

# Reflective Teaching Methods on Learners' Academic Performance in Social Studies: A Case of Selected Junior Secondary Schools in Lusaka District, Zambia

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**Abstract:** Science had numerous applications in the Zambian industries and the world at large and contributes greatly to the economic growth of any country. However, learner's performance in science has been poor at all levels as per report from the Examination Council of Zambia, several factors have adduced to be responsible for this trend. These include the quality and effectiveness of instructional delivery and strategic used in teaching the subject. Therefore, the purpose of the study was to assess the effects of reflective teaching Methods learners' academic performance in science in selected junior secondary schools in Lusaka district, Zambia. The study adopted a mixed methods approach which is a combination of quantitative and qualitative data. A total of 360 participants which comprised of 300 social studies learners and 60 teachers of social studies from 10 junior secondary schools in Lusaka district in Zambia. The respondents were obtained through purposive and simple random sampling. Data was collected using semi-structured interviews and questionnaires. Thematic analysis was used to analyze qualitative data and quantitative data using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (version 26) and Microsoft Excel (version 16). The study revealed that using Reflective Teaching Method had a positive effect on learners' academic performance in social studies. It had also been revealed that pedagogical methods used in Reflective Teaching Method included; learner centred method, teacher exposition method, co-inquiry methodology, discussion method, experimental methodology, research-based methodology, co-operative/collaborative learning, and problem-based learning. Results also showed that skills imparted in the learners through Reflective Teaching Method included; innovative skills, hands on learning/practical skills, research skills, communication skills, co-existence skills, time management skills, problem solving skills, critical thinking skills, and creativity skills. Moreover, in order to promote Reflective Teaching Methods in social studies, the study recommended that the Ministry of Education should enhance capacity building for concerned teachers through seminars, workshops and sending them out for further studies.

**Keywords:** Academic Performance, Learners, Reflective Teaching Methods, Social Studies and Teaching.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Social Studies is an important subject taught in junior secondary schools around the world Lyanda et al (2017). It is designed to provide students with a broad understanding of various social, cultural, economic, and political aspects of society. The specific content and curriculum can vary from one region or country to another, but generally, (Kumaravadivelu, 2014) Social Studies in junior secondary schools covers the following topics;

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**Civics and Government:** This includes the study of political systems, the structure of government, and the rights and responsibilities of citizens. Students learn about the functioning of their own government and often compare it to other systems around the world. **Geography:** This involves the study of the Earth's physical features, such as landforms, climate, and natural resources. It also covers topics like maps, globalization, and the impact of human activities on the environment. **History:** Students learn about historical events, important figures, and significant time periods. This may include local, national, and world history, with an emphasis on understanding how past events have shaped the present. **Culture and Society:** This aspect of Social Studies delves into cultural diversity, traditions, and societal norms. It may include topics like religion, language, art, music, and social customs. **Global Issues:** Social Studies often covers contemporary global issues such as human rights, environmental sustainability, migration, and global conflicts. These topics help students develop a sense of global citizenship and awareness. **Current Events:** Social Studies classes may incorporate discussions of current events and their relevance to the subject matter being studied. This helps students connect classroom learning to real-world situations. **Critical Thinking and Research Skills:** Social Studies also aims to enhance critical thinking, research, and analytical skills. Students are encouraged to ask questions, investigate issues, and form informed opinions. This is supported by Noormohammadi (2014) who says that social studies was designed to help students become informed, engaged, and responsible citizens who understand the complexities of the world around them and can actively participate in society.

Social studies had numerous applications in the Zambian industries and the world at large and contributes greatly to the economic growth of any country. Countries that had developed significantly are those that had invested immensely in the teaching of Social studies, English and Mathematics (Westerman, 2018). This therefore implies that this subject must fully be understood by learners if its application could be realized in areas where it is needed most (Maslach, Schaufeli & Leiter, 2015). Sadly, however, Social studies subjects had been looked at to be difficult subjects especially Geography and Civics related topics, therefore having few learners developing interest in them. At both Junior and Senior level learners generally tend to find problematic (Huddle & Pillay, 2015). Learners that progress with the learning of social studies at senior level lack conceptual understanding of social studies and as such, generally they perform poorly at senior level despite the fact that these topics are also tackled in the junior secondary school curriculum. The performance of learners at grade 9 and 12 in school leaving examinations in sciences had been below average over the years. As evidenced by Examinations council of Zambia (ECZ), Examination Performance Reports (EPR)<sup>1</sup> of 2018, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017 analysis reports respectively, as well as ECZ reports analysis in social studies at grade 12, an indication that the challenges learners face at Junior level also pervade through to senior level.

Social studies as a subject is deemed difficult to teach and to learn because it consists of unfamiliar concepts involving complex relations and its highly conceptual nature makes it particularly difficult for learners to understand (Littlewood, 2017). Further, according to Alrababi (2014), he attributes these challenges to continuous use of the algorithmic approach by most social science educators where learners are expected to perform and master skills of solving certain societal problems in an attempt to teach the subject. Frequently such learners obtain correct answers (Goldstein, 2017).

However, Goldstein warns that correct answers do not necessarily mean that learners understand the concept. Ibid (2017) further indicates that algorithmic approach should be used consciously by ensuring that learners understand the underlying concepts before introducing the formula. Little, (2018) says that some teachers argue that using algorithmic approach leads eventually to understanding the concept but many learners do not reach that point. It is therefore important to address this challenge by exploring suitable teaching strategies so as to ameliorate this status quo and ensure that the teaching of social studies becomes easy by cultivating interest and joy in the learning of the subject. All these arise because of the abstract way in which the topic is presented. Thus, conceptual understanding of social studies by learners both at junior level and senior level can only be realized if educators are able to blend their content knowledge with instructional strategies to an understanding of how various topics should be presented to the diverse ability of learners for teaching and learning processes to be meaningful (Shulman, & Colbert 2018).

From several findings obtained from previous studies cited in this paper, it is evident that a lot of effort had been expended much on establishing the challenges that learners and educators encounter respectively in the learning and teaching of social studies. Frantic efforts however, had not been given to identify an appropriate teaching strategy or strategies that would

make the teaching of this topic meaningful so as to bring about proficiency (Lai & Hu, 2015). It is therefore the teacher's responsibility to identify a suitable teaching methods which would impact positively in learners' conceptual understanding of the subject. It was against this back ground that the researchers sought to evaluate the effects of reflective teaching on the academic performance of learners at in social studies at the selected junior secondary schools in Lusaka district, Zambia.

### 1.1. Statement of the Problem

Pupil's poor performance in social studies had been an issue attracting the attention of researchers and social science educators. Several factors had been adduced to be responsible for this trend. These included the quality and effectiveness of instructional delivery and strategy used in teaching the subject which did not make a good level of achievement on the part of the students. Many teachers teach in self-isolation from their colleagues (Kramsch, 2015). As a result, the teacher needs to be reflective and subject their teaching to critical analysis, allowed their colleague watch over them. Previous researchers had focused on various strategies such as Reform-Based Instruction, Self-regulation Strategy Collaborative Learning, and Hands-on activities as means of improving pupils' achievement in Science. However, all these laudable methods do not bring about desirable results (Yendol-Silva, 2013). Hence, continued poor performance in the subject at both junior and senior level in reference to examination performance report from Examination Council of Zambia (ECZ). There is a need to explore other means of improving the mode of instructional delivery to improve effectiveness of teacher and pupils' achievement in social studies.

### 1.2. The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to evaluate the effects of Reflective Teaching Method on learners' academic performance in social studies in selected Junior Secondary Schools in Lusaka district, Zambia.

### 1.3. Research Objectives

The objectives of the study were to:

- Evaluate the effects of Reflective Teaching Method on learners' academic performance in Social studies in selected Junior Secondary Schools of Lusaka district, Zambia.
- Establish the pedagogical methods used in Reflective Teaching Method in Social studies in selected Junior Secondary Schools of Lusaka district, Zambia.

### 1.4. Theoretical Framework

While teachers and learners cannot change the past, they can affect the future (Dewey, 2016). This comes through extensive thought and analysis of their teaching practices, and this process of reflective practice is grounded in theories of reflection and thinking. Specifically, the theories of John Dewey and L.S. Vygotsky provide a strong theoretical framework for the study of teacher and learner reflection. Dewey's ideas about reflection provide information about why it is important for teachers to reflect, while Vygotsky provides a framework for how teachers should reflect.

#### Dewey's Theory on Experience and Reflective Thought and Action

John Dewey (2015) argued that: 'We do not learn from experience. We learn from reflecting on experience'. He defined reflective thought as an "active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and further conclusions to which it tends". To him, reflection is deliberate thoughtfulness about teaching beliefs and practices. Dewey believed that it was very important for teachers to participate in reflective practice and that this activity is complex, rigorous, intellectual, and emotional, and took time for teachers to do well (Rodgers, 2016). According to Dewey, reflection mirrors the scientific process. Reflectors must first participate in an experience that causes them to interpret it and think about it beyond its end. They then define the problem and identify questions that have arisen from the experience. Next they must participate in a means/ends analysis where explanations and further questions are explored. Finally, they generalize their conclusions, create hypotheses, and test them out (Dewey, 2016; 2015 in Rodgers, 2016).

### Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory

Even though Dewey talked about the importance of the social interaction for reflection, from a Vygotskian perspective, social interaction is inseparable from reflection since for Vygotsky all new learning starts on the interpersonal level (2016). Vygotsky argued that people develop within their social world and stressed the importance of peer interactions in fostering higher levels of cognitive and social development. This social world is comprised of relationships and interactions where learners collaborate towards shared goals. It offers an open area of communication that gives them the opportunity to express and negotiate their ideas (Rogoff, 2018). Viewing preservice teachers as adult learner's links well with Vygotsky's sociocultural theory. His theory also provides us with information about how teachers reflect, benefits of reflection, skills imparted when using reflection practice, and what reflective practice should look like. In reflective processes that are informed by Vygotsky's theory of learning and development, teachers are continually learning. Vygotsky believed that learners reconstruct their understanding of the world in a social manner through collaborative processes with their peers. He attributed the benefits of collaboration to the mutual involvement by the learners, the equality of the relationship between them when in a collective group, and the motivation by them to collaborate based on their shared understandings (Tudge, 2018). In particular, when learners of mixed knowledge levels interact in collaboration, they are able to communicate on a level that they are able to understand and share with each other. This collaborative relationship is what is needed for preservice and student teacher discussion groups in teacher education programs. These programs must create environments that promote growth for their preservice teachers. These environments will allow people to discover not only how to do something, but that they can actually do it, through discussion and collaboration with their peers. These are environments where learning leads development, which is a relationship that Vygotsky described when discussing what happens in the zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 2016).

#### 1.5. Significance of the Study

In an era where reflection in teacher education is regarded as an effective approach to teacher education in general and science in particular, this study provides a closer and comprehensive analysis on the phenomenon of reflection in social studies in selected Junior Secondary Schools. Within this process, it places primary importance on the understanding of the effects of reflective practicum process from both the learners and teachers' perspectives, by inquiring their perceptions and interests during a reflective practicum process. This would provide alternative lenses to the viewpoints of researchers, teacher educators, and of experienced teachers. Consequently, it would enrich our understanding of the phenomenon of reflection and of the reflective process as a whole. In addition, this study conducted a detailed analysis on the pedagogical methods used in Reflective Teaching Method in social studies in selected junior secondary schools and developmental process of teachers' reflective thinking. Within this process, it sheds light upon how various methods, such as journals, reflective interviews, seminars, problem solving processes, team work, collaboration, innovation, and self-observation and self-analysis contribute to the developmental process. In addition, it elaborated upon the benefits of Reflective Teaching Method in social studies in selected junior secondary schools by considering their reflectivity developmental processes in the practicum process. In relation to these, the findings of this study would allow course instructors and curriculum designers in teacher education to design courses and programs accordingly, and to assist the learners acquire good results in the subject and social science teachers to get a good start in their practice.

## 2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 2.1. Study Design

The study adopted a mixed methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative data. Exploratory and descriptive designs were as well considered appropriate as they also allowed for more flexible strategies of data collection in order to answer the research questions. The study incorporated both qualitative and quantitative aspects of research. The study was aimed at collecting information from respondents on the effects of Reflective Teaching Method on learners' academic performance in social studies in selected Junior Secondary Schools in Lusaka district, Zambia.

### 2.2. Research Site

The research was conducted in in Lusaka district of in Zambia at some selected junior secondary schools from which respondents were also sampled.

### 2.3. Population, Sample and Sampling Procedure

The population for the study comprised of social sciences teachers and learners of social studies at the selected junior secondary schools. The target population was 3600. The sample size involved a total of 360 respondents which included three-hundred (300) learners of social studies, thirty from each selected school. Sixty (60) teachers of social studies, six from each selected school. The study employed both purposive and simple random sampling on different participants. Simple random sampling was used on the learners, this is because there were too many to participate, hence simple random selection of was preferred. On the other hand, purposive sampling was used on the teachers for convenient purposes.

### 2.4. Data Analysis

Qualitative data from in-depth interview were analyzed by using thematic data analysis. Data were organized, categorized, and coded. The themes were identified and interpreted to obtain the meaning. Visual presentation was made by using tables to illustrate the emerging contents from the interviewed participants. Data obtained from the administration of the questionnaire were analyzed by using Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS) version 26 to compute measures of central tendencies such as mean and standard deviations.

### 2.5. Ethical Issues

Permission from DEBS office for Lusaka district was sought in carrying out this study and the researchers avoided pressuring respondents to take part in the research. Additionally, the researchers ensured that respondents participated on the basis of informed consent. The principle of informed consent required the researcher to provide sufficient information and assurances about taking part to allowed individuals to understand the implications of participation and to reach a fully informed, considered and freely given decision about whether or not to do so, without the exercise of pressure or coercion. The use of offensive, discriminatory, or other unacceptable language was avoided in the formulation of Questionnaire and Interview guides. Privacy and anonymity of respondents was of a paramount importance. Acknowledgement of works of other authors used in any part of the study was noted.

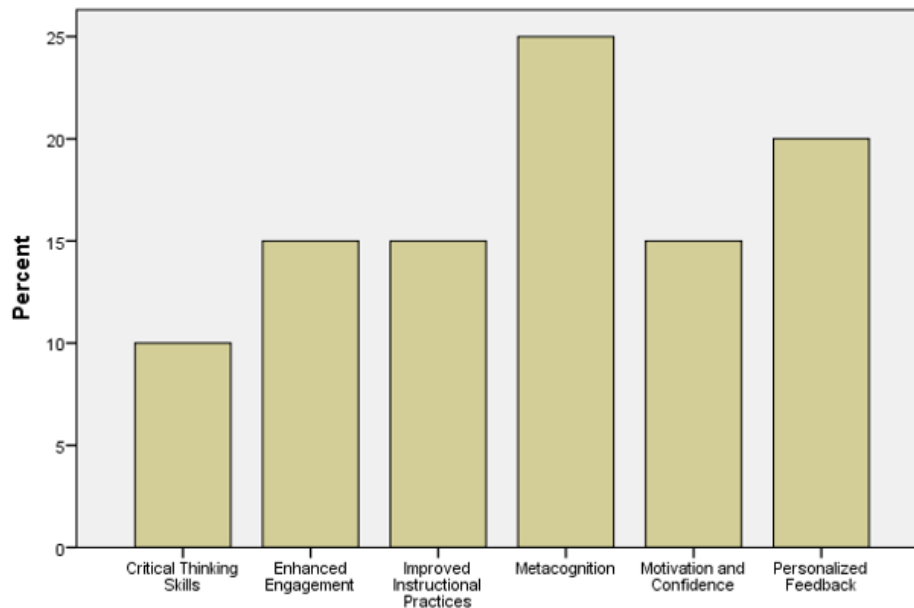
## 3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The following findings and discussions were presented according to set research objectives:

### 3.1. Teachers' Responses on The Effects of Reflective Teaching Method on Learners' Academic Performance in Social studies

Figure 1 below presented the respondents' responses on the effects of Reflective Teaching Methods on learners' academic performance in social studies in selected Junior Secondary Schools in Lusaka district. 25% baring the highest percentage response looked at Metacognition as a major effect to RTM in social studies. Respondents noted that reflective teaching can also help learners develop metacognitive skills, which involve understanding their own learning processes and strategies. When learners are encouraged to reflect on their own learning experiences, they can become more self-aware learners, which can improve their academic performance (Wallace, 2015). Also, the respondents mentioned that Reflective teaching often involves assessing student progress and performance. Teachers can provide more personalized feedback (20%) to learners, helping them understand their strengths and areas for improvement. This feedback can be invaluable in guiding learners toward academic success. Moving on, enhanced engagement was presented by (15%) response given. Respondents observed that when teachers reflect on their teaching, they often consider how to make their lessons more engaging and interactive. This can involve incorporating real-world examples, multimedia resources, or hands-on activities into the social studies curriculum (Wheelock, 2017). Increased engagement can lead to better retention of information and improved academic performance. Respondents further stated that when teachers show a commitment to self-improvement through reflection, it can inspire learners to take their studies more seriously. Additionally, providing constructive feedback and creating a positive classroom environment can boost students' confidence and motivation (15%) to excel in social studies. The study also discovered that reflective teaching methods encourage students to think critically and analyze the subject matter from various perspectives. By engaging in discussions and activities that promote critical thinking (10%), learners can develop stronger analytical skills, which are essential for success in social studies.

**Effects of Reflective Teaching Method on Learners' Academic Performance in Social studies**



**Figure 1: Effects of Reflective Teaching Method on Learners' Academic Performance in Social studies**

### 3.2. Pedagogical Methods used in Reflective Teaching Method in Social Studies

The second objective of the study sought to establish pedagogical methods used in Reflective Teaching Method in science. This was rated with a degree of agreement or disagreements i.e., strongly agree (SA), Agree (A), Neither (N), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SDA)

#### 3.2.1. Ask Peers to Review their Work

**Table 1: Ask Peers to Review their Work**

		Frequency	Percentage
<b>Valid</b>	Agree	106	29
	Strongly agree	150	42
	Neutral	16	4
	Disagree	29	8
	Strongly disagree	30	8
	<b>Total</b>	<b>360</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Results from the table (1) above showed that 29% (n=106) of respondents agreed that asking peers to review their work is one of the pedagogical methods used in Reflective Teaching Method in social studies, 42% (n=150) respondents strongly agreed that asking peers to review their work is one of the pedagogical methods used in Reflective Teaching Method in social studies, 4% (n=16) of respondents were not sure if asking peers to review their work is one of the pedagogical methods used in Reflective Teaching Method in social studies or not, 8% (n=29) disagreed that asking peers to review their work is not one of the pedagogical methods used in Reflective Teaching Method in social studies, and 8% (n=30) strongly disagreed that asking peers to review their work is not one of the pedagogical methods used in Reflective Teaching Method in social studies. Data indicated that asking peers to review their work was used as a pedagogical method in Reflective Teaching Methods Lusaka district.

#### 3.2.2. Work with a Mentor

The study sought to find out if working with a mentor was used as a pedagogical method in Reflective Teaching Method in social studies and the findings were as shown in the figure below (Figure 2).

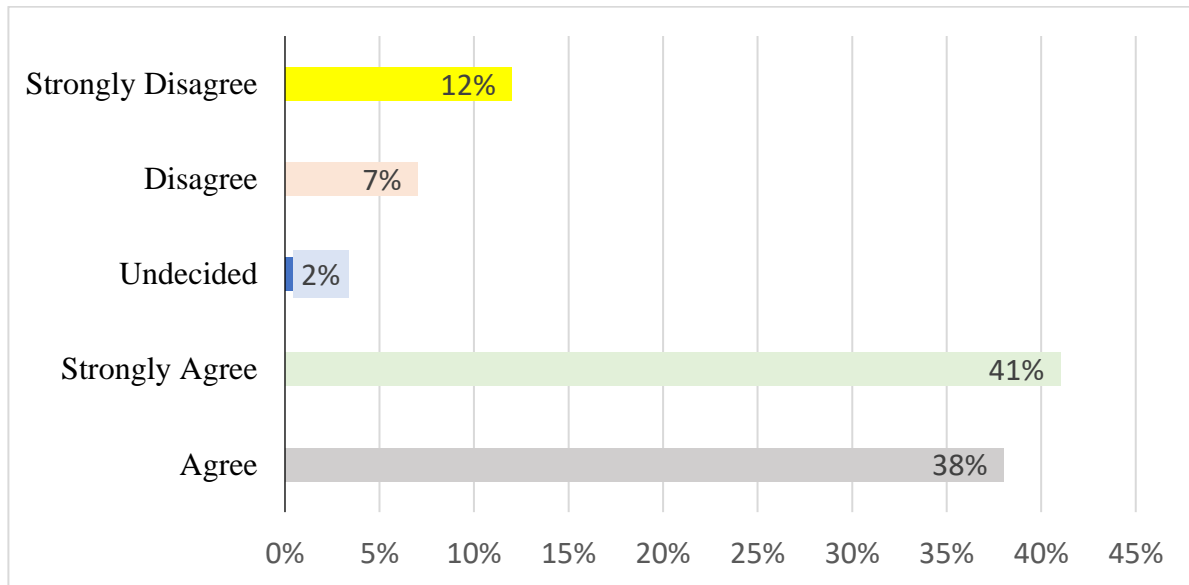


Figure 2: Work with a Mentor

Results from Figure 2 above showed that 38% of respondents agreed that working with a mentor was used as a pedagogical method in Reflective Teaching Method in social studies, 41% respondents strongly agreed that working with a mentor was used as a pedagogical method in Reflective Teaching Method in social studies, 2% of respondents were not sure if working with a mentor was used as a pedagogical method in Reflective Teaching Method in social studies or not, 7% disagreed that working with a mentor was used as a pedagogical method in reflective teaching, and 12% strongly disagreed that working with a mentor was used as a pedagogical method in reflective teaching. Hence, data indicated that working with a mentor was used as a pedagogical method in Reflective Teaching Method in social studies Lusaka district.

**3.2.3. Exposition Method**

Additionally, the study further sought to find out if exposition method was used as a pedagogical method in Reflective Teaching Method in social studies and the findings were as shown in figure 3 below;

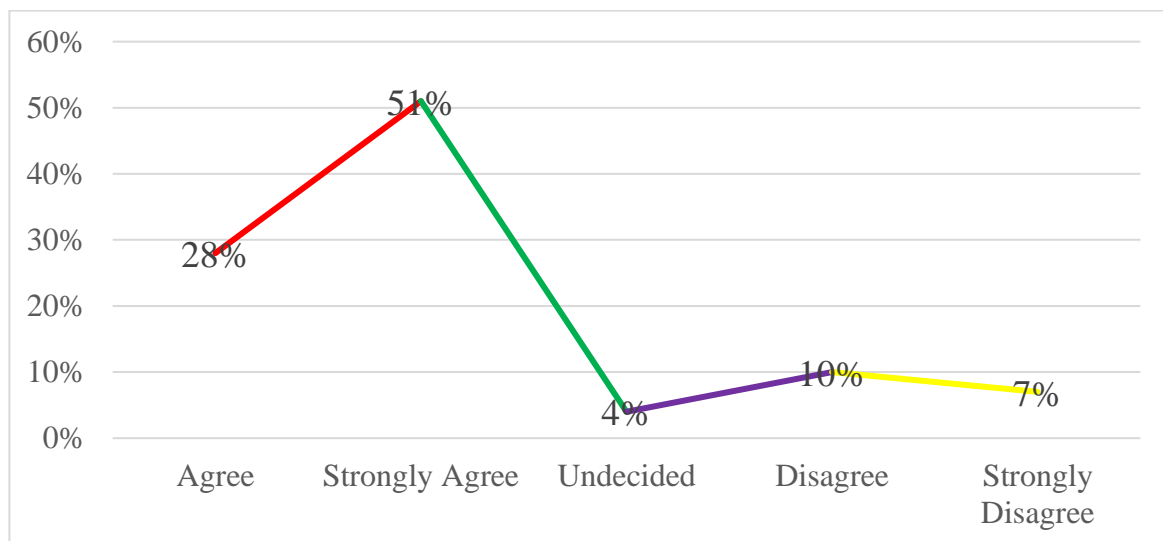


Figure 3: Exposition Method

Results from figure 3 showed that 28% of respondents agreed that exposition method was used as a pedagogical method in Reflective Teaching Method in social studies, 51% respondents strongly agreed that exposition method was used as a pedagogical method in Reflective Teaching Method in social studies, 4% of respondents were not sure if exposition method

was used as a pedagogical method in Reflective Teaching Method in social studies or not, 10% disagreed that exposition method was used as a pedagogical method in reflective teaching, and 7% strongly disagreed that exposition method was used as a pedagogical method in Reflective Teaching Method in social studies. Data indicated that exposition method was used as a pedagogical method in Reflective Teaching Method in social studies Lusaka district.

**3.2.4. Learner Centered Method**

Besides, the study also sought to find out if learner centered method was used as a pedagogical method in Reflective Teaching Method in social studies. The findings were presented in the table below (Table 2);

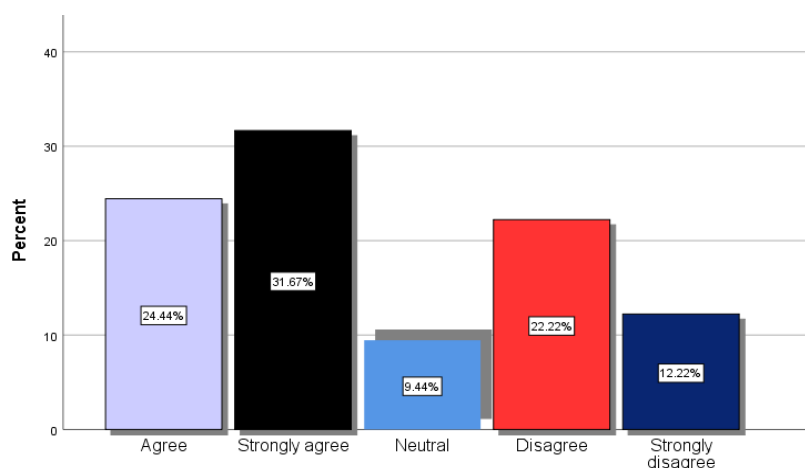
**Table 2: Learner Centered Method**

	Percentage of respondents (n=360)
Agree	17
Strongly Agree	59
Undecided	11
Disagree	3
Strongly Disagree	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>

Results from table 2 showed that 17% of respondents agreed that learner centered method was used as a pedagogical method in Reflective Teaching Method in social studies, 59% respondents strongly agreed that learner centered method was used as a pedagogical method in Reflective Teaching Method in social studies, 11% of respondents were not sure if learner centered method was used as a pedagogical method in Reflective Teaching Method in social studies or not, 3% of the respondents disagreed that learner centered method was used as a pedagogical method in Reflective Teaching Method in social studies, and 10% of the respondents strongly disagreed that learner centered method was used as a pedagogical method in Reflective Teaching Method in social studies. Therefore, data indicated that learner centered method was used as a pedagogical method in Reflective Teaching Method in social studies Lusaka district.

**3.2.5. Keep a Teaching Journal or Diary**

Results from Figure 4 showed that 24% of respondents agreed that teaching journal or diary was used as a pedagogical method in Reflective Teaching Method in social studies, 32% respondents strongly agreed that teaching journal or diary was used as a pedagogical method in Reflective Teaching Method in social studies, 9% of respondents were not sure if teaching journal or diary was used as a pedagogical method in Reflective Teaching Method in social studies or not, 22% of the respondents disagreed that teaching journal or diary was used as a pedagogical method in teaching journal or diary is used as a pedagogical method in Reflective Teaching Method in social studies, and 12% of the respondents strongly disagreed that teaching journal or diary is used as a pedagogical method in teaching journal or diary is used as a pedagogical method in Reflective Teaching Method in social studies. Therefore, results of the study revealed that teaching journal or diary was used as a pedagogical method in Reflective Teaching Method in social studies Lusaka district.

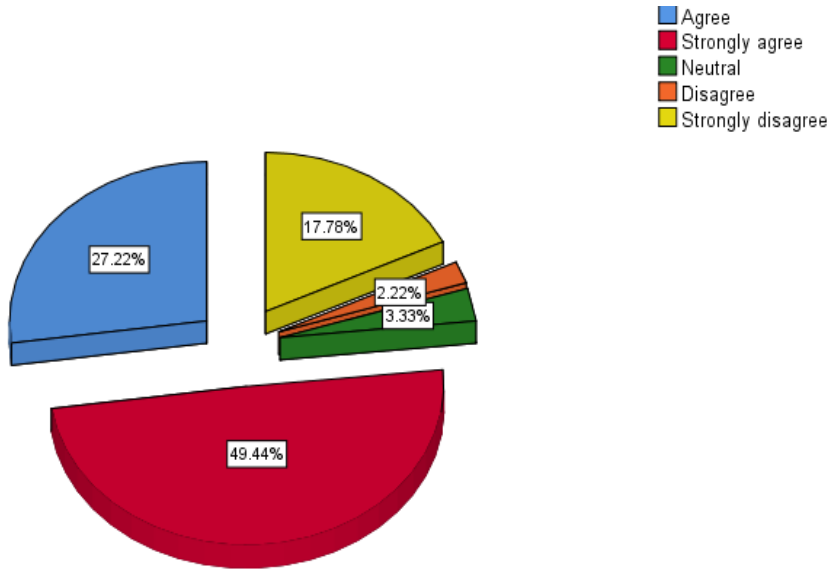


**Figure 4: Teaching as a Journal or Diary**



**3.2.6. Collaboration Method**

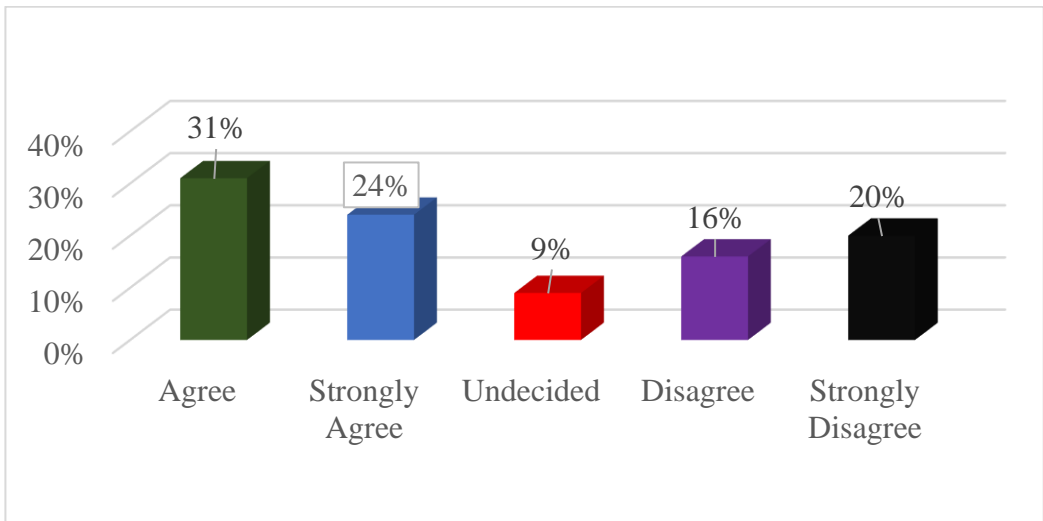
Results from figure 5 shows that 49% of respondents agreed that collaboration method was used as a pedagogical method in Reflective Teaching Method in social studies, 27% respondents strongly agreed that collaboration method was used as a pedagogical method in Reflective Teaching Method in social studies, 3% of respondents were not quite sure if collaboration method was used as a pedagogical method in in Reflective Teaching Method in science social studies or not, 2% disagreed that collaboration method was used as a pedagogical method in Reflective Teaching Method in social studies, and 18% strongly disagreed that collaboration method was used as a pedagogical method in Reflective Teaching Method in social studies. Therefore, the study found that collaboration method was used as a pedagogical method in Reflective Teaching Method in social studies in Lusaka district.



**Figure 5: Collaboration Method**

**3.2.7. Innovative Skills**

The responses indicated that the majority affirmed the statement shown by 31% (n=112) strongly agreed and 24% (n=86) agree, while 9% (n=32) neither agree nor disagree. On other hand, 16% (n=58) agreed and 20% (n=72) strongly agreed with the statement (Figure 6). According to the findings this showed that innovative skills are imparted in the learners through Reflective Teaching Method in social studies.



**Figure 6: Collaboration**

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This study was conducted to evaluate the effects of Reflective Teaching Method on learners' academic performance in social studies in selected junior secondary schools in Lusaka district, Zambia. The study findings showed and provided evidence that using Reflective Teaching Method had a positive effect on learners' academic performance in the subject matter. The results had also shown that understanding social science concepts using learners' academic performance in social studies was more effective to understand the concepts without learners' academic performance in the subject in enhancing comprehensive skills, innovative skills, self-reliant skills, manipulative skills, hands on learning/practical skills, organizational skills, paper presentation skills, research skills, technological skills, communication skills, co-existence skills, discussion skills, self-evaluation/awareness's skills, analytical skills, time management skills, problem solving skills, observation skills, critical thinking skills, and creativity skills. Regarding the benefits of Reflective Teaching Method to the learners, it had been established that Reflective Teaching Method improves their critical thinking skills, heightens their motivation in learning, boosts their overall performance, brings about learning growth in learners, enhances innovation, develops problem solving skills, develops intellectual stability, encouraged a democratic environment within the classroom, enhances the spirit of team work and leadership skills in learners, helps learners to develop analytical skills, helps learners to develop learning acquisition skills and improve knowledge acquisition, helps learners to develop metacognitive skills, makes learners to obtain a deeper understanding of a concept or a topic, stimulates the ability to remember difficult topics and formulate solutions, boosts engagement of learners in class, boosts teacher-learner relationship hence creating a good learning environment, improves overall effectiveness, helps learners to develop manipulative skills through hands on activities, helps learners to handle any examination question on a particular specific out come on every topic, and helps learners to develop the sense of responsibility in their learning.

#### 5. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are actions that should be taken on the basis of the findings of this study:



- The ministry of education should ensure that teachers are exposed to reflective teaching through workshops and seminars.
- School managers should always ensure that learners are given tasks that involve reflective activities both at school and home.
- The school managers and head of departments with the help of experts in teacher education field to perform as the mentors to the teachers in performing reflective teaching practices.
- Teachers should shift from the conventional method which is teacher-centred to innovative learners-centred like Reflective Teaching Method which allowed students to share their experiences, assess self and others and actively participate in classroom discussion.

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**Author's short biography**

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