



**EXPLORING TEACHERS' USE OF STRATEGIES THAT PROMOTE
CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS IN SOCIAL STUDIES: A CASE OF SOME
COMMUNITY DAY SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN NKHOTAKOTA
DISTRICT IN MALAWI**

**MASTER OF EDUCATION IN CURRICULUM AND TEACHING STUDIES
(SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION) THESIS**

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UNIVERSITY OF MALAWI

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August, 2023

DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that this thesis is my own original work which has not been submitted to any other institution with similar purposes. Where other people's work has been used, acknowledgements have been made.

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CERTIFICATION OF APPROVAL

The undersigned certify that this dissertation represents the student's own work and effort and has been submitted with our approval.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my late mother, Tasiyana Nkhoswe, for having been a wonderful mother. How I wish she were alive to witness this special achievement! May her soul continue resting in peace! I also dedicate this work to my late father, Mr. S.J.K. Nyirenda for encouraging me to keep on working hard in school, and to Chuck and late Joanne Wilson for shaping me to become an educated person.

ABSTRACT

Social Studies is one of the subjects based on outcomes based education philosophy which seeks to promote critical and creative thinking skills in learners in Malawi. Social Studies is expected to promote learners' active participation in classroom activities as well as in the larger society. This expectation requires teachers to shift from teacher-based and content-based teaching to student-based teaching as a way of helping students develop the competences needed for critical thinking. In 2015 – 2016 academic year, the Malawi government adopted the outcome-based education (OBE) at secondary school level. From the time Outcome Based Education was adopted, I have not come across a study that explores the strategies that teachers use in promoting critical thinking skills in the learners in Community Day Secondary Schools in Nkhosakota District. Therefore, this study was undertaken to explore how teachers use strategies that promote critical thinking skills in Social Studies. The study employed critical pedagogy theory as its lens: and five Community Day Secondary Schools in Nkhosakota District in Central East Education Division participated. The study used qualitative methods and generated data through interviews, document analysis and lesson observations. Convenience sampling was employed in this case study research. The findings revealed that Social Studies teachers planned to integrate critical thinking into their lessons though they faced challenges in using the strategies that promote critical thinking skills in the learners. The study concluded that if critical thinking skills are to be promoted, teachers need to be assisted on how best to improve student participation in class.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	vii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	viii
LIST OF TABLES.....	xi
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS	xii
CHAPTER ONE	1
INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY	1
1.1 Chapter overview	1
1.2 Background to the Study	1
1.3 Statement of the problem	8
1.4 Purpose of the study	8
1.5 Research questions	8
1.6 Significance of the study	9
1.7 Definition of terms	9
1.8 Structure of the thesis.....	10
1.9 Chapter summary	11
CHAPTER TWO	12
REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE	12
2.1 Chapter overview	12
2.2 Meaning of Critical Thinking.....	12
2.3 The Malawi Social Studies Curriculum	17
2.4 Teachers’ instructional strategies that develop critical thinking skills	19
2.5 Teachers’ integration of critical thinking into teaching	23
2.6 Challenges teachers face when using teaching strategies that promote critical thinking skills	29
2.7 Theoretical Framework	33
2.8 Chapter summary	36
CHAPTER THREE	38
RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY	38

3.1 Chapter Overview	38
3.2 The researcher's philosophical underpinning	38
3.3 Research Approach and Design	39
3.4 Population and sampling strategy	41
3.5 Data generation procedure	42
3.5.1. Semi-structured interviews	42
3.5.2. Observations	44
3.5.3. Documents analysis	45
3.6 Data analysis procedure	47
3.7 Ethical considerations.	50
3.8 Credibility and trustworthiness	51
3.9 Pilot testing.....	51
3.10 Limitations of the study.....	52
3.11 Chapter summary	53
CHAPTER FOUR.....	54
PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS	54
4.1. Chapter overview	54
4.2 Context of the case study secondary schools	54
4.3. Critical thinking teaching and learning strategies	56
4.3.1 Asking high order questions	56
4.3.2 Employing participatory teaching methods	58
4.3.3. Teachers' organisation of teaching and learning strategies.	62
4.4 The teachers' integration of critical thinking into teaching strategies	65
4.4.1 Necessary element to integrate critical thinking skills into teaching	66
4.5 Challenges faced by teachers when using the teaching strategies that promote critical thinking skills in Social Studies	67
4.5.1. Inadequate teaching and learning materials.....	69
4.5.2. Teachers' limited knowledge on classroom management	72
4.5.3. Lack of in-service trainings by the schools	74
4.6 Proposed ways of overcoming the challenges that teachers face when using strategies that promote critical thinking skills in Social Studies.....	77
4.6.1 Adequate provision of Teaching and Learning Materials	77
4.6.2 Adequate provision of in-service training programmes	78

4.6.3 Provision of well-structured support system	78
4.7. Chapter summary	79
CHAPTER FIVE	80
CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY	80
5.2. Conclusions and implications of the study.....	80
5.3. Overall implications for policy and practice of critical thinking in Social Studies.....	83
5.4 Suggested areas for further study	84
REFERENCES	86
APPENDICES.....	105

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Summary of how teachers organised their lessons	63
Table 2: Showing the availability of basic teaching and learning resources	69
Table 3: Teachers’ understanding of the relationship between student classroom participation and promotion of critical thinking skills in Social Studies.....	71

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CATS	Curriculum and Teaching Studies
DEM	District Education Manager
CDSS	Community Day Secondary School
CEED	Central East Education Division
MIE	Malawi Institute of Education
MoEST	Ministry of Education Science and Technology
NCSS	National Council of Social Studies
NIED	National Institute for Educational Development
OBE	Outcomes Based Education
OSISA	Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa
TTC	Teacher Training College
UNISA	University of South Africa

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 Chapter overview

This chapter focuses on contextual background of the study. It also provides the statement of the problem, purpose of the study, the research questions, significance of the study, definition of key terms, and the structure of the thesis.

1.2 Background to the Study

Social Studies is defined as the integrated study of the social sciences and humanities to promote civic competence (NCSS, 2013). Social Studies education at classroom level aims at diversifying student understanding of reality for youth in a multi-cultural and inclusive community to make rationally and critically based decisions on the well-being and good citizens (Veltri, 2014). Social Studies helps secondary learners gain a greater understanding of future decision-making (Hinde & Perry, 2007). Students learn Social Studies to develop a better understanding of the world and use of critical thinking skills to find solutions and to be responsive to circumstances that are difficult (Khan & Inamullah, 2011).

Social Studies is taught under the Outcomes Based Education in Malawi. The Ministry of Education, in partnership with the Malawi Institute of Education (MIE), Malawi introduced OBE to reflect the societal needs and skills required to the learners so that they can ably live a meaningful life in their communities (Chirwa, 2014). According to Chirwa and Naidoo (2014), the idea of OBE and integrated learning areas was borrowed from the first post – apartheid curriculum of South Africa. The emphasis of OBE is on learner – centred strategies which help learners to develop critical thinking skills.

Learning tasks and strategies are needed along with various approaches which enhance students' critical thinking skills and understanding of Social Studies significantly (Bhakti, Ghiffari, & Regita, 2018). An important element of Social Studies is to promote students' critical thinking skills (Karabulut, 2012). Since the goal and purpose of Social Studies is to educate students in a global society make right decisions to become functioning members of the society (Little et al., 2007), Adda247 (2020) highlighted the following seven critical thinking skills that students must demonstrate if they are to become functioning members of the society;

- Ask questions that are clear and easily understood
- Listen to others' views and opinions
- Distinguish between fact and opinion
- Determine credibility of sources of information
- Distinguish relevant from irrelevant information
- Draw logical conclusions based on evidence
- Organise and classify ideas and evidence

The primary goal of Social Studies and critical thinking is to prepare students to make informed decisions on public and political issues. It has to be pointed out that for students to make those informed decisions, it requires critical thinking skills. Therefore, effective participation in public life is contingent on the quality of one's critical thinking skills.

Among the several major strategies to teaching critical thinking skills, the literature seems to favour infusion – teaching thinking skills in the context of subject matter (Adda247, 2020). This strategy entails integrating content and skills as equally as possible in order to maintain a balance of the two.

In addition to being more active in the community, the aim of Social Studies by way of the NCSS is to encourage learners in secondary schools by including a better psychological and social environment for learning (America, 2009). Secondary school students can incorporate the knowledge of class with the experience of real situations and with the ability to gain global knowledge and understanding (Khan & Inamullah, 2011). This ensures that students are ultimately responsible for their learning and understanding in Social Studies through approaches centered on students. Learning tasks and strategies are needed along with various approaches which enhance students' understanding of Social Studies significantly (Bhakti, Ghiffari, & Regita, 2018).

Debabrata and Cuenca (2015) state that teachers seek to fulfill certain requirements that increase social study interests and learning. Teachers of Social Studies claim the resources supplied in the classroom environment can reflect the students' experience (Alazzi, 2008). This ensures that students are ultimately responsible for their learning and

understanding in Social Studies through approaches centered on students. As said by Demiral (2018) one must gain the ability to analyze and check the details and knowledge gained in any context to strengthen critical thinking skills in all subjects.

The purpose of education and learning is to empower students for a global society. Estanek and Love (2003) explained how teaching will promote analytical thought by involving the whole individual and it is important that learner to be trained and qualified for the modern and globalized world that confronts everyone individually, economically and professionally. Regardless of whether inside or outside classes, the ultimate objective of a teacher at school is to foster students with the necessary skills in the 21st century. Critical thinking induces students to rationalize their analytical skills at a higher level of secondary Social Studies (Hartshorne, Waring, & Okraski, 2019).

In the same vein, learners nowadays are bombarded with too much information through social media. This un-sieved information affects the way they view life, make decisions and interact with each other (Puspita, & Rohedi, 2018). Such being the case, it requires someone to sieve what is right and what is wrong. This too much unverified information hinders rather than aids students' inquiry-based learning (Pow, Li, & Fung, 2009). The quality of this information varies considerably and many students find it challenging to differentiate fact from opinion (Eagleton & Dobler, 2007). It is therefore imperative that under such conditions students must be taught critical thinking skills to help them sieve the information and provide solutions to myriad challenges facing them and the world in general. Students need to apply critical thinking skills within and outside the school situations. The rapid increase in the amount of information accessible on the Internet has

created a number of problems. One that has caught the attention of educators is the increasing possibility that students will use unverified information in their research (Klein, 2002). In the same vein, Malawi in particular and the world in general needs critical and creative students who can confront numerous challenging situations facing the world today (Mkomele, 2015). For a long time, Malawi has strived to develop its students into critical thinkers who would provide solutions to the myriad challenges. One of the goals of the Malawi government is to use education as a catalyst for socio-economic development, industrial growth and an instrument for empowering the poor, the weak and the voiceless (MIE, 2013).

In order to respond to the challenge of lack of critical and creative learning, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology in Malawi adopted the new secondary school curriculum, the Outcome Based Education (Chirwa, 2014). This has made teachers shift from teacher-based and content-based teaching to student-based teaching as a way of helping students develop the much-needed competences, including critical thinking. Outcome Based Education requires that both the school and the community should determine the skills and knowledge that the students should gain when they graduate, then backwardly develop a curriculum, strategies and the materials to help the students achieve those goals (WEAC, 1995, cited in Donnelly, 2007).

The shift from content - centered to student - centered teaching has created the need to actively involve the students in critical thinking capacities in order to construct knowledge and solve perceived problems (Mkomele, 2015). This shift is a movement from the emphasis on the teacher as knowledge provider to the student as the knowledge and skill acquirer as well as being an active constructor of knowledge (Mkomele, 2015).

This, as Prince (2004) highlights, results in a more efficient education because it helps the young people to take their position in society. Basically, learner-centered methods of teaching encourage critical thinking among the learners and make the learners take responsibility for their own learning (Kimaro, 2011).

Social Studies is one of the subjects under the Outcome Based Curriculum in which critical and creative thinking needs to be displayed by learners. Social Studies educators claim that the knowledge, skills, values, and behaviours students learn in the classrooms can help them to be socially, economically and politically active (Barton & Levstik, 2004; Giroux, 1994; Leistyna & Woodrum, 1996; Parker, 2003). Social Studies seeks to provide students with the knowledge, skills, competences, positive attitudes and values that will enable them to participate actively, intelligibly and responsibly in daily life activities as citizens of a democratic world (Mhango, 2008).

The Ministry of Education through Social Studies expects students to display active participation in classroom activities as well as in the larger society during their adulthood (Mhango, 2008). In order to have students who would actively participate in developing their lives as well as the country at large, Malawian curricula at every level and instructional practices were restructured to focus on promoting creativity and problem-solving skills. According to Snyder and Snyder (2008), critical thinking skills in learners can be achieved in three ways namely; using instructional strategies that actively engage students in the learning process rather than relying on lecture and rote memorisation, focusing instruction on the process of learning rather than only on the content, and learner – centered approaches which promote critical thinking skills. Klooster (2001), highlights that critical thinkers not only find their own solutions to problems, but also

support those solutions with good arguments and convincing reasons. According to Klooster (2001), critical thinkers recognise that a problem may have more than one solution.

Today, there is an intensified interest in the improvement of students' critical thinking skills (Kanik, 2010). Scholars have responded to increased demands for students who can think critically by defining the concept of critical thinking, theorising about constituents of critical thinking, researching factors that contribute to the enhancement of critical thinking, developing instructional models to sharpen students' critical thinking, and devising and revising instruments for the assessment of critical thinking (Ennis, 1992; Facione, 1984; Halpern, 1993; Johnson, 1996; Lipman, 1988; McPeck, 1981; Paul, 1995; Resnick, 1987; Tishman, 1993). While there has been much interest to equip students with critical and creative thinking skills in learners by adopting the Outcome Based Curriculum among other things, critical and creative thinking in Social Studies remain a challenge in Community day secondary schools in Malawi. The studies by Katongo, (2016) in Zambia, Mkomele, (2015) in Tanzania, and Wedgwood, (2005) in Tanzania have shown that secondary school graduates lack theoretical and practical skills, self-employment and entrepreneurial skills, critical thinking and analysis skills. In addition, Sumra and Rajani (2006), observe that secondary school teachers are devoting less attention in helping students to think critically rather than to memorise facts, which further leads to complete their studies with superficial knowledge without any critical understanding of small issues surrounding them.

1.3 Statement of the problem

In Malawi, Outcome Based Education was introduced in 2015 in secondary schools. Outcome Based Education emphasizes on the promotion of critical thinking skills in students to allow them apply in and outside their societies. However, this change was introduced in a context of standardized national examinations and high student enrolment in Community Day Secondary Schools. Several studies have been carried out in Malawi focusing on active teaching with its various benefits. This study focused on exploring teachers' use of the strategies that promote critical thinking skills in learners through Social Studies in Community Day Secondary Schools under the new Curriculum.

1.4 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to explore teachers' use of the strategies that promote critical thinking skills in learners through Social Studies in Community Day Secondary Schools in Central East Education Division (CEED) in Malawi.

1.5 Research questions

The study considered the following main research question: How do teachers in Community Day Secondary Schools use critical thinking strategies when teaching Social Studies? To answer this question broadly, the study used the following sub-research questions:

1. What instructional strategies do secondary school Social Studies teachers use to develop critical thinking skills in the students?
2. How do secondary school Social Studies teachers integrate critical thinking in their teaching strategies?

3. What challenges do secondary school Social Studies teachers face when using the teaching strategies that promote critical thinking skills?

1.6 Significance of the study

Since the goal of Social Studies is to equip the learners with skills of providing solutions to different challenges that face these learners during and after school life, it was important therefore to carry out the study so that the strategies that secondary school teachers use in promoting critical thinking skills could be explored and appreciated. The findings of the study would provide teachers with the best ways of using the strategies for promoting critical thinking skills in learners through Social Studies courses. In Malawi, the findings could also communicate answers to the question that educationists, policy-makers and other relevant stakeholders have been or are struggling with - how do Community Day Secondary School teachers use critical thinking strategies that promote critical thinking skills in learners when teaching Social Studies education. This study would also contribute to the body of knowledge and determine several strategies that Community Day Secondary School teachers use when teaching Social Studies education courses to secondary school students in Central East Education Division and Malawi as a whole. The study would also provide information for increased understanding and dialogue about the teachers' strategies of promoting critical thinking skills in learners through Social Studies which would stimulate the need for further studies to look at the teachers' practices in a holistic manner.

1.7 Definition of terms

The following concepts have been used in the study:

Curriculum: That which is taught both inside of the school and outside of the school, directed by the school (Oliva & Gordon, 2013, p.4)

Critical thinking: Scriven and Paul (2007) define critical thinking as the intellectually disciplined process of actively and skillfully conceptualising, applying, analysing, synthesising, and/or evaluating information gathered from, or generated through observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication, as a guide to belief and action.

Teaching Strategies: These are complex educational behaviors of teachers in using methods, techniques, tools, discipline and communications in order to achieve goals and /or objectives (Shinn, Yu-Ho, 1997).

Social Studies: Social Studies refers to the general integrated study of the social sciences and humanities that prepare active citizens for participation in democratic society (Shaver, 1967; Mhlauli 2010).

Outcomes Based Education: “This is an educational model in which the curriculum and pedagogy and assessment are all focused on student learning outcomes” (Driscoll & Wood, 2007, p.4).

1.8 Structure of the thesis

The study contains five chapters. Chapter one presents the background to the study of Social Studies in the promotion of critical thinking skills. The chapter also presents the statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research questions, significance of the study and definition of terms. Chapter Two is the review of related literature on topics concerning Social Studies and critical thinking skills, and theoretical framework. Chapter Three presents the methodology that was followed to conduct the study. Chapter Four

presents and discusses the findings of the study. Lastly, chapter five presents the conclusions and implications on the findings of the study, and ends with suggestions for further research.

1.9 Chapter summary

This chapter has introduced the study on how teachers use the specific strategies for promoting critical thinking skills in Social Studies. It has presented the background of promoting critical thinking skills within Social Studies. It has also discussed the promotion of critical thinking skills in Social Studies in other contexts, for example, Tanzania, before presenting the statement of the problem, purpose, research questions, significance of the study, and definition of terms. The next chapter covers the relevant literature review to the study.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Chapter overview

This chapter is a discussion of literature related to the study. The chapter discusses the meaning of critical thinking, teachers' integration of critical thinking into instruction, and teachers' instructional strategies that develop critical thinking skills. The chapter also looks at some of the studies on the challenges that teachers face when using strategies that develop Critical Thinking skills in learners in Africa in general, and Malawi in particular. Finally, the chapter presents and justifies its framework.

2.2 Meaning of Critical Thinking

The intellectual roots of critical thinking can be traced back to Socrates over 2,500 years ago (Kanik, 2010). The Center for Critical Thinking (2003) states that Socrates, with the help of a probing questioning technique, showed that people could not rationally justify their confident claims to knowledge.

Kanik (2010) continues to highlight that Socrates argued that prevailing confused meanings, inadequate evidence, and self-contradictory beliefs could not be relied on for sound knowledge and insight. The method based upon questioning that requires clarity and logical consistency was called Socratic questioning and thinking. From a Socratic thinking point of view, issues should be approached with critical scrutiny. Human beings are not allowed to commit themselves to beliefs they do not know to be absolutely true because the knowledge they acquire is subject to change under conditions in life (Kanik, 2010).

Kanik (2010) argues that the thinking during this time highlighted the fact that anyone who intends to understand the deeper realities needs to think systematically and trace implications broadly and deeply since thinking that is comprehensive, well-reasoned, and responsive to objections can take us beyond the surface. Throughout history, those principles have been advanced by other thinkers such as Aquinas, Machiavelli, Cole, Erasmus, Moore, Bacon, Descartes, Hobbes, Locke, Boyle, Newton just to name but a few.

According to Dewey 1909 (cited in Fischer, 1995) critical thinking is a subset of the reflective process which involves thorough assessment, scrutiny and the drawing of conclusions in relation to the issue at hand. In as far as the idea of critical thinking is concerned, what matters are the reasons people have for believing something and the implications of their beliefs. Dewey has emphasised the importance of reasoning in critical thinking.

Many conceptions of critical thinking find their definitional roots in Dewey's writings. Yet, a review of literature on critical thinking reveals that there are many definitions of

critical thinking. Dewey (1909) called critical thinking “reflective thinking” and defined it as “an active, persistent, and careful consideration of a belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds which support it and the further conclusions to which it tends” (p. 9). By defining it as an active process, he is contrasting it with the kind of thinking in which a person just receives ideas and information from someone else-what might be called as passive process. This definition is in line with Freire’s Critical pedagogy theory which supports that teachers should use interactive learning techniques that consider the existing knowledge of students to promote critical thinking and decision-making processes which raise their critical consciousness Furthermore, in defining critical thinking as persistent and careful, Dewey is trying to differentiate it with the kind of unreflective thinking-in which people ‘jump’ to a conclusion. According to Dewey (1909), critical thinking is basically an active process-one in which people think things through for themselves, raise questions themselves, find relevant information themselves. Critical thinking is viewed as a “skillful, responsible thinking that facilitates good judgment because it (a) relies upon criteria, (b) is self-correcting, and (c) is sensitive to context” (McPeck, 1981; Browne & Keeley, 2013) while Ryan (2022) and Kurfiss (1988) argue that critical thinking is an inquiry whose determination is to discover a situation, occurrence, question, or problem to reach at a theory or conclusion about its intellectual developmental process that incorporates all available information and that can therefore be convincingly justified. However, most of the definitions are commonly related and when they are closely studied, they seem to be revolving around certain ideas: To begin with, as Paul (1995) points out, from a philosophical point of view, critical thinking is primarily approached as the norm of good thinking, the rational

aspect of human thought, and as the intellectual virtues needed to approach the world in a reasonable, fair-minded way. Psychologists, on the other hand, hypothesise critical thinking as higher-order thinking skills and focus attention on the appropriate learning and instruction processes (Kanik, 2010). There also seems to be a consensus that critical thinking is directed towards some end or purpose such as answering a question, making a decision, solving a problem, resolving an issue, calculating likelihoods, formulating inferences, devising a plan or carrying out a project. Apart from being purposeful, critical thinking also refers to a reasonable, reflective, self-monitored, responsible and skillful thinking that is focused in constructing personal meanings. Furthermore, as it is pointed out in several definitions, thinking about what to believe or do must meet appropriate standards if it is to be regarded as critical thinking. For example, someone who comes to believe on the basis of poor or irrelevant reasons, on the authority of someone whose credibility is questionable, or without attempting to assess the evidence relevant to the truth of the belief, would not be regarded as thinking critically. Also, there is general agreement that thinking critically not only requires the ability to assess reasons properly but also the willingness, desire, and disposition to base one's actions and beliefs on reasons.

Critical thinking is sometimes used interchangeably with problem-solving, decision-making and creative thinking. Palmer (2022) opines that these terms are not conceived as synonymous, but complementary elements of general cognitive processes. Palmer (2022); Beyer (1988) clarify the difference between critical thinking and problem solving by stating that in problem solving and decision-making, there is a classification of operations in which one precedes the next. However, there is not such a sequential operation in

critical thinking, which is a collection of specific operations that may be used alone or in any combination or in any order.

As for creative thinking, Marzano et al. (1991) assert that a good creative thinking process generally includes a good critical thinking process and vice versa. On the other hand, Lewis and Smith (1993) who reviewed the origins of critical thinking and problem solving in philosophy and psychology point out that while philosophers stress the need for critical thinking, psychologists emphasise problem solving and that while the sciences and mathematics adopt a scientific problem solving approach, the humanities use critical thinking as a way of reflective and logical thinking. Yet, when these writers are assigning forms of thinking to disciplines in this manner, they are also cautious as they are well aware of the fact that there is an increasing tendency to use both types of thinking skills together toward the completion of a task in many disciplines today. Therefore, Lewis and Smith suggest the use of the concept "higher order thinking" as an umbrella term to shelter problem solving, critical thinking, creative thinking, and decision making. They argue that an encompassing concept like higher order thinking, once clearly defined, has the potential to help educators close the gap between problem solving of the sciences and critical thinking of the humanities. They suggest the following definition: "Higher order thinking occurs when a person takes new information stored in memory and interrelates and/or rearranges and extends this information to achieve a purpose or find possible answers in perplexing situations" (Lewis & Smith, 1993, p. 136).

For the purpose of this study, Critical thinking was defined as "the intellectually disciplined process of actively and skillfully conceptualising, applying, analysing,

synthesising, and/or evaluating information gathered from, or generated by, observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication, as a guide to belief and action” (Scriven & Paul, 2007, p. 1). According to Newmann (1998), teachers must be willing to make curriculum and instructional decisions that enhance students’ abilities to engage in thinking and interpretation which is also in line with Critical pedagogy theory which points out that students can demonstrate their critical thinking and decision-making skills only when they play an active role in their own learning. William-Boyd (2004) in Zachary (2011) stated that “Dewey contended that the most critical need in American society was for students to be taught to reflect upon what they learned in school” (p. 95).

2.3 The Malawi Social Studies Curriculum

MoEST (2001) stipulates that education is a basic human right. Education prepares learners to play their roles effectively to promote and sustain a country's socio-economic development. It is also a catalyst for socio-economic development, industrial growth and empowerment of the poor, weak and voiceless. Based on this background, the MoEST in partnership with the MIE revised the Secondary School Curriculum and the procedures of assessment (Ministry of Education, 2012). The outcomes-based secondary school curriculum was reviewed to make it more responsive to the aspirations of the Malawian society. Additionally, the curriculum was reviewed in order to reflect among other things, the Outcomes – Based with emphasis on learner – centred approaches and the changes that should take place in order to properly prepare the learners for life, work and tertiary education (Ministry of Education, 2012). The final products of the Outcomes – Based Curriculum are the outcomes, with emphasis on what students should achieve in

terms of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values, which have to be clearly stated before teaching and learning begins (Ministry of Education, 2012). The key design features of the new curriculum are; Outcomes Based Education, Learner-Centred Pedagogies, Indigenous Knowledge and Continuous Assessment (Chirwa & Naidoo, 2014).

Social Studies in Malawi and other countries was introduced to meet certain specific needs and aspirations of the people. Social Studies as a unique area of discipline is committed to transmitting and forming the values of citizens of the nation (Akpan, 2020). Social Studies has come to be accepted as “a school subject that should assist students to acquire the basic knowledge, skills and positive attitudes needed to be responsible citizens and contributing members of society” (Alberta, 2000).

Social Studies is a very important subject, and understanding the concept of Social Studies is necessary. Social Studies deals with the study of the human race and its relationship with the environment (Akpan, 2020). It concerns itself with human beings, who can devise means of meeting their basic needs and developing a social system in different environments (MIE, 2017). Social Studies Education has been identified by scholar such as Edinyang and Ubi (2013) as a potent instrument that has facilitated the attainment of national development goals through the production of responsible citizens that are contributing maximally to the growth of the society.

Outcomes – Based Education (OBE) is a competency based, performance – based approach to education which is aimed at aligning education with the demands of the workplace, while at the same time developing transferable life – skills, such as critical thinking and problems – solving skills, with emphasis on what the learner should do after completing a learning event (Uys & Gwele, 2005). The initiators of the new curriculum,

Malawi Institute of Education, indicated that the curriculum was intended to reflect the societal needs and skills required to the learners with the ability to live a meaningful life in their communities (MIE, 2017). The main aim of Outcomes – Based Education and Social Studies is to develop citizens who are independent and well-informed.

2.4 Teachers' instructional strategies that develop critical thinking skills

Critical thinking cannot be achieved without considering the learner-centred approaches that teachers are encouraged to employ in their teaching. Research about learner-centred approaches aimed at promoting critical thinking skills in Eastern Europe around 1990, for example, showed that there were efforts to change the teacher-centred learning environment in Germany, Poland and Czech Republic schools (Stokes, 2007). Kanik (2010) observes that Critical thinking reveals that enhancing students' critical thinking skills is not only dependent on carefully designed programs providing systematic opportunities for students to think critically but also teachers who can implement properly these programs intended to advance students' critical thinking. Therefore, if teachers are to adopt and implement instruction towards critical thinking, it is regarded as necessary that they have already developed a conception of critical thinking and committed to teaching for critical thinking. Onosko (1990) claims that teachers scoring high on measures of "classroom thoughtfulness" - demonstrate a preference for manipulating data, concept development, relevance, and fostering intellectual dispositions in their students. Contrary to this result, Newman (1991) discovered that teachers who have conceptualised critical thinking, who can articulate their conceptions of critical thinking, and who are eager for and skillful at the development of their students' critical thinking consistently incorporate critical thinking into their teaching. All

these constituted the rationale behind studying teachers' strategies for promoting critical thinking skills development which underlie their classroom practices. Zachary (2011) opines that educators should not expect students to think critically when students have not been taught how to synthesise, evaluate, analyse information, or given the opportunity to demonstrate their ability to think.

According to Paul (1992) students fail to think critically because typical school instruction does not encourage the development of high order thinking skills like critical thinking. Paul explains that typical school instruction, with its emphasis on the coverage of content, is designed as though recalling were equivalent to knowledge. This, instead of instilling in students critical thinking skills, simply encourages rote learning, where students memorise material without understanding the logic of the materials that they learn, an idea which critical pedagogy theory is against. According to Freire (1970), students develop less critical consciousness and cannot adequately transform their societies if they just work more at storing the deposits entrusted to them by their teachers. Chiari (2010), has proposed the following methods that promote critical thinking skills in the learners: a) simulation methods: games involving simulation of imaginary situations and role play; b) discussion methods: discussion, case study, and c) problem-based teaching. Mattes (2007) proposed dialogue, brainstorming, interactive lecturing, group work, pair work, experiment, planned game, project based as active teaching strategy for critical thinking. Furthermore, Paul (1992) identified critical thinking as learning to think within one's discipline by appropriating the standards and values embodied in that discipline. At the same time, however, Paul points out that critical thinking skills and

abilities can be taught using both general critical thinking courses and infusing critical thinking instruction into discipline-specific courses.

Choy and Cheah (2009) suggested that there is need to improve the understanding of the concept of critical thinking among teachers to enable them to effectively teach students to think in this manner. There also seems to be little understanding of the requirements needed to help students think critically. It would also be important for teachers to give consideration to their current instructional methods and their personal belief before attempting to incorporate critical thinking in their lesson. Rodzalam and Saat (2015) recommended that lecturers should provide clear instructions and conduct interesting activities in the class because they influence students' thinking process. Lecturers should also be giving students challenging tasks that require them to think critically, instead of focusing on rote learning.

The Malawi critical thinking initiative was aimed at integrating or infusing the concept of contextualised critical thinking through the curriculum, learning and assessment, teacher training and development. This approach anticipates a systemic change in the country's education system that results in learners becoming more active and independent citizens capable of promoting and maintaining a modern democratic society (OSISA, 2014). The preliminary phase of the initiative sought to build the capacity of educational professionals primarily within teacher training colleges (TTCs) for contextualised critical thinking among teacher educators and in their preparation of teachers.

Several studies have been carried out on education for democratic citizenship in Malawi while partly focusing on learner centred approaches (Mhango, 2008; Ngalande, 2010; Mwala, 2012; Moyo, 2020). The study by Mhango (2008) explored how Primary School teachers in Malawi implement Social Studies lessons for the preparation of active participatory citizens in a democratic society. The study by Ngalande (2010) was aimed at critically examining how the Social Studies curriculum was being implemented in Malawian primary schools, especially in central west division (CWED) and determine what was needed to be done to facilitate its successful implementation. In addition to that, the study by Mwala (2012) explored how Social Studies teachers in CDSS involved learners in participatory classroom activities as a means of promoting active citizenship in a democracy. Mwala's study (2012) employed the interpretive paradigm which helped its findings to understand the experiences of CDSS Social Studies teachers on how they involved learners during lessons. Furthermore, Mwala's (2012) study focused much on how teachers in CDSS involved their learners in participatory learning in order to develop active citizens in a democratic society in South Eastern Division in which participants were interviewed, documents were analysed, and lessons were observed which ensured triangulation of data (Creswell, 2008). The study by Moyo (2020) explored secondary school teachers' use of learner – centred methods in implementing new Social Studies Curriculum in Central West Education Division (CWED) while this study focused on how the strategies are used by teachers in Social Studies in promoting critical thinking skills in order to develop active students in classrooms in Central Eastern Education Division who would later apply those skills outside school situations as Creswell (2009) opines that the intent of qualitative research is not to generalise findings to individuals,

sites, or places outside of those under study. This justified the need to conduct research in Central Eastern Education Division. This study concentrated on five CDSS in Central Eastern Education Division. Mwala's (2012) study inform the present study especially on learner participation in classes, the context of CDSSs and the challenges that they face. However, the present study focused on the students in classrooms who face too much un-sieved information through social media which affects their day to day decisions and included five Community Day Secondary Schools from Central East Education Division to generate data for better understanding of the strategies for promoting critical thinking skills in Social Studies.

It was therefore, important to carry out a study specifically to explore how teachers use the strategies in classrooms in developing critical thinking skills in their learners. As a democratic country facing many challenges, Malawi needs to train her students to become critical thinkers right from primary to secondary schools so that they can apply critical thinking skills as they become responsible citizens. Much as the new curriculum stresses on developing critical thinking skills in the learners using various strategies, it was necessary to find out how teachers use the strategies that promote critical thinking.

2.5 Teachers' integration of critical thinking into teaching

The published studies have revealed that where teachers had specific training revealed more student growth in critical thinking than studies where teachers had no specific training (Abrami et. 2008). Teachers need to learn exactly what is and is not considered critical thinking if they are to integrate critical thinking into teaching. They need to know the learner objectives, what to include, and understand direct instruction and infusion into subject content. Teachers need particular examples of teaching and assessing critical

thinking in their content area. Teachers should understand that some instructional strategies are more effective than others at developing critical thinking skills and dispositions. Opportunities for dialogue/discussion have proved that students' critical thinking skills are improved, especially when the teacher asks quality questions to the whole class or to small groups of students. Additionally, having students participate in genuine or situated problems where problem-solving expectations are present greatly improves critical thinking skills. Some evidence also supports role-playing methods as effective at developing critical thinking skills. Examples from the research include nurse and patient role-playing in nursing education and policy debates in which students play designated roles in Social Studies classes (Abrami et al., 2014).

Furthermore, there are two approaches to the teaching of critical thinking skills; the skill-view and the content-oriented view. The skill-view of thinking suggests that thinking consists of a set of specific skills, such as comparing, ordering, classifying, and predicting, which are considered to have wide applicability and generalisability across all subjects (Lipman, 1994). The skill-oriented approach suggests that the critical thinking skills should be taught directly or explicitly through separate courses or instructional units in courses, where the critical thinking skills are practiced specifically and principles of good thinking are made explicit enough to train students in these skills. However, this approach received much criticism due to the fact that direct teaching of thinking skills through separate courses raises skill technicians, who apply these skills mechanically. The other one is the content-oriented view. The proponents of the content-oriented view suggest that thinking cannot be separated from content as it is a way of learning content. Zohar and Dori (2003) stress that successful learning can be attained by incorporating the

thinking skills into all school level subjects, which allows students to use the skills in a meaningful context and helps them learn the subject matter deeply and apply it out of school settings (Beyer, 1988; Eggen & Kauchak, 2001; Johnson, 2000). Therefore, the integration of the critical thinking skills into the regular curriculum is stressed in this view.

The related research review identifies three advantages of such a direct instruction of thinking skills in a subject matter course (Beyer, 2008). To begin with, in such courses, subject-matter learning and thinking go hand in hand, each reinforcing and contributing to the development of the other in an integrated manner. Besides, when learning, the subject matter is seen as the top priority, learning how to properly apply a skill which is required to learn the given subject matter takes on a special urgency for students. Consequently, they appear much more willing to attend to instruction in that skill when that instruction is provided at this point.

The focus of the educational process is not the acquisition of information but on the understanding of relationships within subject-matters under investigation. In the educational process, both students and teachers query each other. According to Lipman (1994) the reflective paradigm which assumes that education is the outcome of participation in a teacher-guided community of inquiry, students are expected to be thinking if they participate in the community of inquiry unlike the standard paradigm which requires students to think if they learn what they have been taught. The teachers play an authoritative role and the learners just absorb information in order to acquire knowledge thereby contradicting with Freire's critical pedagogy theory which believes in

education that is democratic and dialogical process in which students are not treated as objects, containers, receptacles to receive, file and store the deposits.

The reflective paradigm of critical practice includes certain principles. First, education as inquiry is the first of these principles. Just as scientists apply the scientific method of inquiry to the exploration of problematic situations, students are also required to use the same if they are to learn to think for themselves (Ash & Clayton, 2009; Lipman, 1994). Thus, asking students to study the end results of what the scientists have discovered, and neglecting the process and only focusing upon the product is to be avoided. Second, the principle of community of inquiry is about transforming the classroom into a community of inquiry where students listen to one another with respect, build on each other's ideas, challenge one another to supply reasons for unsupported opinions help each other in drawing inferences from what has been said. Third, sensitivity to what is problematic is also regarded as essential. Ash and Clayton (2009) point out that the curriculum is aimed to bring out aspects of the subject matter that are unsettled and problematic in order to hold the attention of the students and stimulate them to form a community of inquiry. Fourth, education is viewed as a context in which young people learn to be reasonable so that they are brought up to be reasonable citizens, reasonable companions, and reasonable parents. Fifth, it is noted that thinking is a process of finding or making connections (Fook, 2002). He continues by explaining that seeking and examining relationships that apply to events is also regarded as vital to make sound judgments. Sixth, thinking in the disciplines is viewed as another principle. According to this principle, students need to think historically, scientifically, or mathematically; to think in a distinctive way

according to a particular subject involved. Seventh, the primary objective of the reflective model is the autonomy of the learner (Ash & Clayton, 2009; Lipman, 1994).

Autonomous learners are considered to be those who can think for themselves, making their own judgments of the evidence, forming their own understanding of the world and developing their own conceptions of the kind of persons they would like to be, and they are certainly not like those who merely parrot what others say or think. Finally, in the reflective paradigm, in each discipline, the community inquiry is to be used in order to provoke discussion and reflection about the subject matter of the discipline. The principles of the reflective paradigm cited above receive much attention in today's education where there is a shift from the acquisition of facts to the process of thinking.

For many educators, critical thinking is not a way to education but a prerequisite as it helps one to find real root causes to issues rather than solving superficial problems (Figliuolo, 2016; Paul & Elder, 2006). One advantage cited is the creation of a community of inquiry, where each member monitors his or her thinking, as well as critiques other members' methods and procedures. Thus, individuals not only self-correct thinking processes, but contribute overall to group thinking skills and evaluate what they have learnt (Emir, 2009; Lipman, 1995). In such a community where questioning becomes a way of reflection, students are encouraged to question the validity of sources of information, including teachers (Paul & Elder, 2002; Siegel, 1990). Moreover, teachers need to convey to students these skills, since research indicates that many students do not demonstrate strong critical thinking skills. According to Paul & Elder (2006), students demonstrate critical thinking skills if teachers employ Socratic style of questioning. This is a systematic method of disciplined questioning that can be

used to among other things, explore complex ideas, analyse concepts and distinguish what one knows from what one does not know. As Lipman (1994) points out, two important virtues of critical thinking skills are greatly enhanced reading comprehension and the ability to communicate the in-depth perception gained from increased understanding. Positive effects are also observed in the area of problem-solving as Sezer (2008) reveals.

According to Sezer (2008), the differences in problem-solving were not limited to the expert knowledge or having an automated approach to certain problems but the choice of heuristics - strategies and procedures - used. More experienced individuals were found to give greater thought to the approach that they would use, and the relevance of each piece of information, given in the problem. Having mentioned the place of critical thinking in education, it is important to review issues concerning the teaching of critical thinking skills with reference to the findings and recommendations of researchers and specialists in critical thinking-skill learning and teaching. These issues include approaches to the teaching of critical thinking skills, integration of critical thinking into instruction, factors inhibiting students' critical thinking, and assessment of critical thinking. Cotton (1991) points out that in today's information age, the ability to engage in careful, reflective thought is a fundamental characteristic of an educated person, as a requirement for responsible citizenship in a democratic society.

In the same vein, McGivney and Winthrop (2016), reveal that if students are to function in a highly technical society, they must be equipped with life-long learning and critical thinking skills necessary to acquire and process information in an ever-changing world. Taylor (2002) suggests that critical thinking skills are necessary tools for forming

judgment in a society characterised by rapid change, many alternatives of actions and numerous individual and collective choices and decisions.

There have been a lot of studies on the concept of critical thinking, yet, it is still a complex construct, not limited to a single definition, and many areas of uncertainty and disagreement remain as cognitive scientists, philosophers, psychologists, and educational researchers continue to pursue their visions of critical thinking based on diverse research traditions (David, 2022). Applebee (1991) explains that despite the value attached to educating students to think critically and extensive research revealing how to teach for critical thinking, educators continually find themselves teaching students who can read texts but cannot infer ideas, can perform calculations but cannot reason or identify patterns, can recite scientific formula but cannot grasp the essential concepts.

While acknowledging the importance of putting the students at the centre to develop critical thinking skills, there still is little agreement on the fundamental style of teaching for this purpose (Mkomele, 2015). The differences in putting the students at the centre to develop critical thinking skills have become an interesting area of research in sub-Saharan Africa and other African countries. The major focus of this study was on how the Social Studies teachers in Community Day Secondary Schools use the teaching and learning strategies in order to promote critical thinking skills in the learners despite the large enrolment and pressure for national examinations.

2.6 Challenges teachers face when using teaching strategies that promote critical thinking skills

There are many issues that confront teachers and students as it relates to teaching critical thinking skills. According to MoEST (2001), secondary education experiences many

challenges which in turn affect how teachers involve the learners in the teacher's choice of strategies for promoting critical thinking skills. One of the challenges that teachers face when using the strategies that promote critical thinking skills is overcrowding in classrooms (Chiphiko, 2014). Chiphiko further says that overcrowded classrooms are uncontrollable to stimulate learners' curiosity to reading, writing, discussions and demonstrations. There are also in-adequate teaching and learning resources. This forces teachers to have many learners sharing textbooks which negatively affects effective teaching and learning that promotes critical thinking skills (Nsapato, 2005). Chiphiko (2014), in his study entitled 'Implementing Learner-Centred Approaches to Instruction in Primary Schools in Malawi', argues that in as much as teachers see the need for using learner-centred approaches to instruction to promote critical thinking skills, they fail to plan due to challenges of inadequate teaching and learning resources, large class sizes, inadequate learning facilities and lack of pedagogic knowledge. As a result of these challenges, teachers switch to the banking concept of teaching which does not promote critical thinking skills that are necessary for the preparation of active citizens. This conflicts with Freire's critical pedagogy theory which advocates for problem-solving pedagogy that aims at encouraging a dialogue between teachers and students.

Newmann (1998) points out that teachers must be willing to make curriculum and instructional decisions that foster students' abilities to engage in thinking and interpretation. Serbessa (2006) did a descriptive comparative survey that was conducted in Ethiopia aimed at finding out the extent to which the learner-centred approach was being employed in the Ethiopian primary schools and the challenges teachers encountered while using active learning. The results of this study showed that there was

ample evidence that teacher- dominated pedagogy was the norm in the vast majority of Ethiopian primary schools. It was stated that little application of active learning methods was made in the schools as Serbessa (2006) noted that although the innovative teaching and learning is emphasised in the policy, currently traditional lecture methods, in which teachers talk and students listen, dominate most classrooms.

The study by Serbessa (2006) also showed that not only do teachers' attitudes affect the effective implementation of learner-centred teaching approach, but also, attitudes and expectations of students affect how learning is viewed and how teaching is organised. The common obstacles identified in the Ethiopian study were the Ethiopian tradition of teaching and child bringing, lack of institutional and learning resources, teachers' lack of prior experiences to actively participate in the teaching and learning process. This study is related to my study, however the study done in Ethiopia did not explore how teachers use the strategies for promoting critical thinking skills in Social Studies at secondary school level, but rather at primary school level.

Kowino et al. (2012) did a study on challenges that teachers face as they teach critical thinking in Kenya. Four instruments of data generation were used: A graphic observation; rating scale; an in-depth interview schedule; document analysis guide; 16 teachers and 343 learners were selected in the study. The findings showed that the scenario in which irrational behaviour dominated the character of Kenyan youth has brought the contention that the moral well-being of the youth is on a downward trend suggesting that either the teaching of critical thinking through Christian Religion Education (C.R.E) is defective or Kenyan Education system is defective. Kenyan syllabus does not contain relevant elements that could enable students acquire and develop the needed critical thinking

skills. Kowino et al. (2012) suggested that curriculum guide in C.R.E should be relevant and elaborate the critical thinking skills that the teachers need to use in inculcating in the learners the ability to think critically.

Another study by National Institute for Educational Development (2003) was carried out in Namibia to find out if the concept of learner-centred education was well understood by those practising it. Since learner-centred education was introduced as a policy in Namibia in 1991, there have been different understandings of what is meant by learner-centred education and how it is put into practice. From research, it has shown that the curricula and syllabi, textbooks and resources, assessment and examinations developed during the 1990s are not consistently based on learner-centred principles (NIED, 2003). The delivery of learner-centred education thus is affected by the inconsistency among many more constraints. The way one teacher understands learner-centred approach is different from another. The learners' cultural background limits the participation of the young ones in front of the elderly making the learners sit back and listen attentively from the teacher (NIED, 2003).

Learner-centred Approaches in Namibia are used in a situation where the classroom setting, the teachers' and students' perceptions and views are still those of the teacher as the producer of knowledge and students as recipients (NIED, 2003). The classroom setting is in a way that the teacher stands tall and the students are always seated unless called to answer a question. For the teachers to have a clear understanding of what is involved in learner-centred education, they require adequate and continuous in-service training. Though the studies on learner-centred approaches that promote critical thinking skills in learners conducted in Malawi, Ethiopia, Kenya and Namibia focused on learner-

centred approaches that promote effective teaching and learning, from the available literature, no study was carried out to explore how the teachers used the strategies that promote critical thinking skills in learners through Social Studies at secondary school level in five community day secondary schools in Nkhotakota District in CEED which was the aim of this study.

2.7 Theoretical Framework

In order to make sense of the findings of the study, the research was guided by Critical Pedagogy theory of Paulo Freire. The theory was employed in the study because it is in line with the strategies for promoting critical thinking skills. Freire was a Brazilian educational theorist and a critic of teacher-centred teaching. Critical pedagogy is defined as an interactive process through which students and teachers view issues with critical minds for making informed decisions (Nieto, 2005). Critical pedagogy is a teaching approach which attempts to help students question and challenge ‘domination’, and the beliefs and practices that dominate. In other words, it is a theory and practice of helping students achieve ‘critical consciousness’. Freire (1970) was critical of the idea of teaching the students using the traditional methods which he referred to as ‘banking education’ since students were asked just to memorise and repeat ideas, phrases and formulas without understanding the meaning behind them. Additionally, Freire (1970) believed in a problem-posing pedagogy based on the learners’ present interests and experiences. He worked to develop a pedagogy that could liberate the learners leading to social transformation. In Freire’s understanding, students develop less critical consciousness which would result from their intervention in the world as transformers of that world if they work more at storing the deposits entrusted to them. According to Freire, education

must be a democratic and dialogical process since the act of knowing the-world is a mark of all free human beings which is a sharp contrast to the banking concept. Freire opines that students should not be treated as objects, containers, receptacles to receive, file and store the deposits. Evans (2004) asserts that critical pedagogy is connected to John Dewey's works on social reconstruction during the early twentieth century. It was not until the 1980s that critical pedagogy became an important model of interactive learning in the classroom.

Freire, as an educational theorist, in his work "Pedagogy of the oppressed" distinguished between "banking education" and problem-solving education (Evans, 2004). By banking education, Freire referred to the traditional ways of teaching that assumed that students were like empty vessels, waiting to be filled with knowledge from their teachers. Luykx (1999) explains that the problem with banking education is that it makes school centres of reproduction of existing social inequalities through a curriculum that represents the interests of influential groups.

Leistyna and Woodrum (1996, p.1) supported that banking education "focuses exclusively on preparing learners for the work force, while problem- posing pedagogy focuses on the challenges of developing a critically conscious, socially responsible, and politically active student body and citizenry". The banking concept of education indeed, does not promote critical thinking that is necessary for the preparation of active citizens. On the contrary, problem- posing pedagogy aims at encouraging a dialogue between teachers and students.

Critical pedagogy theory is important to this study because as a theory, it puts much emphasis on the importance of transforming students into critical thinkers who would

transform their society. Hence, the theory mainly helps teachers and students to analyse issues from multiple views through reasoning, reading, and writing (Giroux, 1994; Greene, 1996). The objective is for teachers and students to critically examine the links between ideology, power, and culture in a politically shared community (Leistyna & Woodrum, 1996). Through this approach, students are offered several views, which they could use for a critical judgment of their own prior beliefs, perspectives, and stances they bring to class from home. Such critical judgement in turn, helps students to make rational decisions for solving problems in and outside their own societies (Leistyna & Woodrum, 1996).

Another reason why critical pedagogy theory is important is that it links well with participatory learning, which is the symbol of civic learning (Barton & Levstik, 2004; Parker, 2003; Parker, 2004). Since the success in preparing active participatory citizens depends on the curriculum, a poorly framed curriculum can be a channel for reproducing existing social inequalities that hinder active participation in a shared community (Banks, 1997; Banks, 2004b). In this regard, the theory informs us about the significance of a proactive citizenship curriculum in a democratic society. The objective of such a curriculum is to engage students in a critical inquiry of how social situations created the existing inequalities in a society. Students can indeed, demonstrate their critical thinking and decision-making skills only when they play an active role in their own learning. From this perspective, the theory enables both teachers and students “to make sense of the world and their interactions therein-to involve and interact as participants (shapers) of history rather than simply objects (passive recipients) to be acted upon, manipulated, and controlled” (Leistyna & Woodrum, 1996, p.6).

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

To crown it all, critical pedagogy theory provides the teachers with the sort of participatory learning expected in a Social Studies classroom.

Indeed, the teacher teaches to transform and reject the imposed values, so that in a democratic classroom, students and teachers dialogue to rediscover meaning and transform (Marker, 2000). Students who think, actively participate and talk critically in the classroom will also become critical citizens outside the classroom.

2.8 Chapter summary

This chapter has discussed literature related to the study. The chapter has discussed the meaning of critical thinking, the Social Studies Curriculum, teachers' integration of critical thinking into instruction, teachers' instructional strategies that develop critical thinking skills, and the challenges that teachers face when using strategies that develop Critical thinking skills in Africa in general, and Malawi in particular. Finally, the chapter has described Critical pedagogy theory which was employed as the lens through which

this study was conducted. The chapter has presented and justified its framework. The next chapter is on the Research Design and Methodology.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter highlights the research philosophical underpinning, describes and justifies the research design and methodology of the study. The chapter also describes and justifies the location of the study, target population, sample and sampling procedures, and sample size. It also presents data generation instruments as well as data analysis procedures, credibility and trustworthiness of the study, research ethical issues, and limitations of the study. It also clarifies methods that were employed to ensure and enhance credibility and trustworthiness in this research.

3.2 Research philosophical underpinning

Snape and Spencer (2003:1) opine that awareness of the philosophical underpinning for the research can 'secure the quality of the research produced. The researcher's philosophical underpinning is that of interpretivist. He believes that the world has multiple realities that are constructed socially and there are many ways to access them. The researcher is of the opinion that reality is subjective.

The researcher also believes in empiricism whereby knowledge can be gained through perception or sense experience. Following the researcher's philosophical underpinning, the study employed qualitative research design.

3. 3 Research Approach and Design

The researcher employed qualitative approach using a case study research design. Creswell (2008) defines qualitative research as a means for exploring and understanding the meaning of individuals or groups ascribed to a social or human problem. The word 'qualitative' implies an emphasis on the qualities of entities and on processes and meanings that are not experimentally examined or measured in terms of quantity, amount, intensity or frequency (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Myers (2009) in UNISA (2015) argues that qualitative research is designed to help researchers understand people, and the social and cultural contexts within which they live. Such studies allow the complexities and differences of worlds-under-study to be explored and represented (Philip, 1998, p. 267 in UNISA, 2015).

The process of qualitative research encompasses emerging questions and procedures, data generated in the participant's setting, data analysis building from particulars to general themes, and interpretation of data meaning (Creswell, 2008). In addition, Terre Blanche and Kelly (1999) explain that qualitative research tries to describe and interpret people's feelings and experiences in human terms rather than through quantification and measurement.

Kerlinger (1986, p.279) defines Research design as a plan, structure and strategy of investigation so conceived as to obtain answers to research questions or problems. Research design bridges research questions and the implementation of the research.

Research design includes the intersection of philosophy, strategies of inquiry, and the methods that are specific (Creswell, 2008).

This study used a case study design. Stake (1995) opines that a case study is a strategy of inquiry in which the researcher explores in depth a program, event, activity, process, or one or more individuals. According to Stake (1995), the cases are bounded by time and activity, and the researcher collects detailed information using a variety of data collection procedures over a sustained period of time. Gilbert (2008, p. 36) adds that a case study is an approach in which a particular instance or a few carefully selected cases are studied intensively. In this study, Social Studies teachers were studied to understand the differences and similarities among the cases (Stake, 1995). The researcher explored the strategies that teachers used to promote critical thinking skills in the students in Social Studies.

Gunersel (2009) points out that in a case study approach, a single issue is studied by combining information from more than one case. This study centred on how the Social Studies teachers used the strategies that promote critical thinking skills in five Community Day Secondary Schools in Nkhotakota District in Central Eastern Education Division. This approach was necessary because for teachers to promote critical thinking skills in learners they must use proper strategies. The study explored the experiences of Community Day Secondary School Social Studies teachers on how they used the strategies in promoting critical thinking skills. Qualitative research supports that research should explore “actions that are socially meaningful through the direct detailed observation of people in natural settings in order to understand and interpret how people create and maintain their social worlds (Neuman, 1997, p.68). In this study, the studied

cases were the five teachers. A case study design was considered to be appropriate for this study because participants were enabled to say, in their own words, what matters to them and why in relation to the strategies that promote critical thinking skills in Social Studies. Myers (1997) stresses that qualitative research provides a forum for participants to express diverse beliefs or views. This methodology also allowed the researcher to focus on classroom and teachers' strategies while paying attention to the strategies that promote critical thinking skills.

3.4 Population and sampling strategy

The participants of this study were five form two Community Day Secondary School Social Studies teachers from Nkhotakota District in Central Eastern Education Division. The five Community Day Secondary Schools were sampled using Convenience sampling technique since convenience sampling technique is affordable, easy and participants are readily available (Etikan et al, 2015). The teachers were sampled using convenience because the participants could be easily reached. In order to make sure that the results of study reflected all the five Community Day Secondary Schools, five Community Day Secondary Schools were selected for this study. This was to ensure that the results of the study could reflect the same category of secondary schools under study. The five Community Day Secondary School teachers were purposively sampled to take part in the study due to the introduction of Outcomes-Based Curriculum which they had been following for two years at Junior Secondary School level (Creswell, 2014).

The five Community Day Secondary School Social Studies teachers were purposively selected by the researcher because they had taught Junior Secondary School Social Studies for two years. Such being the case, one Social Studies teacher from each of the

five schools was purposively selected because of the introduction of the Outcomes - Based Curriculum. For the purposes of this study, one Community Day Secondary School Social Studies teacher from each Community Day Secondary School was purposively chosen to participate in this study. All the participating teachers were visited in the schools where they were working. This helped the researcher to come up with participants who had appropriate knowledge and experience to the issues under study (Simon, 2011). Nkhotakota district was chosen using convenience sampling because it was where the researcher worked. Etikan et al. (2015) contend that for most researchers: It would be superlative to use the whole population, but in most cases, it is not possible to include every subject because the population is almost finite. This is the rationale behind using sampling techniques like convenience sampling technique. Convenience sampling is where members of the target population that meet certain practical criteria, such as easy accessibility, geographical proximity, availability at a given time, or the willingness to participate are included for the purpose of the study.

3.5 Data generation procedure

For the researcher to explore how the teachers use the strategies that promote critical thinking skills in Social Studies, multiple forms of data generation were used, namely; interviews which were phone recorded, observations and document analysis. Data generation was an important component of this study as it helped to inform the researcher about the effectiveness of strategies (Hendricks, 2009).

3.5.1. Semi-structured interviews

The researcher used semi-structured interviews to generate data. Interviews were used because they yield a great deal of useful information (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). In semi-

structured interviews, the researcher used a set of predetermined questions which were short and clearly worded; in most cases, these questions were open-ended to give the participants freedom to express their views in their own terms. The research respondents were phone recorded during these interviews. This type of interviewing was easy to conduct, and could be easily standardised as the same questions were asked to all participants (Kumar, 2011). According to Preece, Rogers, and Sharp (2002 as cited in UNISA, 2015), structured interviews are most applicable when the goals of the study are clearly understood and specific questions identified.

The researcher asked questions related to the study “teachers’ strategies” of critical thinking in Social Studies. The face-to-face semi-structured interviews were recorded in order to get full understanding of responses from individuals (Creswell, 2003) and to substantiate the jotted down notes in case the notes got misplaced. In addition to that, every recorded file was numbered and labelled with the name and date of the interviewee in order to avoid confusion and complications. Interview guides (see appendix 5) were used for face -to -face interviews with all the five Community Day Secondary School teachers. This helped the researcher to have the teachers’ understanding of the issues at the same time respecting how they came up with their responses (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Five thirty minute interviews were conducted and each teacher was interviewed once which helped the researcher to generate enough data for the study. During semi-structured interviews, some participants became silent. They could not respond to the questions asked by the researcher because they could not clearly grasp what the researcher wanted to find out. To overcome this problem, the researcher repeated and

rephrased the questions and allowed the participants to process their answers by giving them time to think.

3.5.2. Observations

Apart from semi-structured interviews, observations were also used because they are flexible and free where information flows freely and the researcher took advantage of unforeseen data sources as they surfaced (Leedy and Ormrod, 2005). Observation is a purposeful, systematic and selective way of watching and listening to an interaction or phenomenon as it takes place (Kumar, 2011). Additionally, Kumar (2011) points out that observation is appropriate in situations where full and/or accurate information cannot be produced by questioning, because respondents either are not co-operative or are unaware of the answers because it is difficult for them to detach themselves from the interaction. Junior Community Day Secondary School Social Studies teachers were observed as they were teaching their lessons to find out if they were using the strategies that promote critical thinking skills in the learners. The researcher acted as a non-participant observer where the researcher did not get involved in the activities of the teachers and students but remained a passive observer, watching and listening to the activities and drawing conclusions from those activities (Kumar, 2011). Observations helped the researcher to get access to situations and people where interviews were impossible to use; the researcher had access to people in real life situations (Hoepfl, 1997). The researcher observed five lessons for the five teachers. Each lesson observation lasted for forty minutes. Observation helped the researcher to compare what is being advocated by the curriculum planners and what actually happens in the classrooms about the strategies for promoting critical thinking skills in Social Studies. Observations help to provide a deeper

understanding of the context in which events, such as teaching and learning, occur. Hoepfl contended that observers should have enough skills to be able to monitor verbal and nonverbal cues, use of concrete and unambiguous descriptive language in communicating both content and styles in which knowledge is acquired. As the presence of an observer can be a distortion of the natural scene, the researcher explained to the learners and the teachers that they should feel free in the classrooms and that they should be as natural as possible because the exercise was solely for research purposes (Hoepfl, 1997). An observation checklist was used for generating data (see appendix 7). Research participants were observed after documents were analysed. This was to ensure that what was planned is what was being delivered. The five teachers were observed and interviewed and each teacher was observed once (Hopkins, 2002). While observing the participants' lessons, the researcher encountered the challenge of unwillingness of the participants to participate. To overcome this challenge, the researcher built a good rapport with them and explained to them that they should feel free and that the data collected during observation was going to be used for research purposes only.

3.5.3. Documents analysis

In addition to semi-structured interviews and observations, relevant documents were reviewed as one way of generating information in order to understand how teachers promote critical thinking skills among their students in Social Studies. As Strydom and Delpot (2005) state, document analysis is an analysis of written materials that contain information about the topic under study. Cobin and Strauss (2008) state that document analysis requires that data should be analysed and interpreted in order to get the meaning, understand, and develop empirical knowledge. Documents are 'social facts', which can

be produced, shared and used in socially organised ways (Atkinson & Coffey, 1997, p.47).

The following documents were analysed by the researcher in this study; lesson plans or lesson notes and schemes of work. Labuschagne (2003) explains that document analysis yields data, quotations, or the whole passages that are organised into main themes, categories, and case examples specifically through content analysis. The researcher analysed the mentioned documents to find out if the teachers were using the appropriate strategies for promoting critical thinking skills in Social Studies. Lesson plans and schemes of work were analysed in order to see if the teachers were able to implement classroom activities that foster critical thinking skills. Document analysis helped the researcher to find out if the selected teachers were able to follow the principles of critical pedagogy theory used in the study.

This study was expected to draw upon multiple sources of evidence in order to find convergence and corroboration through the use of different data sources and methods. Yin (1994) opines that apart from documents, other sources of information include interviews, participant or non-participant observation, and physical artifacts. Denzin (1970, p. 291) also stresses that document analysis is mostly used in combination with other qualitative research methods as a means of triangulation which is ‘the combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon’. Eisner (1991, p. 110) contends that through data triangulation, the researcher tries to provide ‘a confidence of evidence that yields credibility. Through data triangulation, the researcher guards against the accusation that the findings of the study are simply an artifact of a single method, a single source, or a single bias of the investigator (Patton, 1990). Document analysis was

employed because by examining information generated through various methods, the researcher corroborated the findings across data sets, hence, reducing the impact of potential biases that can exist in a single study. In this study the researcher developed a template of document analysis that was used for recording data from the teachers (see appendix 6). As the researcher was asking for the documents, the research participants were unwilling to have their documents analysed. The researcher dealt with this problem by carefully explaining to the participants that the documents were going to be analysed for research purposes only. The other challenge that the researcher encountered was illegibility of what was written in the documents such as lesson plans and schemes of work. The researcher sorted out this problem by asking the owners of the documents to explain what they had written.

3.6 Data analysis procedure

Data analysis is the process of bringing order, structure, and meanings to the mass of generated data (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p.278). According to Schurink et al. (2011, p. 403 in Vosloo, 2014) the qualitative data analysis involves recording of data, verbatim transcription, thorough reading, coding, evaluation and description. Creswell (2009) further points out that data analysis consists of organising and preparing of data for analysis which involves transcription of interviews, scanning the material, typing of field notes, sorting and arranging the collected data into various types depending on the sources of data. In this study, data was thematically analysed because of its flexibility. It is against this background that the researcher listened to the audio for the interviews from teacher participants. Additionally, the researcher wrote down word for word what the participants had said when responding to the interview questions. This assisted the

researcher to familiarise himself with data as he went through the data several times. In order to make sure that there was accuracy, the researcher checked the transcripts against the original audio recordings.

After getting familiar with data, the researcher assigned different codes to the raw data that was assessed in a meaningful way regarding the phenomenon under study. According to Clarke & Braun (2017), codes are building blocks for classifying patterns of meaning in the data, supported by a central organizing idea. The codes were identified to give meaning to the data extracts that originated from the transcribed data.

Another data analysis process involved categorical combination of codes which presented an opportunity to deal with research questions separately (Cresswell, 2013). The codes were reduced. Thereafter, the researcher generated code categories by assessing their relevance. A code category entailed “collection of similar data sorted into the same place, an arrangement that enabled the researcher to identify and describe the characteristics of category” (Morse, 2008, p. 727). Consequently, the researcher reviewed the all-encompassing code list, the codes’ descriptive accounts and the coded excerpts to identify and develop patterns and connections from data that emerged from the voices of the participants. During this process, the researcher generated five code categories that presented teacher participants’ use of the strategies that promote critical thinking skills in Social Studies. Various elements of data were interlinked to come up with code categories that were named from the voices of participants in the transcribed data (Baxter and Jack, 2008).

To elongate the findings, literature was used to create a conceptual framework (Peel, 2019) that informed and steered the thematic data analysis. The researcher identified conceptually the interconnections of ideas that showed how teacher participants demonstrated their experiences and practices on the use of the strategies that promote critical thinking skills in Social Studies. The final stage of data analysis involved describing and interpreting themes in the study. Thematic analysis involved transcribing data, coding, collating codes into potential themes, checking themes, refining specific themes and report writing (Kothari, 2004). The identified themes were used as a basis for reasoning, argumentation, deliberation, contemplation and formulation of conclusions to come up with conclusions in combination with the generated qualitative data. In addition to that, data analysis involved deconstruction of the qualitative data into manageable categories, patterns, themes and relationships in accordance with the research aims (Mouton, 2001, p. 108). Line by line coding was used for analyzing data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990) in which line, sentence and paragraph segments of the transcribed interviews with Social Studies teachers and field notes gathered from classroom observations and from document analysis were separately reviewed to come up with a decision as to what codes fitted the ideas suggested by data. The outlined procedure also allowed the researcher to go beyond mere descriptive, comparative and explanatory ends to discover the rationale and motivation for responses (Thietart, 2007, p. 361 cited in Vosloo, 2014). Lastly, the procedure enabled the researcher to explore and understand the strategies that teachers use in order to promote critical thinking skills in Social Studies. As the researcher was analysing data, he faced the challenge of unclear

phone-recorded responses from the participants. This was resolved by calling and re-interviewing the participants to re-answer the question.

3.7 Ethical considerations.

Capron (1989) claims that any kind of research should be guided by the principles of respect for people, beneficence, and justice. According to Capron, respect for people is the recognition of participants' rights, including the right to be informed about the study, the right to freely decide whether to participate in a study, and the right to withdraw at any time without penalty. Patton (2002) and Cray (2004) argued that the use of the principle of informed permission is necessary for a fair research. In view of this, the researcher endeavoured that all participants received an informed consent form which had vividly explained the nature of the study and the participant's involvement in the study (see appendix 4). This process took place before conducting interviews and observing the lessons of the participants. The participants were assured that their responses would remain confidential and anonymous. The names of the schools and teachers chosen to participate in this study were kept anonymous. The privacy of the participants was ensured by the use of pseudonyms on all research documents. For instance, schools were named as A, B, C, D, and E while the teachers were named 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5. All participants had to indicate the date of the interview and observation, and append their signature on the letter to signify their consent to participate in the study. In addition to that, all participants voluntarily took part in the study and the researcher communicated to them that their participation would be curtailed at any time without a fine if they felt uncomfortable with the interviews. Interviews as well as classroom observations were only conducted after the teachers themselves expressed willingness to

participate in the study (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). In order for the researcher to conduct the study, permission was sought from all the relevant authorities (see appendix 1).

3.8 Credibility and trustworthiness

Polit and Beck (2012) explain that credibility refers to the confidence in how well the data address the intended focus. The researcher used multiple sources of data generation to ensure authenticity of the findings of the study. Data from different sources was triangulated by examining evidence from the sources and used it to come up with logical justification of the themes. Triangulation is the use of multiple datasets, methods, theories, and/or investigators to address a research question (Bhandari, 2023). Data triangulation protects the researcher from the accusation that the findings of the study are simply but a product of a single method, a single source, or a single bias of the investigator (Patton, 1990; Bhandari, 2023). The researcher established themes based on the converging of various sources of data and perspectives from participants. The process helped the researcher to achieve validity of the study.

3.9 Pilot testing

To make sure that the research instruments were effective, the researcher carried out a pilot testing of all the data generation instruments. A pilot study is a mini-version of a research or a trial run conducted in preparation of a full-scale study and may be conducted specifically to pre-test research instruments (Teijlingen & Hundley, 2001). In a pilot study, the researcher tries out all research techniques and methods, which the researcher has in mind to see how well they will work in practice (Blaxter, et al. 1996, p. 121). Watson, et al. (2007) contend that conducting a pilot study is vital to any research as it serves the function of helping the researcher to detect possible flaws in the

measurement instruments and whether concepts have been adequately operationalized. The researcher therefore, conducted a pilot study to identify possible flaws, refine data generating instruments, uncover ethical as well as other key practical issues, such as the sampling procedure, and find an opportunity to resolve certain issues that may otherwise hinder the main project (Kelly, 2007). In this study, pilot testing took place at Bishop Mtekateka Secondary School where Social Studies teachers got interviewed and observed during the delivery of their lessons.

Through pilot testing, the researcher discovered data collection instruments were wordy and needed rephrasing since they could not generate the required and meaningful data for the study. Pilot testing enabled the researcher to refine the questions so that they could yield the desired data for the study. On the part of lesson observations, the researcher noted that teachers expressed unwillingness to have their lessons observed. The researcher overcame this challenge by clearly explaining to them that the observations were solely for the purposes of research and that would remain confidential.

3.10 Limitations of the study

This study was initially planned to take place within one month however, it extended to the other month. It was planned that the researcher would interview and observe two teachers in a week. Data was planned to be generated in 25 days. The researcher later learnt that it was not practical to stick to the planned schedule in order to generate enough data for the study due to the time that was being spent on the interviews. Three participants recommended that the researcher should interview and observe them the following week due to lack of preparation and absenteeism from work. The researcher addressed this challenge by rescheduling the interviews and observations to the re-agreed

date. Furthermore, participant number 5 changed his mind in the middle of the interview because he was uncomfortable with the questions and needed enough time to study the questions. The researcher provided the participant with a copy of the questions for the sake of familiarisation with the questions and the interview was rescheduled to another date. Furthermore, the findings of the study cannot be generalised to other contexts, since qualitative research is bound by context, the study is only applicable to those schools which were under study. However, the findings of this study can give an insight on the strategies that teachers use for promoting critical thinking skills in Social Studies. The subsequent section provides a summary for chapter three.

3.11 Chapter summary

This chapter highlighted the research's philosophical underpinning, discussed and justified how the qualitative research design and methodology was carried out to generate data. Furthermore, the chapter described and presented the location of the study, target population, sample and sampling procedures, sample size, data generation instruments and the procedures of analyzing data, issues of credibility and trustworthiness of the study, pilot testing, research ethical issue and limitations of the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

4.1. Chapter overview

This chapter discusses findings from five schools that participated in this study. This study focused on exploring how teachers use strategies for promoting critical thinking skills in Social Studies. This was achieved by interviewing, observing as well as analysing documents for Social Studies teachers teaching Social Studies in five CDSSs in Nkhosakota district in Central East Education Division (CEED). The study was guided by the main research question: How do teachers in CDSS use critical thinking strategies when teaching Social Studies? Qualitative data were analysed in terms of how teachers use strategies for promoting critical thinking skills in Social Studies in their Social Studies lessons. Results from the data are presented under each subsection below.

4.2 Context of the case study secondary schools

Malawi has four categories of public secondary schools, these include: National Secondary Schools, District boarding Secondary Schools, Community Day Secondary Schools and City Day Secondary Schools.

These categories are distinctive from each other in terms of how they are funded, their catchment area, background, the performance of the students and lastly their selection into national examinations. National Secondary Schools are the oldest of secondary

schools in Malawi intended to train the best learners selected from the results of Malawi Primary School Certificate Examinations. These learners are selected from across the country. Malawi has 25 National secondary schools. Four of the twenty-five secondary schools are fully funded by the government while remaining twenty-one are partly owned by churches and government.

On the other hand, District secondary schools are the second oldest category of secondary schools. They were established during the one-party government after independence. The government partly funds these schools. The learners of these schools are selected from the district in which the school is located. These schools train the second category of learners selected after the passing their Primary School Certification Examination.

Community Day Secondary Schools serve learners from the surrounding areas of the school. The government of Malawi through the ministry of education established these schools as a response to the increase of school enrolment in primary schools as a result of the introduction of free primary school education after the introduction of democracy in Malawi. Most of the pupils who pass primary school leaving certificate are selected into Community Day Secondary Schools. According to Chibwana (2019) most of the students selected into these Community Day Secondary Schools belong into the third group of students basing on their primary school leaving certificate results. These schools are found in rural areas and have got low funding and poor staffing of teachers. The community day secondary schools were studied using pseudo names. The community day secondary schools were considered for this study to explore the teachers' use of the strategies that promote critical thinking skills in Social Studies due to numerous challenges that they face.

4.3. Critical thinking teaching and learning strategies

According to Jacobs (2004) as cited in Mwala (2012), a teaching and learning strategy is a procedure that can be employed by the teacher to the learners when presenting the learning content. When asked to explain how they engage learners to promote critical thinking in their lessons, they stated that they ask high order questions and employ participatory methods such as debate, drama, group discussions, role play, question and answer and discovery learning. These themes are discussed in detail in the following sub-sections.

4.3.1 Asking high order questions

During semi-structured interviews, respondents from all the CDSSs under study agreed that they ask high order questions to promote critical thinking skills during the teaching and learning process. The analysed documents also showed that they were going to ask high order questions. Teachers were confident that asking high order questions allows learners to participate in the lessons, makes their lessons livelier and helps in the promotion of critical thinking skills. For example, teacher 4 at school D remarked:

Each time a lesson is prepared, I leave a room for students to answer questions or explain further on the point that I have given. Apart from delivering the material, students are given a portion of the task to do. In so doing I hope it promotes critical thinking. Instead of just explaining, something is left for them to discuss or brainstorm (Interview excerpt).

Explaining on the same, teacher 5 at school E said:

I like involving students. I give a bit of me introducing the topic. I let the learners into groups and discuss. I give students a topic to think about, for example, I ask them the rights of a woman then I throw the topic back to the learners to discuss after introducing it (Interview excerpt).

Indeed, thought provoking questions enable learners to critically think through their responses as they answer the questions. Giroux (1992) claims that students who think and talk critically in the classroom will also become critical individuals outside the classrooms. Considering the responses from the teachers, and the documents analysed, the study noted that the teachers had knowledge of the strategies that promote critical thinking skills in their learners. The lesson plans and schemes of work had all the elements of critical thinking skills. However, the study found out that the questions were of low order. For example, teacher 4 at school D asked this question to the learners:

*“State any **three** reasons that led to the partition of Africa”.*

Teacher 3 at school C also asked the following question to the learners:

*“Give **two** reasons why planet Venus is called ‘the earth’s twin.’”*

The findings of this study agrees with the study by Moyo (2020) and Mwala (2012) which revealed that asking learners thought provoking questions helps in promoting critical thinking skills. However, in this study and the studies by (Moyo, 2020) and (Mwala, 2012), teachers faced challenges of involving all the learners due to overcrowding in the classrooms. This study revealed that the questions above only required learners to demonstrate their comprehension by stating the reasons that led to the partition of Africa and why the planet Venus is called the earth’s twin and not necessarily

to evaluate or synthesise the content that was delivered to them. These low order questions would not promote critical thinking skills as expected. In line with the Critical Pedagogy theory these questions would be best suitable under the ‘banking education’ since students were asked questions based on memory, repetition of ideas, phrases and formulas without understanding the meaning behind them. The reasons as to why they did not ask high order questions and involve learners in their lessons will be discussed under the challenges that teachers face when using strategies that promote critical thinking skills

4.3.2 Employing participatory teaching methods

During semi-structured interviews, participants in this study agreed that employing different teaching and learning methods in the lesson will help the learners to get motivated to learn. This was evidenced by teacher 2 at school B, who planned to integrate critical thinking into lessons by:

coming up with the methods or methodologies that help learners to think on their own towards the activities in the classroom, rather than spoon-feeding them, but they should discover concepts on their own whereby the teacher is just a mediator (Interview excerpt).

Explaining on the same teacher 5, at school E stated:

I make sure that I take learners from what they know to what they do not know by coming up with methods that provide them with the opportunity to take part in the lessons. I make sure that the methods that I choose help learners to think on their own (Interview excerpt).

The documents analysed at schools B and E indeed showed different methods of teaching such as question and answer, small group discussions, pair work and role play. This is in line with the principle of critical pedagogy theory as Freire (1970) argued that students develop less critical thinking which would result from their intervention in the world as transformers of that world if they work more at storing the deposits entrusted to them. It is indeed necessary to use various teaching methods in the lesson, for it helps learners to develop adequate critical thinking skills. However, it was noted during classroom observations that the majority of teachers did not adequately organise classroom activities that could have promoted critical thinking skills in the learners since in most of the schools that participated in the study, listening was the major classroom activity for learners. Failure to adequately organise classroom activities is discussed under two subheadings. Teachers' limited knowledge on classroom management and lack of in-service training by the schools.

All the five teachers who participated in this study were knowledgeable about the use of participatory teaching and learning strategies that promote critical thinking skills in their lessons. When asked about the teaching and learning strategies that were covered in their teacher preparation programmes, the interviewed teachers were quick to mention the strategies such as; brainstorming, question and answer, pair work, role play, and group discussion. However, from what was observed during classroom observations, some teachers employed only teacher-centred strategies throughout their lessons.

Explaining on the same, teacher 4 at school D opined that,

I use question and answer because it promotes immediate critical thinking. You may not use debate on daily basis because it consumes a lot

of time. I apply question and answer and lecture method. If one attempts to answer the question, I clarify or rephrase the question because it may mean the word used to ask the question has puzzled the learner or giving them some examples which may be related to the topic I am dealing with which may prompt something the heads of the learners (Interview excerpt).

The use of high order questions indeed provokes the learners' thinking ability. This is in agreement with what Smith (1991) found out, when a teacher asks questions to determine a child's grasp of content, he not only gives the student a type of problem but also leads him to ask questions of his own. It also agrees with the study carried out by Vakalisa (2004, p. 5) which showed that participatory learning requires that the class should be managed in a manner that allows learners to freely express their views on the content without any impingement either from the teacher or their peers. Furthermore, he pointed out that participatory learning is centred on the idea that a good part of learning happens when learners are allowed to express what they think of the learning content presented to them (Mwala, 2012). This also agrees with critical pedagogy theory which aims at helping students achieve critical consciousness by liberating them in the classroom. The teachers as shown in (Table 3) were in agreement that involving learners during classroom lessons would result in having lively classrooms and encouraging full participation of learners which would also result in promoting critical thinking skills. This is again in line with Freire's (1970) critical pedagogy theory which encourages teachers to use interactive learning techniques that consider the existing knowledge of students to promote critical thinking skills such as; asking questions that are clear and

easily understood, listening to others' views and opinions, distinguishing between fact and opinion, determining credibility of sources of information, distinguishing relevant from irrelevant information, and drawing logical conclusions based on evidence. This supports what Mwala (2012) found that some of the teachers were of the view that using participatory teaching and learning strategies helps interaction between the teacher and the learners, and learner to learner and promotes critical thinking skills. Explaining on the relationship between student classroom participation and promotion of critical thinking skills in Social Studies, teacher 3 had this to say:

I always make sure that I ask students about something that happened related to current affairs and at the end of the lesson, I make sure that I give them a challenge or problem to solve. The way I interact with students on that particular day may prompt their minds to think positively or negatively. So by giving them positive comments on whatever they have done in class prompts them to think critically. Similarly, giving them a challenge which they never expected makes them to be always ready to answer either historical or current affairs issues (Interview excerpt).

Explaining on the same, teacher 2 expressed the following opinion:

Generally, I do not think without students' participation critical thinking can work. It means their participation is quite vital than everything. First and foremost, is to let students participate in classroom activities that's when we have critical thinking. Students may be thinking of something at home, if they are not taking part in the classroom discussions yet the teacher wants to promote critical thinking skills in his lessons. It is

fruitless if the learners are not taking part in the classroom. So, there is a big relationship (Interview excerpt).

The study found out that teachers did not fully organise classroom practices that could promote learner participation which in turn would enhance the promotion of critical thinking skills. The study also found out that much as teachers had a positive perception of learner-centred approaches, observations in classrooms showed that questions and answers were dominantly used. Most of the questions used were low order ones which did not promote critical thinking skills.

4.3.3. Teachers' organisation of teaching and learning strategies.

Table 1 presents a summary of teachers' academic qualification and how they organized their teaching and learning strategies in all the five schools.

Table 1: Summary of how teachers organised their lessons

School	Length	Exercise	Questioning	Group work	Classroom activities	Text books	Class	Teacher's qualification.	Number of students
A	40 min	None	Yes	None	Copying notes	NA	F2	PSTC	60
B	40 min	None	Yes	None	Listening	NA	F2	B.Ed.	80
C	80 min	None	Yes	Yes	Presentations	10	F2	PSTC	100
D	40 min	Yes	Yes	None	Listening	NA	F2	B.A. Edu.	75
E	40 min	Yes	Yes	None	Listening	NA	F2	B.A. with UCE	110

Key: NA=Not Available; F2= Form 2, PSTC=Primary School Teaching Certificate

From Table 1, the dominant teaching and learning strategy in all the five schools was Question and Answer. All the teachers used Question and Answer as their main strategy of teaching. However, during classroom observation, the study noted that most of the questions that were used were low order questions. This might have affected the promotion of critical thinking skills in the learners. Only one teacher employed Group Work which was not also effective because of the failure by the teacher to handle large number of students and inadequate number of textbooks used by the learners. Some of the students in the groups were not being monitored and others felt neglected as they were unable to present the findings of their discussions due to limited time. When the teacher was asked as to why he did not monitor the other groups, this is what teacher 4 at school D, had this to say:

We don't have enough materials which becomes very difficult when it comes to group work. For example, to give them work or reference as a group, it becomes a challenge when you ask them to refer to a certain page... because you find that you have got two books against six big groups. So instead of dividing groups into smaller ones, you may have two or three large groups which makes it difficult to monitor (Interview excerpt).

The study noted that some teachers teaching Social Studies had general diplomas and degrees without specialization in Social Studies. This might as well have contributed to how they organised their lessons. For example, teacher 3 at school C and teacher 5 at school E had serious challenges in involving all the learners in their lessons. However, teacher 3 faced serious difficulties in organising the lessons while teacher 5 at school E

employed different mechanisms of controlling the class but was still challenged because of the class size. Some of the challenges that they faced include; controlling noise in the class rooms, engaging all the learners in the lessons, monitoring classroom activities and motivating the learners to take part in the lessons with limited teaching materials. The study also observed that majority of the teachers preferred individual responses to chorus responses which was commendable as it encouraged individual participation in the lessons.

In conclusion, the study noted that though all the teachers are familiar with various participatory teaching and learning strategies that promote critical thinking skills, they only employed teacher centred strategies. This was due to the fact that the schools had high student teacher ratio, lack of teaching and learning resources and being under pressure to cover a lot of work since, according to them, participatory learning consumes a lot of time. The study noted that if critical thinking skills are to be promoted, teachers need to be assisted on how best to improve student participation in class. Teachers need to be equipped with the necessary skills of managing classes with large numbers, provided with adequate teaching and learning materials and organising frequent in-service training.

4.4 The teachers' integration of critical thinking into teaching strategies

Under this question, how do secondary school Social Studies teachers integrate critical thinking into their teaching in Social Studies, data was collected through interviews and document analysis. The findings were organised using the following subthemes:

4.4.1 Necessary element to integrate critical thinking skills into teaching

During the semi-structured interviews, the teachers in this study showed that they plan their lessons having the learner in mind. They demonstrated that they understand that student involvement at classroom level begins at planning level with adequate teaching and learning materials. They understand that at planning level, they should integrate critical thinking into the planned work in order to promote critical thinking skills.

4.4.1.1 Adequate teaching and learning materials

From the semi-structured interviews, it was revealed that teachers integrate critical thinking into their teaching by providing opportunities to learners to take part in the lessons. All teachers agreed that having enough teaching and learning materials is a prerequisite for students' involvement into the lesson. For example, teacher 3 at school C remarked:

I decide to use lecture method because the teaching and learning materials are not enough at our school. Just imagine, having ten textbooks against 100 students in class. How can I effectively involve all the learners in class? (Interview excerpt).

Explaining on the same, teacher 1 at school A commented:

I consider lecture method as the best because there are no textbooks for the learners to use in groups if I choose group method (Interview excerpt).

Indeed, the availability of teaching and learning materials promotes students' effective participation in the lessons. All teachers in this study pointed out that they find it hard to integrate critical thinking skills into their lessons due to in-adequate teaching and learning

materials. This is in agreement with Gross (2003) who pointed out that when teaching and learning materials are available, the teaching and learning environment becomes conducive. It is also evident that for teachers to effectively integrate critical thinking skills into their teaching, there must be enough teaching and learning materials. For example, the schemes of work for teachers 3 and 4 at school C and D indicated that resource books and chart papers would be used in groups by the students. It is indeed true that the availability of teaching and learning materials helps the teachers to effectively involve learners in their lessons thereby promoting critical thinking skills in the learners. Lack of teaching and learning materials at school A and C promoted the teachers to revert to lecture method which might have affected the participation of learners in the lessons. The use of lecture method by the teachers is in contradiction with Freire's (1970) critical pedagogy theory which states that banking education does not promote critical thinking skills that is necessary for the preparation of active students.

4.5 Challenges faced by teachers when using the teaching strategies that promote critical thinking skills in Social Studies

The study noted that some teachers had limited knowledge on how best and effectively to integrate critical thinking skills into their lessons. This could be attributed to inadequate of in-service trainings at secondary school level since two of the five teachers had primary school teaching certificates from Teacher Training Colleges. For example, teacher 1 from school A, and teacher 3 from school C were trained as primary school teachers but were asked to teach at Community Day Secondary Schools due shortage of trained teachers in Secondary Schools. This supports the study conducted by Mhango (2010, p. 171) which showed that teacher preparation programmes are probably the

sources for the limited understandings of participatory learning and weak skills in organizing interactive classroom practices that promote critical thinking. According to the teachers, they think that participatory learning is a mere involvement of students in classroom activities. As a result of having limited understanding of participatory learning, their decisions in planning their lessons were affected, which to a greater extent were teacher-centred hence, did not promote critical thinking skills. Regarding why they did not actively involve learners in the classroom lessons, teachers gave a number of challenges that hinder them from doing so. Some of the problems that they cited were, inadequate time allocated for the subject on the timetable, high numbers of students in the classes, while others highlighted the issue of inadequacy of teaching and learning materials as another challenge. Others felt that participatory strategies consume a lot of time as such they fail to complete the syllabus in good time. For example, teacher 4 at school D explained:

*You may not use debate on daily basis because it consumes a lot of time
(Interview excerpt).*

When asked on which method they mostly use for promoting critical thinking skills, teacher 2 from school B mentioned question and answer as the mostly used strategy for promoting critical thinking skills. When asked how they use the strategy; teacher 3 at school C replied:

I pose a question to the learner, maybe he or she fails, I still keep on asking, maybe giving him or her some clues towards the answer. Then he or she will be thinking along those lines. And at the end you see her catching up... (Interview excerpt)

Indeed, thought provoking questions enable learners to critically think through their responses as they answer the questions. Giroux (1992) claim that students who think and talk critically in the classroom will also become critical individuals outside the classrooms.

4.5.1. Inadequate teaching and learning materials

In this study all the five schools which participated in the study did not have adequate teaching and learning resources for them to effectively engage the learners in the lessons and promote critical thinking skills. For example, table 2 shows the availability and use of some of the basic teaching and learning resources.

Table 2: Showing the availability of basic teaching and learning resources

School	Class	Available copies of Textbooks per class	Number of students
A	F2	3	60
B	F2	3	80
C	F2	3	100
D	F2	3	75
E	F2	3	110

Key: F2=Form 2

As indicated in table 2 above, due to inadequacy of resources, learners' participation in the lessons was limited in Social Studies classes. For example, at school C, form 2, the teacher organized learners in groups of more than fifteen students per group to discuss.

The students were required to share the two available Social Studies textbooks for reference. This limited the learners' participation in the lesson and affected the delivery of the lessons and promotion of critical thinking skills since there was no meaningful participation of the learners in the lessons. For example, commenting on the same, teacher 3 from school C had this to say:

I avoid putting my students in groups because there are no adequate Social Studies textbooks at our school due to the introduction of the new curriculum. As a solution, I usually lecture my students (Interview excerpt).

Relying on three textbooks made it difficult for teachers to fully and effectively engage with the students and promote critical thinking skills. Textbooks enable teaching and learning in the sense that teachers can give reading assignments to learners when they are readily available (Mwale, 2000). Textbooks help to widen the knowledge base of learners and enhance active participation which in turn enhances promotion of critical thinking skills. Apart from having in-adequate learners' textbooks, it was also observed that all the five schools had no Teachers' Guides to direct the teachers on how to organize classroom activities that promote critical thinking skills. Teacher 1 and 3 faced challenges to organise classroom activities that could promote critical thinking skills. This could be attributed to their training background and academic qualification. Teachers faced challenges to source supplementary materials related to their lessons which could have helped the learners to get involved. Furthermore, the study noted that underqualified teachers had the most difficult time in teaching as compared to those who were fully qualified.

Table 3: Teachers’ understanding of the relationship between student classroom participation and promotion of critical thinking skills in Social Studies.

Teacher	Teachers’ understanding of critical thinking skills acquired by learners in classrooms
1	Analytic-identifying relationships among concepts to express opinions
2	Interpretation-grasping and articulating meaning of experiences
3	Communication-presenting logically the results of one’s reasoning
4	Self-regulation-checking one’s own thinking
5	Evaluation-evaluating the credibility of statements from an objective position

From table 3, all the teachers understand themselves as being able to identify the relationship between students’ classroom participation and the promotion of critical thinking skills by providing the skills that can be promoted if learners participate in the lessons. However, during observations, the majority of them did not allow learners to participate in their lessons except only for questions and answers which were partly advocated by almost all the teachers. Looking at the result, it seems the teachers are aware of the critical thinking skills that learners can get if participatory teaching and learning strategy is employed in the classroom but they choose teacher-centred strategies due to a number of challenges which include but not limited to inadequate teaching and learning resources, large class sizes and lack of in-service training in the schools. This

contradicts with critical pedagogy theory which critiques the use of banking knowledge and considers both the teacher and the learner as coworkers in the process of learning. For example, teacher 3 at school C opined:

It is difficult to involve every student in large classes. When students are grouped, due to the limited time that we have, it is very difficult for other groups to present in class because 40 minutes is not enough (Interview excerpt).

4.5.2. Teachers' limited knowledge on classroom management

From what was observed during classroom observations, the study noted that there was ineffective use of the strategies as per what was initially planned. The teachers faced challenges in handling and involving learners in large classes. The findings of this study are in line with Ipinge (2005) who observed that large classes hinder the achievement of learning objectives and reduce the completion of learning activities in Namibia. The overcrowded classrooms significantly affect effective teaching and learning process since the activities such as group works, discussion and think-pair-share are not well monitored by teachers given the large number of learners in the classrooms. For example, at schools A and C, very few learners actively took part in question and answer and group discussion due to the large numbers of students in classrooms. The classroom of school C had 100 students. Furthermore, there was a lot of noise and murmuring amongst the students when some learners were taking part in the lessons due to failure of correctly pronouncing some English words. This affected the delivery of lessons because the planned work was not adequately covered. For instance, some students had to stop answering questions because they were being laughed at due to stammering and failure to

correctly pronounce some words in English, to which the teacher faced challenges on how effectively to engage all the learners in the class. In addition, at school C, it was noted that the majority of students were not fully participating in the lessons when it came to question and answer as a method of teaching which can be attributed to fear of being laughed at in case they made a mistake. At this school, the teacher tried to provoke the learners' thinking skills by employing question and answer method but it was challenged because of the size of the class.

Surprisingly though, the teachers in these two schools made very little effort to make sure that learners were involved in the lessons. A comment has to be made that even though teachers may not always be able to manage big classes, they should be able to try to promote critical thinking skills by effectively engaging all students in their classes. Since it was very difficult to involve all learners in the lessons, the teachers resorted to teacher-centred strategies which discourage the effective participation of learners into the lessons and totally contradicts Freire's (1970) critical pedagogy theory that totally disagrees with what he called 'banking education' where students are asked just to memorise and repeat ideas, phrases and formulas without understanding the meaning behind them. This agrees with the study carried out by Cosgrove (2010) which showed that one of the main challenges of the promoting critical skills in students is that many professors and teachers do not have adequate experience of investigating ideas explicitly and deeply, and have not dedicated significant time and energy to the consideration of how to promote critical thinking skills within the classrooms. It is therefore necessary that teachers have got enough experience of involving learners into their lessons if critical thinking skills are to be promoted.

He further pointed out that for critical thinking to be developed to a significant part of students, it requires that a good portion of teachers within an educational institution have a significantly well-developed understanding of critical thinking as well as how to teach for it. According to Cosgrove (2010) for any institution that seeks to improve critical thinking skills, there is need to design a practical and long term professional development plan aimed at expanding professors' understanding and expanding their practice to critical thinking. This supports critical pedagogy theory which strives for the disruption of the effects of unjust systems of power both in the classroom and in the larger society (Ozman & Craver, 2008).

4.5.3. Lack of in-service trainings by the schools

It was observed that there is lack of in-service trainings in all the five schools that were visited. For example, at school E, the teacher attributed some of the challenges that they face in the classroom to lack of professional development trainings in the schools. In addition, when the teacher organised group work, some groups were not even monitored due the large number of students in a class. This caused some problems because the teacher could not adequately supervise all the groups and ensure the full participation of the learners in the lessons.

The study found that the interviewed teachers had different teaching experiences and educational qualifications. Their teaching experience varied from two years to twenty-three years of service which affected the delivery of their lessons. For example, those who had been in the teaching service for a very long time had the skills of engaging

learners in the lessons as opposed to those who had served less in the teaching profession. The study also found out that some teachers were not fully qualified to teach in secondary schools. For example, from school A and C, the teachers had primary school teaching certificates and have not been involved in any training to effectively help them promote critical thinking skills in the learners. The failure to create teaching and learning environments which are interactive and conducive could be attributed to the fact that the said teachers possess minimal skills of effectively promoting critical thinking skills. For example, teacher 5 from school E pointed out that:

...so far I haven't heard anything or seen anything like in-service training organized by the schools or the ministry of education. People only went for SCAR training when the new curriculum was being rolled out. Only few were asked to attend then brief others later which is not effective. Those who attend such trainings do not effectively share what they learnt (Interview excerpt).

The study noted that some teachers who participated in this study possessed both adequate academic and professional qualifications to effectively engage learners in participatory teaching and learning activities that promote critical thinking skills in the class. However, some failed to effectively engage the learners because of lack of the necessary in-service training.

The study also noted that of the five teachers who participated in the study, only one attended an in-service training even though it did not focus on how best to promote critical thinking skills in the learners. For example, teacher 4 from school D explained that:

At cluster level we had a training organized by ministry officials on how to conduct study circles in schools. The training was beneficial only that it was done at a small scale and in a hurried manner. The skills I got from the training are helping me to implement critical thinking because this is kind like outside classroom environment whereby in class you teach while outside the classrooms they teach each other and in so doing they promote critical thinking skills amongst themselves...(Interview excerpt)

As a response to the problem of lack of well-structured in-service training, Chibwana (1997) noted that for teachers to effectively promote critical thinking skills, it is important that teachers be oriented in order to adopt the suggested new teaching strategies. It is noteworthy to comment that for critical thinking skills to be promoted, there is need that teachers must have the relevant skills and training. Furthermore, Shiundu and Mohammed (2006) highlight that due to poverty and failure to produce the desired outcome in educational practices, in-service training in most African countries remains a challenge. Due to poverty, many countries cannot just afford to allocate the necessary resources for sustainable and effective in-service trainings since there are other competing and pressing priorities. As a result, the provision of in-service training remains ignored. Additionally, there is lack of well trained personnel who could handle the trainings of teachers.

On the failure of the training programmes to produce the expected results in pedagogical practices, Shiundu and Mohammed (2006) pointed out that the organised training programmes are occasional, disorganized and lack continuity. This results in not having clear nationally coordinated approach to the task. The study also noted that in some

schools, for example at schools A and C, teachers revealed that they did receive support from fellow teachers more especially from those who have taught the subject for a longer period of time, though the concerned teachers pointed out that it is not effectively and frequently done. This shows that if in-service trainings are supported as it should be, they can be a powerful instrument in helping teachers to effectively promote critical thinking skills in their lessons.

4.6 Proposed ways of overcoming the challenges that teachers face when using strategies that promote critical thinking skills in Social Studies

In view of the findings of this study, the researcher proposes the following ways of overcoming the challenges that teachers face when using strategies that promote critical thinking skills in Social Studies:

4.6.1 Adequate provision of Teaching and Learning Materials

Teaching and learning materials for Social Studies were not enough which was one of the main challenges for effective participation in classroom lessons and promotion of critical thinking skills. For example, there was high in adequacy of Social Studies textbooks in all the five schools. In addition to Social Studies textbooks, the schools also need to have Social Studies Teachers' Guides, chart papers and other classroom requirements such as colored chalk and crayons. In reference to these resources, the Malawi government should take an initiative to invest in these basic teaching and learning materials so that teachers can ably promote critical thinking skills effectively and actively by involving learners in lessons.

4.6.2 Adequate provision of in-service training programmes

Another major challenge why teachers are finding it difficult to promote critical thinking skills in their lessons is lack of well-designed and effectively established in-service training programs for teachers. It is contended that the changes in approach, methods of teaching and learning Social Studies can only become a reality if teachers are fully prepared for change by procedure of retraining (Shiundu & Mohammad, 2006). It is therefore important that human resources be identified both at district and local levels who will be assigned with the task of conducting as well as organizing in-service trainings that are aimed at equipping teachers with the necessary skills of promoting critical thinking skills in their classroom strategies. Furthermore, if critical thinking skills are to be promoted, the in-service training programs should focus on specific subject areas in order to help teachers in those respective areas by those who have a deeper understanding of subject areas. It would also be important that written documents about the training should be given out to the participants at the end of the training for the sake of reference. This would help the subject teachers with something to refer to from time to time hence keeping themselves updated.

4.6.3 Provision of well-structured support system

Basing on the observations that were made in the classrooms in all the five schools, it was evident enough that there was a big problem on the level of proficiency in spoken English on the part of learners. This had a serious impact on the promotion of critical thinking skills on the learners. This problem was as a result of lack of support amongst the teachers themselves. It is a common practice for Science and humanity teachers to make grave mistakes of thinking that it is only the duty of language teachers to address

the problem of inadequate proficiency level in spoken English. On the contrary, every teacher is a teacher of language. It is therefore advisable that teachers should support each other by teaching learners various communication skills as this has the potential to increase learner participation in class a skill highly advocated for the promotion of critical thinking skills (Mwala, 2012).

4.7. Chapter summary

This chapter has presented and discussed findings based on the research questions that guided the study. This study focused on exploring how teachers use strategies for promoting critical thinking skills in Social Studies. This was achieved by interviewing, observing as well as analyzing documents for Social Studies teachers teaching Social Studies in five CDSSs in Nkhotakota district in Central East Education Division (CEED). The study was guided by the main research question: How do teachers in CDSS use critical thinking strategies when teaching Social Studies?

In summary, this study has noted that all the participants attempt to use learner-centred approaches but face challenges to implement the fundamental principles of critical pedagogy theory due to numerous challenges. The common challenges include but not limited to large class sizes, lack of frequent in-service trainings and shortage of teaching and learning materials. It has also been noted that critical pedagogy theory totally criticises ‘banking education’ because it does not provide the learners with the opportunity to think on their own. The next chapter presents the study’s conclusions and implications for future studies.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

5.1. Chapter overview

The purpose of this study was to explore teachers' use of the strategies that promote critical thinking skills in Social Studies in Community Day Secondary Schools in Nkhotakota District in Central East Education Division. This chapter is a presentation and summary of the findings of the study based on the research questions.

5.2. Conclusions and implications of the study

The three research questions and themes generated from the data provide a suitable basis for making the conclusions of the study. This study focused on exploring how teachers use critical thinking strategies for promoting critical thinking skills in learners in Social Studies. The study employed critical pedagogy theory as the lens through which the findings were based. This was achieved by interviewing, observing as well as analysing documents for Social Studies teachers teaching Social Studies in five CDSSs in Nkhotakota district in Central East Education Division (CEED). The study was guided by the following main research question: How do teachers in Community Day Secondary Schools use critical thinking strategies when teaching Social Studies?

Regarding the organisation of instructional strategies, the study established that the curriculum documents provide enough evidence that Malawi Secondary School Social Studies curriculum has the required approaches that educators come up with for the effective preparation of active learner participation that promote critical thinking skills. The analysis of the curriculum documents showed that the teachers are encouraged to use a number of strategies, lesson activities and resources for the promotion of critical thinking skills. From this position, Social Studies curriculum has the necessary tools for participatory approaches that fit very well with the proposed theory of critical pedagogy. However, teachers struggle to actively engage learners in their lessons due to numerous challenges. Furthermore, while the Social Studies Curriculum prescribes learner – centred approach as the preferred pedagogy, the situation on the ground proves otherwise, which concurs with what Mhlauli (2010) reports that there is a contradiction within this philosophy. Mhlauli further argues that the reality is that teachers believe in learner – centred pedagogy but practice teacher – centred approaches. Learner – centred pedagogy is a democratic teaching – learning pedagogy and an ideal means of achieving democracy in the classroom. Griggs (2010) adds that curricula are now packaged and delivered without any form of student contribution hence, treating students as objects and not as subjects. Social Studies has a predetermined teaching curriculum with clearly stipulated specific objectives and prescribed period of completion that culminates into a standardized national examination (Ministry of Education, 2008). Malawi’s education system is such that the emphasis on teaching and learning is examination oriented. Teachers have to make sure that they teach to complete the syllabi within the prescribed period in preparation for the examinations. At the expense of democratic engagement,

teachers basically teach to test thereby ignoring the necessary strategies that promote critical thinking skills.

On the second research question which sought to investigate how secondary school Social Studies teachers integrate critical thinking in their teaching the study established during the face to face interviews with the teachers that all the analysed documents had well - planned strategies for promoting critical thinking skills by involving the learners in their classroom lessons. From classroom observations, the second research question sought to identify the kinds of teaching and learning strategies that teachers in CDSS use to promote critical thinking skills in Social Studies. The study established that the schools lacked adequate teaching and learning resources necessary to promote critical thinking skills by allowing learners' participation in the lessons. Most of the schools did not have adequate textbooks that they could give the students to use in the groups. This negatively affected the delivery of the lessons as students had nothing to refer to during their discussions. The other problems were large class sizes and inadequate in-service trainings at secondary school level. These problems negatively affected the promotion of critical thinking skills because the teachers faced challenges in effectively engaging all the learners in the classrooms. It is therefore worthy to identify human resources who will be assigned with the task of organising and conducting trainings aimed at equipping teachers with the necessary skills of promoting critical thinking skills.

The third research question was intended to find out the challenges secondary school teachers of Social Studies face when using the teaching strategies that promote critical thinking skills. From the findings the study concluded that teachers did not adequately organise their strategies that could enhance learners' participation and promote critical

thinking skills due to a number of challenges which negatively affected the delivery of their lessons. The challenges that they encountered include, but not limited to; knowledge on classroom management, lack of in-service training by the schools, and large numbers of students in the classrooms. The study established that teachers faced challenges in managing their classes. Teachers did not make any meaningful attempt to involve learners in their lessons which resulted into not many learners participating in the lessons and failure to promote critical thinking skills. The schools had high number of students in the classes which made it difficult for all the learners to participate in the lessons. The implication of all this is that, if there were frequent in-service training to equip teachers on how best to handle large classes and balance up the student-teacher ratio, critical thinking skills could be adequately promoted by the teachers of Social Studies.

5.3. Overall implications for policy and practice of critical thinking in Social Studies

Critical thinking has been a long standing main objective of education in the Social Studies. Today, it is highlighted in many statements and publications of state education departments, local school districts, and professional associations (John, 1986). Critical thinking has not been taught satisfactorily in most Social Studies classrooms. In Malawi, the efforts to promote critical thinking skills in Social Studies will fail unless teachers know how to integrate it into teaching, are knowledgeable about the strategies that develop critical thinking, and are provided with the necessary solutions to the challenges that they face when using the teaching strategies that promote critical thinking skills. The teachers plan to integrate critical thinking into their teaching but are challenged by large class sizes, lack of in-service training and inadequate teaching and learning materials. It can therefore, be concluded that if solutions could be provided to these challenges,

teachers can effectively implement what is expected of them when it comes to the promotion of critical thinking skills in learners through Social Studies.

According to John David (2022) all students, regardless of social class or presumed limitations in ambition or ability, have to some extent the potential to think critically. The teachers in the CDSSs have the ability to develop critical thinking skills in the students but are negatively affected by the numerous challenges that they face in their day to day lessons. The teachers switch to teacher-centred strategies that do not promote critical thinking skills in learners in the midst of their lessons because learner - centred strategies require that they have all the required and necessary teaching and learning materials. Students' capabilities to think critically are most likely to be increased if teachers embed critical thinking in their daily lessons in Social Studies, and are equipped with the necessary means of dealing with the challenges that impede the promotion of critical thinking in their lessons.

5.4 Suggested areas for further study

The study explored the teachers' use of the strategies that promote critical thinking skills in Social Studies in five community day secondary schools in Nkhotakota District in Central East Education Division. Considering the findings of this study, further study can be done to explore the effect of technology on the promotion of critical thinking skills in Social Studies because technology plays a greater role in the promotion of education in schools. Another study can be conducted on how to motivate Community Day Secondary School teachers to use participatory learning in promoting critical thinking skills despite facing various challenges because outcome-based education emphasises on the promotion of critical thinking skills.

5.5 Chapter summary

This chapter has presented and summarised the findings of the study based on the research questions.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: LETTER OF PERMISSION FROM CENTRAL EAST EDUCATION DIVISION (CEED)



Tel (265) 01253611/412 - 01253612
Fax(265)01253227

CENTRAL EAST EDUCATION
DIVISION, PRIVATE BAG 233,
KASUNGU

Correspondence to be addressed to
The Education Division Manager

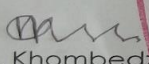
Luke Kaunga Nyirenda,
Nkhotakota Secondary School,
P/Bag 14,
Lilongwe.

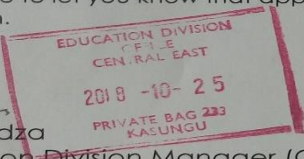
Date 25th October, 2018.

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Reference is made to your letter dated 24th October, 2018 in which you requested to conduct research in five Government secondary schools in Nkhotakota District.

I hereby write to let you know that approval has been granted to you to proceed with the research.


H. Khombedza
for: Education Division Manager (CEED)



APPENDIX 2: LETTER OF INTRODUCTION FROM CHANCELLOR COLLEGE



Principal: Richard Tambulasi,
BA, (Pub Admin), PBA (Hons), MPA, Ph.D
Your Ref.:
16th October, 2018

P. O. Box 280, Zomba, MALAWI
Tel: (265) 01 524 222
Email: cats@cc.ac.mw
achauma@cc.ac.mw

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION CURRICULUM AND TEACHING STUDIES DEPARTMENT TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Dear Sir,

Letter of Introduction for Mr Luke Kaunga Nyirenda

I write to introduce **Mr Luke Kaunga Nyirenda** as a Master of Education candidate at the University of Malawi's Chancellor College. He is in his research year of studies where he is supposed to conduct research and submit a thesis in fulfillment of the Master of Education in Curriculum and Teaching studies (Social Studies Education) degree requirements. I would like to request for your favour in granting him permission to conduct the study.

I look forward to your usual assistance.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "AM Chauma".

AM Chauma, PhD.

HOD, Curriculum and Teaching Studies



APPENDIX 3: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

24th October, 2018

FROM: Luke Kaunga Nyirenda, Nkhotakota Secondary School, Private Bag 14, Nkhotakota.

TO : The District Education Manager, Nkhotakota District Education Office, P.O. Box 20, Nkhotakota.

THR : The Head teacher, Nkhotakota Secondary School, Private Bag 14, Nkhotakota.

Dear Sir,

RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

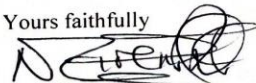
I would like to request for permission to conduct research in the schools in Nkhotakota district. I am Luke Kaunga Nyirenda, a Master of Education in Curriculum and Teaching studies (Social Studies Education) student at the University of Malawi, Chancellor College. I would like to conduct a research on how teachers use the strategies for promoting critical thinking skills in their learners.

The research will be conducted in four government secondary schools in Nkhotakota district and will generate data through face-to-face interviews, classroom observations and document analysis. The research will require one social studies (humanities) teacher from each school. The teacher will be observed, interviewed and have his or her schemes and records of work, lesson plan or lesson notes and syllabus analysed. Participation in this study will be voluntary and the contributions made by participants will be kept confidential and anonymous. The face-to-face interviews will take a maximum of 30 minutes each.

For more information refer to the attached letter of introduction from Chancellor College.

Looking forward to your usual assistance.

Yours faithfully



Luke Kaunga Nyirenda

It has been approved to conduct research in your institution. Please advise the District Education Manager accordingly.

NKHOTAKOTA DISTRICT EDUCATION OFFICE
26 OCT 2018
DISTRICT EDUCATION MANAGER
P.O. BOX 20, NKHOTAKOTA
24 OCT 2018
PRIVATE BAG 14, NKHOTAKOTA

Ag. DC/
for will be great
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APPENDIX 4: CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY

Dear Participant,

I hereby write seek your consent to participate in my study. I am Luke Kaunga Nyirenda, a student at the University of Malawi, Chancellor College. I am conducting a Qualitative research on **Exploring how secondary school teachers use the strategies that promote critical thinking skills in Social Studies**. The purpose of this study is to explore the teachers' use of the strategies that promote critical thinking skills in Social Studies. Your participation will be highly appreciated and will involve interviews which will be phone recorded for later analysis. After the interviews, I will also request you to allow me to have an opportunity of observing your lesson. In addition to that, may I also request you to allow me to go through some of your teaching documents such as lesson plans and schemes of work. The generated data will solely be limited to the use of this study. I will ensure that your confidentiality is maintained by not citing your actual name within the study. May I also take this opportunity to inform you that participation in this study is voluntary. You may choose to withdraw from the study at any time, and that any data generated from you will not be used in the study. Please write your signature below, if you have read and fully understood the contents of this letter.

Participant's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Researcher's Signature: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX 5: RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND INTERVIEW GUIDE FORM

RESEARCH QUESTIONS	INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
What instructional strategies, in-class activities and assignments do secondary school Social Studies teachers consider in order to develop critical thinking skills in the students?	1. What do you understand by strategies for promoting critical thinking skills in Social Studies? 2. How do you plan for the integration of critical thinking into your lessons? 3. Has the Ministry of Education or the schools conducted any professional development activity to improve the knowledge and skills of promoting critical thinking skills in Social Studies? If yes, how beneficial have the programmes been to you?
How do secondary school Social Studies teachers integrate critical thinking into teaching?	1. How do you integrate critical thinking into your lessons? 2. How do you make sure that all students participate in your lessons?

What challenges do secondary school Social Studies teachers face when using the strategies that promote critical thinking skills in Social Studies?	1. What kinds of learning strategies or techniques were covered in your teacher preparation programs? 2. Which strategies do you use to promote critical thinking skills in the learners? 3. Which strategy or technique do you use frequently? 4. What measures do you take into account when planning your lessons? 5. What kind of learning and teaching materials do you use in your class? 6. What kinds of lesson activities do you implement in your class to enhance students' participation in promoting critical thinking skills in Social Studies? 7. Based on your experience, what is your understanding of the relationship between student classroom participation and
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	promotion of critical thinking skills in Social Studies? 8. What are your suggestions on how best the strategies should be used to promote critical thinking skills in Social Studies? 9. Do you face any challenges when integrating learning strategies and critical thinking skills in your lessons? 10. What do you do to overcome the challenges?
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APPENDIX 6: DOCUMENT ANALYSIS TEMPLATE

Name of Document	Data to be analysed	Remarks
Lesson plans/lesson notes	Availability of teaching and learning methods that promote critical thinking skills. E.g. Question and Answer, Pair/Group work, Debates, Role playing, and many more. Learners' activities and teacher's activities.	
Schemes and records of work	Planned activities for the lesson, and strategies used in lessons for promoting critical thinking skills	

APPENDIX 7: AN OBSERVATION TEMPLATE

Teacher's name	Area of observation	Activities to be observed	Remarks
3	1. Introduction	▪ The purpose of the lesson was clearly stated. ▪ Teacher asked questions in the introduction to build a good rapport with the learners. ▪ Students ably and actively answered some of the questions.	
	2. Probing questions	▪ Tried to engage learners ▪ Learners were put in groups to discuss but there was too much in	

		the groups ▪ Lack of tolerance in the groups ▪ Time run out before they could even present their findings	
	3. Classroom environment	▪ Teacher's control over the learners ▪ Is there organisation in the classroom? ▪ Do the students exercise tolerance	
	4. Students' participation	▪ Very few students participated in the discussions e.g. some discussed non-school issues ▪ Overcrowding in the	

		classroom ▪ Teacher struggled to supervise the discussions	
	5. Teacher's flexibility when interacting with learners	▪ Demonstrated flexibility when interacting with learners ▪ Lacked classroom management skills	
	6. Promotion of critical thinking skills in the lesson	▪ Tried to involve learners but reverted to teacher-centred strategy due to overcrowding in the classroom ▪ Shortage of teaching and learning materials.	