced model	In this model, units are taught separately, but are designed to provide a broad framework for related concepts.	Views the curriculum through eyeglasses: the lenses are separate but connected by a common frame.
Shared model	This looks for overlapping concepts and involves coordinated planning between two teachers of different subjects. A literature teacher and a history teacher, for example, may team up to	This views the curriculum through binoculars, bringing two distinct disciplines together into a single focused image.

	teach an historical perspective of segregation by reading.	
Webbed model	This generally uses a theme to connect all subject areas.	Views the curriculum through a telescope, capturing an entire constellation of disciplines at once.
Threaded model	This “threads” thinking, social, or study skills to connect learning across the curriculum. For example, sequencing is a skill taught primarily in reading, but can be threaded into the other subjects.	This views the curriculum through a big magnifying glass: the ‘big ideas’ are enlarged throughout all content with a meta-curricular approach.
Integrated model	This blends the four major disciplines by finding concepts or skills that overlap. For example, the whole-language approach that blends the skills of reading, writing, speaking, and listening using literature as a theme.	Views the curriculum through a kaleidoscope: interdisciplinary topics are rearranged around overlapping concepts and emergent patterns and designs.
Immersed Model	This model advocates that integration take place within the learner with little or no outside help. For example, a student who has a love for horses reads about horses, writes about them, draws pictures of them, and longs to learn more about them.	Views the curriculum through microscope. It filters all content through the lens of interest and expertise.
Networked Model	This allows for exploration, experimentation, and participation. A student’s fascination with the solar system and space travel, for instance,	views the curriculum through a prism, creating multiple dimensions and directions of

	directs his or her reading choices or television viewing.	focus.
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**Source:** Ten ways to integrate curriculum by Fogarty (1991).

### Appendix15: Advantages of Thematic and Chronological Pedagogies

Advantages of Thematic Approach	Advantages of Chronological Approach
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<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. More appropriate for the use of student-centered methods (project-based learning, cooperative learning, group work, etc.)</li> <li>2. Good for teaching with multiple perspectives (examining history with multiple perspectives)</li> <li>3. Fun/Not Boring</li> <li>4. Provides meaningful learning</li> <li>5. Allows students to be more creative</li> <li>6. Supports a deeper understanding of the events</li> <li>7. Provides an opportunity to see the big picture</li> <li>8. More effective in teaching historical thinking skills</li> <li>9. Makes recalling easy</li> <li>10. Enables catching up current issues</li> <li>11. Provides an opportunity for historical learning beyond the textbook</li> <li>12. Focus on skill rather than knowledge</li> <li>13. More suitable for citizenship education</li> <li>14. Saves time</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Easy to understand</li> <li>2. Successful in teaching chronology</li> <li>3. The familiar method</li> <li>4. Successful in teaching cause-effect relationship</li> </ol>
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*Source:* Turan, I. (2020). Thematic vs Chronological History Teaching Debate: A Social Media Research

## Appendix 16: Excerpt from 1995 MSCE MANEB Examination Paper

1996

Section A (30 marks)

Answer any two questions from this section.  
Each question carries 15 marks.

1. a. State one function of each of the following organs of the League of Nations:  
(i) The Council,  
(ii) The Assembly,  
(iii) The International Labour Organization (ILO). (6 marks)
- b. Explain with two reasons why the United States of America failed to join the League. (2 marks)
- c. Which two events show that Italy and Japan disobeyed the League? (2 marks)
- d. State any five reasons why the League failed to achieve its aims? (5 marks)
2. a. Explain any three factors that enabled Mussolini to rise to power. (6 marks)
- b. State the significance of the Lateran Treaty of 1929. (3 marks)
- c. Explain Mussolini's policy on the following:-  
(i) Local Government,  
(ii) Press,  
(iii) Education. (6 marks)
3. a. Describe any five economic problems that Europe experienced at the end of the Second World War.

25. a. Describe any **one** way in which the colonial government reacted to the growth of nationalistic movements in Ghana.

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**(2 marks)**

- b. State any **two** aims of the Berlin Conference of 1884.

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**(2 marks)**

- c. Mention any **two** results of the Berlin Conference of 1884.

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**(2 marks)**

- d. Describe any **two** factors that led to the partition of Africa.

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