

# Living the Curriculum: Reflections on *Historia ya Tanzania na Maadili* and the Civic Formation of Tanzanian Youth

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**Abstract:** *This paper offers initial reflections on introducing *Historia ya Tanzania na Maadili* as a core subject in secondary schools and examines its potential role in shaping young citizens. The subject combines Tanzanian history with the development of values and ethical awareness, aiming to strengthen national identity, social responsibility, and civic engagement. It reviews the curriculum's main objectives and highlights why adolescence is a critical period for integrating historical knowledge with value development. Insights from moral development, citizenship education, and history pedagogy are used to interpret how the subject might influence students' understanding of community, accountability, and nationhood. The discussion also considers challenges that could affect its implementation, such as teacher training, instructional resources, and the need for reflective rather than rote learning approaches. Although classroom evidence remains limited at this stage, the analysis suggests that *Historia ya Tanzania na Maadili* has the potential to serve as a foundation for fostering informed, engaged, and ethically aware young citizens.*

**Keywords:** curriculum, civic engagement, *historia ya Tanzania na Maadili*

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## INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, education systems worldwide have shifted from narrowly academic models towards broader curricula that include civic competence, ethical reasoning, and values education. This pedagogical shift reflects a growing consensus that schools must not only impart knowledge but also foster socially responsible, morally grounded citizens capable of contributing to democratic and inclusive societies (Wesner, Kadir, & Cushing, 2025). Within this global trend, the introduction of *Historia ya Tanzania na Maadili* as a core subject in Tanzanian secondary schools signifies a deliberate national effort to connect historical understanding with civic and moral development.

This integration draws on two longstanding educational traditions: history education as a basis for fostering national identity, collective memory, and critical thinking, and values education as a means for developing ethical sensitivity, interpersonal awareness, and civic responsibility (Wesner et al., 2025). Research indicates that adolescence is a crucial period during which individuals begin to develop their sense of justice, citizenship, and social responsibility, making it an opportune stage for curriculum interventions focused on ethical and civic development (Flanagan & Gallay, 2014; Berkowitz & Bier, 2005).

Integrating historical narratives with value-based reflection enables learners to understand the development of their nation while also exploring moral dilemmas, leadership issues, and civic duties

embedded in that history. As Boulebeda and Aichoun (2025) mention, second-generation curricula that include citizenship and ethics in subject teaching help young people interpret their societal roles more critically and actively. These methods align with UNESCO's global education frameworks, which support global citizenship education and education for sustainable development (UNESCO, 2015).

However, the successful implementation of such a values-driven subject heavily relies on pedagogical practice. Evidence indicates that student outcomes in moral and civic education are markedly improved through interactive, inquiry-based methods rather than didactic or rote approaches (Monte-Sano, 2008; Halstead & Taylor, 2000). Teachers need to be prepared not only with content knowledge but also in facilitating sensitive, values-based discussions, and curricula should offer opportunities for reflection, debate, and ethical reasoning (Gürhan, 2025; Pflieger, 2025).

This paper offers a critical analysis of *Historia ya Tanzania na Maadili* in light of these considerations. Drawing on insights from citizenship education, history pedagogy, and adolescent moral development, it examines the theoretical foundation of the subject and reflects on early implementation challenges. Although empirical classroom evidence remains limited, the analysis indicates that this curriculum innovation has significant potential to cultivate ethically grounded, historically informed citizens capable of addressing Tanzania's changing social realities.

## DISCUSSION

### **Framing the Innovation: Inside the *Historia ya Tanzania na Maadili* Syllabus**

The introduction of *Historia ya Tanzania na Maadili* as a core subject in Tanzanian secondary schools signifies more than just a routine update to the curriculum it marks a shift in how educational knowledge is structured, what counts as meaningful learning, and how the state envisions the civic character of future generations. Launched through the 2023 reforms by *Taasisi ya Elimu Tanzania* (TET), the subject combines national history with the explicit teaching of moral values and civic principles. Since it is compulsory across both general and vocational secondary streams (*Kidato I–IV*) and is mentioned in some pre-university courses, the syllabus demonstrates a firm commitment to education as a means of cultural continuity, nation-building, and moral development (TET, 2023).

At face value, the curriculum relies heavily on chronological historical periods from pre-colonial societies to the liberalisation era, weaving through them an evolving narrative of national identity, struggle, and resilience. But beneath the surface lies a deeper pedagogical purpose: to draw ethical lessons from history and develop a moral consciousness aligned with contemporary Tanzanian values. As such, the syllabus does not merely record the past; it aims to make it ethically instructive.

The themes outlined in the curriculum include the moral structures of pre-colonial societies, the dislocation and resistance during the colonial period (1890–1960), and the ideological foundations of post-independence Tanzania, particularly the Arusha Declaration (1967–1985) and the shift towards liberalisation in the late 20th century.<sup>2</sup> These historical frameworks are paired with an explicit call to promote virtues such as patriotism, integrity, national unity, respect for resources, and civic accountability (TET, 2023). This intentional pairing raises important questions: To what extent can a values curriculum grounded in national history avoid becoming prescriptive or politically

instrumentalised? And how can learners be encouraged to reflect critically rather than passively absorb knowledge?

These are significant concerns. As Halstead and Taylor (2000) warn, values education embedded in national narratives risks conflating ethical development with political socialisation unless there is space for dialogue, dissent, and moral reasoning. Similarly, Osler (2011) contends that while civic education aims to promote inclusion and participation, its national framing often risks excluding plural histories and contesting voices, especially those of marginalised communities or youth with transnational identities. In this context, *Historia ya Tanzania na Maadili* becomes not just a curriculum but a moral project—an effort to build a shared civic imaginary through selective storytelling and value promotion.

There is also the question of balance between historical complexity and moral clarity. History, by its nature, is interpretive and contested. Ethical narratives, on the other hand, often seek coherence and resolution. How the curriculum reconciles these tensions whether through open-ended inquiry or normative affirmation will shape not just what students know, but how they learn to judge, empathise, and belong (Lévesque, 2008; Barton & Levstik, 2004). If values are merely extracted from history like moral footnotes, the approach risks superficiality. But if ethical reasoning is developed through critical engagement with historical dilemmas, contradictions, and human choices, then the subject could cultivate precisely the civic capabilities it aspires to.

Comparative cases offer instructive parallels. In South Africa, for instance, the Life Orientation curriculum was designed to blend personal, social, and civic education after apartheid, but faced critiques for lacking substantive engagement with historical injustices (Chisholm, 2005). Ghana's Moral and Religious Education similarly attempts to infuse ethics into schooling but has struggled to distinguish between moral prescription and ethical inquiry (Anamuah-Mensah, 2004). Tanzania's model is, arguably, more integrated rooting values in national narrative rather than religious doctrine or social skills training. Yet this very integration raises the stakes: Can values grounded in history remain open to critique and reinterpretation?

Finally, the curriculum's emphasis on national cohesion and moral formation suggests an underlying theory of citizenship one that views the educated citizen not merely as a skilled worker or informed voter, but as a morally anchored participant in nationhood. This aligns with broader postcolonial curricular aims across sub-Saharan Africa, where the legacy of colonial fragmentation has prompted states to use education as a tool for ethical reconstruction and civic unity (Tikly, 2004; Tawil & Cougoureux, 2013). However, such aims must be continuously interrogated: Are learners encouraged to engage critically with the past, or to revere it? Are ethical frameworks presented as evolving or fixed?

The curriculum's emphasis on aligning historical content with ethical instruction reveals a deliberate effort to construct not only civic knowledge, but civic character. This design presupposes that national identity, moral reasoning, and historical understanding can be cultivated simultaneously through formal education a view supported by educational theorists who link curriculum to the shaping of social values and national narratives (Osler & Starkey, 2006; Kerr, 1999; Tawil & Cougoureux, 2013). Yet this integrative ambition also raises critical pedagogical and philosophical questions. Can history inevitably partial and contested serve as a stable foundation for values

education? And to what extent does embedding ethics in historical narrative promote reflective citizenship, rather than passive moral conformity? These questions are not merely academic; they strike at the heart of what *Historia ya Tanzania na Maadili* aims to achieve. To further unpack these tensions, it is necessary to consider the underlying educational rationale for combining historical study with values instruction, and why this pairing is especially resonant in contexts seeking to nurture participatory, ethically grounded citizens.

### **Becoming Citizens: Why Adolescence and the Moral Imagination**

If, as the previous section suggested, *Historia ya Tanzania na Maadili* attempts to teach students how to “read” the nation’s past ethically, the deeper question becomes: Why should history and values be taught together? Can history offer a credible foundation for moral reasoning, or does this pairing risk simplifying both history and ethics into classroom slogans?

Proponents of the integration argue that such a fusion is both timely and necessary. History, when taught critically, enables students to interpret the past not as a neutral record of events but as a space of human choices shaped by values, ideologies, and contested visions of justice (Barton & Levstik, 2004). At the same time, values education seeks to cultivate precisely the kind of ethical imagination required to evaluate those choices not only in the past but also in the present (Halstead & Taylor, 2000; Berkowitz & Bier, 2005). When these two domains converge, the curriculum moves from being content-driven to becoming conscience-driven.

Yet this integration raises difficult questions. Whose values are being taught? Whose version of history is being elevated? Scholars such as Osler and Starkey (2006) warn that civic and values education, when tightly coupled with national history, often serves to reinforce dominant political narratives under the guise of moral instruction. Indeed, a history curriculum that claims to promote unity or patriotism must contend with the inherent tensions between collective identity and critical inquiry (Banks, 2008; Osler, 2011). If students are expected to internalise “positive” values without critically engaging with historical contradictions such as colonial complicity, post-independence disillusionment, or the moral ambiguities of leadership then values risk becoming ideological tools rather than reflective outcomes.

This tension is not unique to Tanzania. In Rwanda, history education after the genocide was used to promote reconciliation, but also narrowed permissible narratives of the past in the name of social cohesion (Freedman et al., 2008). South Africa’s Life Orientation curriculum sought to rebuild civic identity but has been criticised for lacking meaningful historical engagement, resulting in what Chisholm (2005) calls “thin citizenship.” Tanzania, in contrast, places historical content at the heart of its moral project. This is both a strength and a risk. The strength lies in relevance; the risk lies in rigidity. Students must be invited not only to remember their nation’s past but to question it, contest it, and extract ethical meaning from its ambiguities.

This is where the integration becomes potentially transformative. If enacted thoughtfully, *Historia ya Tanzania na Maadili* could nurture citizens who are not only knowledgeable about their history but capable of evaluating the ethical implications of leadership decisions, civic struggles, and social transformations. As Lévesque (2008) asserts, “historical consciousness” must be paired with ethical

consciousness the ability to judge the past not from a distance, but with an understanding of its moral relevance for today.

However, this vision is contingent on pedagogy. It is one thing to design a syllabus with moral themes; it is another to teach it in ways that encourage reasoning over rote learning. A curriculum that merely prescribes values from the past may fail to prepare learners for the ethical complexity of the present. Instead, the integration of history and values must involve reflective discussions, dialogical teaching, and space for moral exploration not just memorisation of patriotic ideals. Without these conditions, the subject may reinforce civic obedience rather than civic agency (Osler, 2011; Kerr, 1999).

However, even if integration is theoretically justified and critically framed, why now? And why focus on this developmental stage of secondary education as the venue for such moral formation? Is there something uniquely powerful about adolescence that makes this subject especially urgent and relevant?

To address this, we must turn to the developmental literature on civic identity formation in adolescence, a period during which young people not only form opinions but also develop the moral frameworks through which they interpret their role in society. Understanding this developmental window is crucial to evaluating the pedagogical timing and potential impact of *Historia ya Tanzania na Maadili*.

If civic identity is, at its core, the internalised understanding of one's place, responsibility, and belonging within a wider national and moral community, then adolescence is arguably the most critical period in which this identity begins to take shape. The decision to introduce *Historia ya Tanzania na Maadili* at the secondary level is not simply a curricular adjustment but a deliberate act of pedagogical timing. It recognises that adolescence is not a neutral passage from childhood to adulthood; it is a turbulent, formative moment where ethical beliefs are tested, civic imaginations are awakened, and the foundations of lifelong identity are laid.

This understanding is firmly rooted in developmental psychology. Erikson (1968) proposed that adolescence is defined by the psychosocial conflict of "identity versus role confusion," where young people begin to wrestle with questions about who they are and what kind of society they wish to belong to. These are not abstract philosophical dilemmas. In Tanzania today, such questions are viscerally real. A Form Two student in Dodoma learning about the Arusha Declaration may be intellectually fascinated by the ideals of collective self-reliance, but emotionally and socially, that same student is growing up amid widening income inequalities, consumer culture, and a digital media environment that celebrates individual success. The contradictions between the Tanzania imagined in curriculum texts and the Tanzania experienced in everyday life create the very friction where civic reflection begins.

Adolescents in Tanzania are not passive recipients of historical narratives. They are active moral interpreters of their reality. This is why the pairing of history and values in a single subject is not only pedagogically innovative but psychologically strategic. Historical narratives particularly those involving conflict, reform, resistance, or transformation offer adolescents scenarios in which ethical reasoning can be safely and meaningfully practiced. As Kohlberg (1984) and later Nucci (2001)

show, the adolescent brain becomes increasingly capable of moral reasoning that goes beyond simple rule-following to consider justice, fairness, and the social good. However, this capacity must be nurtured. Left untapped, it can become apathy or cynicism. Directed through meaningful curricular engagement, it can become the soil in which moral courage and civic responsibility grow.

In Tanzanian classrooms, these opportunities for moral reasoning are embedded in the content itself if teaching allows for interpretation and dialogue. Consider the 1964 Union between Tanganyika and Zanzibar. For most students, this is first encountered as a historical fact. But when framed critically, the topic opens into debates about unity versus autonomy, majoritarian politics versus regional identities, and the ethics of nation-building through compromise. For students in Zanzibar, these questions may resonate even more acutely, offering a chance to explore personal and political identity through the lens of national history.

Similarly, when students study precolonial governance structures and how they were disrupted by indirect colonial rule, they are not just learning about historical transitions they are reflecting on the values embedded in those structures. What did justice mean in a Nyamwezi chiefdom? How were elders held accountable in coastal Swahili communities? How did these moral systems compare to the British model of legal authority? These are not just historical curiosities; they are entry points into a comparative ethical imagination that helps students to situate contemporary governance within a longer moral arc.

However, values education cannot be assumed to “transfer” automatically from history content. Adolescents in Tanzania, like elsewhere, are immersed in a morally pluralistic landscape. In cities such as Arusha, Iringa, and Dar es Salaam, students regularly encounter conflicting ethical demands from family norms, religious teachings, digital media, and peer culture. One student may come from a devout Muslim family that prioritises obedience and modesty, while another may be attracted to a digital influencer culture that values visibility, independence, and social ambition. For these students, values are not given; they are negotiated. The curriculum must therefore become a space for navigating rather than prescribing morality.

This is precisely why examples like Nyerere’s *ujamaa* must be taught as complex and contestable rather than mythologised. A Form Three discussion on *ujamaa* might begin with a question such as: *Was Nyerere’s moral vision more successful than his economic policies?* One student might argue that *ujamaa* failed Tanzanians materially, leading to food shortages and forced villagisation. Another might counter that, despite economic challenges, it instilled in Tanzanians a sense of communal responsibility that remains to this day. The power of this debate is not in reaching consensus, but in sharpening students’ ability to weigh moral trade-offs and recognise that civic ideals often come wrapped in ethical ambiguity.

However, this moral development can only happen if pedagogy treats students as ethical agents rather than ideological recipients. Teaching values as fixed doctrines—such as respecting others, obeying the law, and loving your country—without room for critical engagement is not only intellectually lacking; it is ethically unhelpful. Adolescents will see the contradiction between what they are told and what they observe. A teenager who has witnessed political bias or police violence will not be convinced by textbook definitions of democracy unless she is also given the tools to discuss injustice. As Flanagan and Gallay (2014) argue, civic identity is shaped not in the repetition

of values but in the negotiation of experience. If the classroom cannot hold moral tension, students will seek their questions elsewhere, often in digital spaces that may not be prepared to address them.

The emotional weight of civic identity formation must not be underestimated. Tanzanian adolescents are thinkers, yes, but they are also feelers. Their sense of justice is emotional, often rooted in personal or collective pain. A student in Mbeya whose family has been displaced for development projects may struggle to accept state narratives of progress. A girl in Singida who has experienced gender discrimination may question the moral legitimacy of certain “traditional” values. These students need more than information; they need recognition. As Layne et al. (2025) show in their research on trauma-informed civic education, adolescents develop civic resilience not by denying difficult truths, but by confronting them in supportive environments. The Tanzanian classroom, then, must be not just a place of instruction but a space of ethical acknowledgement.

The Tanzanian government's decision to introduce this subject during adolescence is, therefore, both pedagogically and politically significant. It is a recognition, whether fully articulated or not, that this is the window when young people are most open to moral inquiry, most capable of critical thought, and most ready to imagine alternative futures. But for this promise to be realised, the curriculum must do more than combine content areas. It must model a way of engaging with the world that honours doubt, dialogue, and dissent. It must position students not as inheritors of a fixed civic identity, but as co-creators of a moral community still in formation.

Still, this ideal raises practical and structural questions. What kind of teaching will bring this subject to life? Are educators equipped to facilitate reflective dialogue on difficult topics? Do classrooms have the resources, the time, and the institutional support to nurture deep moral reasoning? These are not peripheral concerns. They are central to the success or failure of *Historia ya Tanzania na Maadili* as a meaningful site of civic formation.

However, the ambition of *Historia ya Tanzania na Maadili* cannot be achieved through curriculum content alone. The classroom is not just a place for transmitting knowledge; it is a space of negotiation, where values either come to life or fail to do so depending on how they are taught. If the adolescent learner is morally prepared, the next question is: *Is the system pedagogically equipped?* The curriculum may be conceptually comprehensive, but its success ultimately depends on teachers, the quality of instructional materials, and the institutional willingness to support reflective, values-based education in practice.

### **From Vision to Practice: Challenges of Pedagogy and Implementation**

If the introduction of *Historia ya Tanzania na Maadili* at the secondary level reflects a bold curricular vision one that envisions young Tanzanians as ethically grounded and historically conscious citizens then the question of how this vision is enacted becomes crucial. A curriculum, after all, is only as effective as the classroom allows. Without the pedagogical tools, institutional support, and philosophical preparedness to bring its goals to life, even the most transformative curriculum risks becoming a hollow gesture.

One of the most urgent challenges is teacher preparedness. Studies across the African continent consistently show that educators responsible for teaching civics or values-based history often feel

under-equipped to handle the moral and political complexities these subjects require (Waghid, 2019; Msindo & Komba, 2020). In the Tanzanian context, the introduction of the 2023 curriculum reforms did not coincide with a comprehensive programme of teacher re-training or pedagogical re-alignment. Teachers, many of whom were trained under older, content-heavy models, are now expected to facilitate open-ended discussions on contested historical events, ethical dilemmas, and national values tasks that demand both confidence and conceptual agility.

This disconnect is both pedagogical and emotional. Teaching values requires ethical vulnerability; it demands that educators manage disagreement, hold tension, and accept ambiguity. In many Tanzanian classrooms, especially in rural or under-resourced schools, such a teaching approach can seem risky. A teacher asked to moderate a debate on political corruption or to entertain student critiques of post-liberalisation policies may fear being seen as subversive or disloyal. As Osler (2011) and Kiwan (2016) note, civic education in politically constrained contexts often involves hidden costs. Teachers may self-censor not due to indifference, but out of caution.

Furthermore, the structure of Tanzanian secondary education still tends to focus on exam results, memorising content, and teacher-centred methods. A curriculum that promotes enquiry, reflection, and moral reasoning clashes with the institutional pace of traditional chalk-and-talk teaching and compressed syllabi. In many schools, even well-meaning teachers are forced to rush through complex historical topics to prepare students for national assessments. There is little time to explore ethical questions like: *Was the union with Zanzibar negotiated in good faith?* or *Can tradition and human rights coexist in modern Tanzanian identity?* Yet these are exactly the sorts of questions that stimulate values education.

Instructional materials also influence what is considered possible. The current textbooks for *Historia ya Tanzania na Maadili*, although thematically integrated, often rely on declarative statements about national values rather than presenting multiple perspectives or open-ended historical cases. As a result, students are sometimes shown simplified moral lessons such as “respect the nation,” “honour leaders,” and “preserve traditions” without the critical scaffolding to explore exceptions, contradictions, or changing interpretations. This risks moralising rather than educating, and ultimately undermines the civic skills the subject aims to develop (Seixas & Morton, 2013; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004).

There is also a cultural expectation that history revolves around national pride and unity. Although this has historical justification, given Tanzania’s post-independence focus on cohesion and collective identity, it poses a challenge for any curriculum aiming to include debate, complexity, or critique. A student questioning the legacy of villagisation or the underrepresentation of Zanzibar in national memory might be seen not as engaged, but as unpatriotic. Similarly, a teacher promoting such questions may find themselves at odds with school leadership or community norms.

Yet despite these constraints, signs of potential emerge. Research indicates that when educators are trained to facilitate dialogue instead of simply delivering content, students respond with increased engagement, empathy, and critical thinking (Ndalichako & Komba, 2021). Pilot programmes in civic education across East Africa have shown that even in large classrooms, discussion-oriented methods such as case studies, historical simulations, and value-ranking exercises can foster moral reflection

without disrupting classroom order (Kumah-Abiwu & Ayee, 2023). The key is not the abandonment of structure but the deliberate use of pedagogies that respect complexity.

For example, a Form Four history class in Iringa recently used role-play to explore debates around Tanzania's liberalisation in the 1980s. Students were assigned roles as government officials, rural farmers, traders, and leaders of civil society. By adopting these perspectives, they had to confront the conflicting values of efficiency, equity, tradition, and opportunity. The activity ended not with a single correct answer, but with a roundtable discussion on what each actor gained or lost and the kind of development that is ethically sustainable. The moral lesson came not from instruction, but from immersion.

However, examples like these remain the exception, not the rule. For *Historia ya Tanzania na Maadili* to become a genuinely formative subject, teacher development must be systemic, not incidental. Professional learning communities, curriculum workshops, and reflective teaching guides are vital not only for technical preparation but also for fostering moral confidence. Teachers must be trusted as intellectuals, not just transmitters. They need safe spaces to reflect on their own values, biases, and pedagogical choices.

Furthermore, assessments should align with students' ambitions. If learners are assessed only on factual recall, the more profound aspects of civic identity, such as ethical judgement, historical empathy, and moral reasoning, will continue to be undervalued. Reforming assessments does not mean abandoning exams entirely but involves finding ways to recognise reflection, dialogue, and ethical insight. Ultimately, the challenges of implementing this subject are not unique to Tanzania. Across different contexts, values-based history education requires a shift not only in content but also in educational culture (Barton & Levstik, 2004; Banks, 2008). What makes Tanzania notable is the timing: a young population, a rich national narrative, and a new curriculum that aims to link the past with moral futures. Whether this ambition leads to democratic deepening or a missed opportunity depends on the next steps: in classrooms, in teacher colleges, and in national discussions about the kind of citizen the nation intends to develop.

### **Civic Possibilities: Youth Agency and the Promise of Engagement**

What ultimately matters in a curriculum like *Historia ya Tanzania na Maadili* is not just what students learn, but what they are empowered to do with that learning. A subject that explores national history and moral values must go beyond personal character formation to enable civic action. Young people are not passive inheritors of national ideals; they are active interpreters of what those ideals mean in an ever-changing present. Their engagement with the curriculum cannot be limited to the classroom. It must spill into public life, inform everyday decisions, and inspire participation in shaping the nation they are taught to understand.

Throughout this reflection, I have argued that adolescence offers a powerful developmental opportunity a moment when ethical reasoning and civic awareness are not only possible but also urgent. However, these cognitive and emotional potentials remain at risk of staying inactive unless they are matched by real-world opportunities for agency. Students require more than just knowledge of past struggles or abstract values; they need social permission and institutional backing to act meaningfully in their surroundings. A subject that calls for integrity, responsibility, or patriotism

must also provide learners with the confidence and the enabling conditions to practise these ideals beyond mere theory.

The Tanzanian context demands special attention here. While youth make up the majority of the population, their civic participation remains limited, often confined to formal acts like voting (for those eligible) or involvement in government-supported clubs. Nonetheless, this approach neglects the deeper civic energy shown daily by young Tanzanians, from environmental activism in Mwanza to school leadership programmes in Iringa, and Whatsapp-organised community service in Dar es Salaam. These forms of agency are not separate from civic education; they are civic education- lived and improvised in real time. The challenge is not to create youth engagement but to recognise and legitimise it within formal educational discourse.

Current research confirms that civic identity is most powerfully shaped when learners are treated as capable moral agents, not future citizens in waiting (Biesta, 2011). Tanzanian students already navigate complex social terrains balancing school demands with family responsibilities, negotiating values from home, religion, and digital spaces. When a student in Morogoro asks why corruption persists despite all the civics lessons about accountability, or when a girl in Mtwara challenges gender roles during a discussion of traditional leadership systems, they are not deviating from the curriculum. They are enacting it.

Still, the risk of reducing engagement to symbolic participation remains. A values curriculum that celebrates student voice but restricts critical thinking, or that encourages civic clubs but avoids difficult discussions, risks tokenising agency rather than enabling it. As Mwaseba, Mwinyimvua, and Rutatika (2025) caution in their analysis of civic education across East Africa, political socialisation strategies often seek harmony over truth, compliance over criticality. Yet civic maturity is not achieved by evading disagreement it is cultivated through the ability to hold ethical complexity, debate respectfully, and act with purpose even in the face of contradiction.

What is needed, then, is not simply space for youth to express themselves, but the institutional courage to let their insights shape the conversation. Teachers must be prepared not only to facilitate civic discourse but to respond when students challenge dominant narratives. Schools must become sites of civic rehearsal, where young people practise the skills of ethical discernment, collective action, and moral imagination. And policymakers must understand that a truly participatory democracy cannot be built on a passive curriculum.

In conclusion, *Historia ya Tanzania na Maadili* should be seen not only as a pedagogical shift but also as a moral stance: that young Tanzanians deserve both the resources and the confidence to shape the country they inherit. To fulfil this promise, the curriculum must engage their curiosity, critical thinking, and emotional awareness, encouraging them to go further. It should tell them not only about their past but also ask them who they aspire to become. Most importantly, it must listen. *Historia ya Tanzania na Maadili* offers more than just a new subject on the timetable; it provides an opportunity to reassess how young people view their role in the nation's story. It encourages us to trust that students are capable not only of learning history but also of using it to think critically about who they are, what they value, and how they can contribute. For this subject to be successful, it must go beyond the classroom and connect with the real lives of learners their questions, doubts, and hopes. Civic engagement starts when young people feel seen, heard, and valued. That's when

education becomes more than just instruction. It transforms into preparation for life in a shared world, shaped by memory, guided by values, and open to new possibilities.

## CONCLUSION

Reflecting on the integration of history and values education in Tanzanian secondary schools reveals a curriculum reform that is both timely and ambitious. *Historia ya Tanzania na Maadili* responds to a national desire to deepen civic responsibility and moral awareness in a generation growing up amid rapid social change. It recognises that citizenship is not a destination but a lifelong process, one shaped by the stories we tell, the values we uphold, and the questions we are allowed to ask. By centring this subject during adolescence, the curriculum aligns with a period of life rich in ethical curiosity and identity exploration.

Yet, its success will not rely solely on its structure but on how it is brought to life in classrooms, conversations, and learners' everyday experiences. Much hinges on whether teachers are supported to guide students through complexity rather than certainty; whether schools can create space for dialogue, not just discipline; and whether national education policy trusts young people enough to let them engage, critique, and imagine. The promise of this subject lies not only in what it teaches but in what it dares to open up: the possibility that young Tanzanians can shape their nation's future with clarity, care, and courage.

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