



Democratic Citizenship Education in Botswana: Challenges & Prospects

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Abstract

This article reports findings of a case study which investigated the responsiveness of Social Studies teacher training curriculum towards democratic citizenship education (DCE) with two colleges of education in Botswana. Individual and group interviews were used to collect data from Social Studies student-teachers. Findings show that the teaching of DCE at colleges of education has not been successful. Firstly, the curriculum does not have adequate content on DCE. Secondly, college lecturers believe in active methods of teaching but hung to a traditional approach in their classes. Thirdly, colleges have challenges that hamper the effective transmission of DCE. However, efforts made by colleges to train effective teachers are recognised. The study raises a central argument that teachers need support in their effort to transmit DCE by receiving effective training in the subject. In the light of the findings important recommendations are made to the policy makers, curriculum planners and Social Studies lecturers.

Keywords: Active methods of teaching, Democratic Citizenship Education, Curriculum development, Social Studies Education, Teacher training.

Reference to this paper should be made as follows:

Oats, R. (2015). Democratic Citizenship Education in Botswana: Challenges & Prospects. *International Journal of Scientific Research in Education*, 8(4), 150-158. Retrieved [DATE] from <http://www.ijsre.com>

INTRODUCTION

Teachers play a pivotal role for any nation to achieve quality education; hence they need to be properly trained in their subject fields. If teachers are not well prepared then their products are expected to be of low quality in turn. Specifically, if Social Studies teachers are poorly trained their learners will be poorly prepared in turn and this is likely to manifest itself in the way they exhibit citizenship knowledge, attitudes and skills in the society. It therefore becomes imperative for student-teachers in Botswana to gain high quality knowledge, skills and attitudes in Social Studies content and methods of instructional delivery during their training. Deeper training in DCE will enable them to demonstrate relevant and functional democratic skills and knowledge needed to achieve the value statements of Botswana as enshrined in the various education policy documents and the *Vision 2016* while in the field (Noddings, 2005).

The main purpose of this study was to examine the responsiveness of Social Studies teacher training curriculum towards DCE in Botswana. Fundamental to this study is the fact that Botswana is a democratic country that attempts to promote and cultivate democratic citizenry among its young people through school curriculum. To realize this task, subjects such as Social Studies are used to transmit citizenship ideals to young citizens. This study, investigated the quality of Social Studies teacher training curriculum towards DCE. The study probed the nature of DCE as encapsulated in the teacher training curriculum and further examined the level of comprehension of DCE ideals by student-teachers and whether they could articulate how they should be enacted. The study also explored challenges faced by colleges of education in their effort to transmit DCE.

It follows that the intended ideals of DCE can effectively be discharged by professionally equipped teachers who have been baptized into deeper democratic theories. Vonk (1993) describes the professional development of a teacher as one including a trilogy of personal, knowledge and environmental dimensions. The personal dimension involves self-concept by the teacher and ideas of good practice. The environmental sphere entails teacher interaction with his or her working situations while the knowledge dimension involves pedagogical content knowledge, classroom knowledge and managerial skills.

It is in view of the above position that this study explores whether colleges of education equip student-teachers with relevant strategies to enable them to teach DCE ideals effectively at primary school level in Botswana. Studies based on qualitative and quantitative research paradigms have indicated the prevalence of teacher-centred methods of teaching and learning in Botswana schools. The 1977 National Commission on Education, which produced the report, Education for *Kagisano*, expressed a concern over the tendency by teachers to overstress traditional methods of teaching and learning. The Commission's report claimed that the curriculum gives excessive emphasis to abstract learning and memorisation and neglect practical studies and acquisition and application of skills (Botswana Government, 1977). This study thus has the potential to positively contribute to Botswana as a nation in a number of ways: to inform policy formulation and curriculum development appropriately in the next curriculum review and to cause a shift in Social Studies teaching of citizenship concepts by replacing the current academically-oriented teaching themes, knowledge and values that fail to provide the most relevant knowledge, values and skills for life after school in Botswana.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Citizenship Education and its Imperatives on a Global Perspective

The concept, citizenship education arose in Greece during the Archaic Age (776-479 BC) and has been a persistent human social necessity. It later thrived in the following classical age during which time it was the subject of some distinguished thinking (Heater, 2004). As time went on, re-invention and modification on citizenship discernment was driven by forces such as political needs of participation and loyalty. There were also philosophical, military and economic forces. The philosophical forces were based on the idea of popular sovereignty which undertakes that the existence of power by any individual or group of individuals is genuine only if sanctioned by the populace. The economic explanation was due to the fact that in the early stages only the economically advantaged classes held the status in the society. The military explanation on the other hand assumed that citizens were those who bore arms in defense of their city. Citizenship therefore emerged when all these factors matched with the political abolition and monarchical power.

Based on the above argument that the emergence of citizenship was propelled by the need for participation and loyalty on the side of citizens, citizenship is applicable in today's society to re-enforce the essential principles of the nation. Simply put, citizenship can be used as an approach to emphasize fundamental ideals valued by a country. For instance, Botswana centers all its initiatives on the five values of democracy, unity, self-reliance, development and *botho* (a well-rounded person). To pursue these ideals, school curriculum could house elements on these principles and spread them to young citizens. Cecchim (2003) agrees that CE equips men and women to play an energetic part in public life and to shape in an accountable way their own destiny and that of the society. CE is undergirded by theories such as the liberal, republican and communitarian.

One of the initial explanations of systematic liberal theory, John Locke (1690), regarded individuals

as gifted with and animated by rationale, characterized as the ‘voice of God’ (Isin & Turner, 2002). The principles of the liberal theory embrace primacy of individual liberty, an expansive protection of freedom of inquiry, speech and worship and presumption in favor of privacy, markets and other forms of private ordering. The republican theory on the other hand gives importance to duty and responsibility. The republican model aims to develop citizens to own and exhibit goodness so as to fit with ease in their society socially and politically. In the African context, Adiyenka and Major (2006) postulate that, most educational systems in traditional Africa aimed at adapting children to their physical, social and spiritual environment.

Subsequent is the communitarian theory which sees citizenship as a matter of rights and stalwartly accentuates that being a citizen comprises belonging to a historically developed community. It therefore infers that citizens of a particular community identify to their nation and participate copiously in the affairs of the nation. Basse (1999) concurs that traditional education in Africa was more of a cultural action aimed at the construction of attitudes and habits considered necessary for participating in societal activities.

The above theories are deemed relevant for the purpose of CE in this study for the reason that they all emphasize freedom of citizens in their country. This study therefore believes that participative, responsible and duty obliged and free citizens in a democratic set-up can be fully realised through a purposely designed educational package and that the starting point is with effective teacher training. The assumption is that if teachers are well equipped with DCE ideals they can extend it better to their learners.

Citizenship Education in Botswana

At independence in September 1966, Botswana had a fragile democracy with an education system that was inherited from the British who had colonised Botswana from 1885 to 1966. The inherited education system had several features not applicable to Botswana. As such after independence immediate efforts were undertaken through various education policies for the building of a strong nation envisaged by the then government. These policies include: *Education for Kagisano* (social harmony), the *Revised National Policy on Education and Vision 2016*. These are policies that have influenced CE in the context of teacher training as they are intimately linked to the values of the nation and in this case, the teaching of Social Studies for DCE.

CE has gone through three major stages in Botswana. These are, CE during traditional period, CE during the colonial era and CE after independence. The third phase which came to fore after independence is more important to mention here. This phase is known as Social Studies as CE. With the coming of independence, the Government of Botswana developed a new set of obligations and loyalties. Simply put, citizenship training that emphasised cultures of other nations was considered irrelevant. The result was the development of a new CE taught through subjects such as Social Studies. The Department of Curriculum Development and Evaluation (1990) indicates that the new formal education in citizenship focused on Botswana and included experiences of traditional Tswana family, ethnic groups, and the nation at large.

The new view to CE inevitably influenced teacher training curriculum so as to align it to new demands. As a matter of fact teacher training on Social Studies was introduced at colleges of education and the University of Botswana. Tonota College of Education (1993) states that Social Studies is a program of learning which uses the knowledge of individual and societal development for the function of offering students with the background necessary for solving socially significant problems in a challenging and ever demanding society. This means Social Studies basis its content on knowledge and understanding of man’s interaction with his social and physical environment. In this endeavor, Social Studies passes on two dimensions of, how man influences and is influenced by his or her physical and social environment. Thus the key objective of the subject is to prepare thoughtful and active citizens who can function profitably in global communities.

While efforts have been made to integrate CE ideals into teacher training through subjects such as Social Studies, it is not yet clear whether the country’s goal of producing active citizenry is been realized. Thus, the need for teacher preparation to fully equip teachers with the methods, techniques and strategies that will enable them to fully achieve this subject mandate needs no overemphasis. I hence contend that for effective transmission of CE, there is need for colleges of education to use more appropriate ways to the transmission of CE. It was for this reason this study investigated the responsiveness of teacher training curriculum towards DCE in Botswana.

METHODOLOGICAL ORIENTATION

This study targeted three primary teacher training colleges, which are the only colleges that Botswana has. These are Tlokweng College of Education, Francistown College of Education and Serowe College of Education. Final year Social Studies in-service student-teachers and pre-service student-teachers studying at these colleges were the target population. These colleges had a total of 150 third year Social Studies students at the time of investigation – Serowe College of Education had 89 students, Francistown College of Education had 48 students and Tlokweng College of Education had 13 students. The pre-service student-teachers held a General Certificate in Secondary Education whereas the in-service student-teachers held a Primary Teachers Certificate (PTC).

This study used probability sampling approach to select two of the existing three colleges. Serowe and Francistown Colleges were sampled. Probability sampling was preferred because it allowed each unit in the sample identified to have an equal chance of being selected. Then we employed convenience sampling to select student-teachers. Twelve (12) volunteering pre-service students from Serowe College were selected for individual interviews, and 12 in-service students from Francistown College of Education for group interview. Relevant ethical protocol was observed throughout – permission to conduct the study was sought from the Permanent Secretary as standard procedure and from the colleges, consent was sought from the participants after they were assured confidentiality, anonymity and liberty to pull out from the study at any point.

Unstructured open-ended questions were used for group interviews with in-service students, and semi-structured questions for individual interviews with pre-service students. The choice for unstructured interviews was informed by the fact that interactive discussions we envisaged with the participants. On the other hand, semi-structured interviews were considered because they would allow probing beyond the answers given by participants to prepared questions (Opdenakker, 2006).

Data was gathered at the beginning of 2012 after appointments were made with the participants. The participants were interviewed during their free time on college campuses in order not to disrupt their time and class attendance. In the process of data gathering, transcription was being made whilst we still remembered, in addition to the recorded data, what participants said. This approach to data gathering also helped with member checking and a possibility to gather more data if there was that need from member checking. Member checking and the piloting of the interview schedules ensured the trustworthiness of the data. Data analysis followed stages of transcription, intensive reading to familiarise with data before coding for patterns and themes, category formation and triangulating between colleges and types of interviews.

FINDINGS

I present the findings per case first, followed by inclusive discussion of the findings.

Case study 1: Findings from individual interviews

It emerged from findings that respondents viewed DCE in diverse ways. As a result, the concepts citizenship and DCE seemed problematic as respondents viewed them differently.

When asked what the concept citizenship means, one student said, *“It means being a responsible person, loyal and willing to participate in the development of the country”*. Another student-teacher opined that citizenship refers to *“skills, knowledge and attitudes a citizen possess”*. With probing we were interested to know what skills, knowledge and attitudes a citizen is expected to have from this response, but the student did not expound.

Responses also differed to the question as to what it meant to be citizens of Botswana. One respondent said: *“Proud citizen looking at the fact that Botswana is a democratic and peaceful country”*, while another respondent mentioned: *“It means I should be responsible for my country, to do some activities like tree planting and be involved in those activities that affect my country such as attending meetings called by authorities and taking part in all elections”*. An interesting definition of DCE was noted from a respondent who defined it as the art of inculcating values, attitudes and beliefs of a particular society to

students or young people. Another respondent said, *“It is an education that helps to instil knowledge that is necessary to help the country develop citizens with good attitudes and skill”*.

On the question of adequacy of curriculum towards DCE students gave different observations. One respondent stated, *“No. I would have loved each concept of DCE taught separately, e.g. civic education, governance, human rights, civil rights and responsibilities because the integrated approach does not give enough treatment of the ideals of CE”*. Another indicated, *“Social Studies curriculum does not have enough content that appeals to DCE, the introduction of CE at year 1 of training is fine but there after CE aspects are infused into other topics and do not come out clearly. Because of this arrangement students fail to get the wider parameters of CE”*. When asked what was missing from the Social Studies curriculum relative to DCE, this respondent opined: *“Practical activity is missing because citizenship is about knowing and execution of knowledge. Deeper education on democracy and voting processes are also missing”*. One respondent was relatively satisfied that the Social Studies syllabus covered what was expected, except that he questioned the manner in which it was being taught, *“The Social Studies syllabus in my view alone has enough content. The only weakness is the way it is taught. That is, the methods, approaches and strategies used to teach DCE topics do not appeal to CE”*. According to the respondent lecturers overemphasized active and interactive methods for Social Studies and CE but fail to teach according to those methods.

When asked to indicate the teaching methods and strategies commonly used in their classes that are suitable for the development of good citizenship, one respondent said, *“Inquiry, because it reinforces the values of democratic citizenship and hence can be used to inquire on the challenges faced by the country at large”*. Majority of respondents indicated that peer teaching seemed suitable. They indicated that lecturers usually gave them topics in groups to research and present and that was in line with the demands of CE because trainees were exposed to enquiry on various issues. The discovery method was also mentioned by participants.

Case study 2: Findings From Group Interviews

In-service student-teachers had varying perspectives on what citizenship and being a citizen of Botswana meant. One student said, *“It refers to the rights of a person and their livelihood”*. Another student opined that citizenship meant ownership of one’s country and how that ownership is maintained through contributing to the affairs of society. To him citizenship meant that a citizen is someone who feels owning his or her country and who should exhibit that in all his or her interactions. One student emphasised the benefits she expected to get from her country. She claimed that citizenship was about rights and benefiting from one’s country’s development. She further argued that citizenship was not only about someone being expected to perform certain responsibilities but also about benefits.

A good number of students equated citizenship to Botswana to participating in activities and events such as tree planting, attending meetings called by authorities. Though this response is true, it sounded shallow to us because it represented a rather simplistic view of responsibilities that have to do with citizenship. Tantamount to this shallow view was another response by majority of students who stated that being a citizen of Botswana means belonging to Botswana. Nevertheless, other students viewed belonging to Botswana implying the characteristics of patriotism, loyalty, responsibility, abiding by law and participation.

Regarding the adequacy of Social Studies curriculum towards DCE two students seemed to be satisfied with the pedagogical knowledge that they had acquired, *“It is adequate because we learn different skills that we can use to produce active learners when in field”* and *“It is adequate because now we are able to use different teaching techniques better than before and this will help us to produce fully functional learners”*. Students also felt that they had gained research and inquiry skills in the subject. They thus indicated that the skills on research and inquiry acquired would help them to pass DCE concepts more confidently to their students.

Overall, students at this college designated that the curriculum was adequate to facilitate qualities of good citizenship in students. However, their good feeling about the curriculum was confined to teaching methods and research as opposed to content. As a result, their responses already tapped into the next question about teaching methods.

Specifically on teaching methods and strategies, one student said *“I prefer peer-teaching because it encourage cooperation among student-teachers. The approach gives students a chance to share ideas in*

knowledge generation and these are ideals of DCE". Thus, it appeared from the discussions that lecturers encouraged the virtue of cooperation, participation in class activity and group work.

Students were asked to indicate the best way of preparing student-teachers for good citizenship. One student's response went as follows, "*As Social Studies student-teachers we need active engagement in national activities to familiarise ourselves with what is on the ground. For instance, students should be given as part of their training a chance to interrogate and cross-examine government programmes.*" Another student mentioned that there was need to do it in a practical way to enable learners to exercise what they learned and in the process develop competencies and be effective in whatever they did.

On challenges of transmitting DCE, the findings of this study showed that the transmission of DCE at College 2 was faced with numerous challenges. These included among others, time constraints, inadequate educational resources and dictatorial college governance. One student said:

Lecturers of Social Studies at this college lack democracy. The only thing they are good at is talking about democracy. When you listen to them talking about democracy you will like it. They also lack openness and this hinders effective learning of DCE since as we learn we wonder whether democracy is about students only.

This emotional statement was followed by another thus: "*Lecturers here do not consult students, rather they just instruct them even on issues that directly affect academic or welfare of students. For this reason student here often wonders what democracy in Botswana refers to*".

The lack of active methods of teaching also took time on the discussion table. Student-teachers argued that lecturers believe so much on interactive methods of teaching but fail to use the methods themselves in their teaching. One participant said:

Lecturers encourage the use of interactive methods yet lecturers do not use them nor do they demonstrate on those methods, in short we are taught theory with nor practice and I believe this norm in this college limits students-teachers' exposure to diverse methods of teaching.

Another student supported this view by expounding that there is no outdoor teaching where students could visit organisations or places of interest to augment classroom intersection and that this practice separates theory from practice. The student argued that colleges need to create opportunities for themselves to explore avenues of making learning of CE more practical.

DISCUSSION

Citizenship Education as Encapsulated in Social Studies Curriculum

Findings reveal that college Social Studies curriculum is wanting in terms of DCE. Participants indicated that college curriculum is inadequate towards DCE due to several deficiencies and non-specificities in the curriculum. It emerged that the teaching of rights, responsibilities and values such as tolerance are not detailed. This scenario creates a vacuum in the curriculum and is against the republican theory which gives emphasis to duty and responsibility. As a matter of fact, if these are missing in the curriculum the goals of educating for effective citizenry will not be met.

Howbeit, some students, especially those at Francistown College of Education indicated that syllabus pronunciation is rich as CE is a major theme of Social Studies. Their views emphasised pedagogical content knowledge as being the one that was satisfactory. The subject content knowledge was not engaged in their responses. This makes one to wonder if what is outlined in the syllabus really manifests itself in the schooling system and beyond. It is also not clear whether colleges have been successful in the production of effective and patriotic teaching force. For instance, college curriculum seems to fail to some degree to emphasise the elements of nation building which are crucial to Botswana's condition. Botswana is a multicultural society with over 26 ethnic groups and nationals from other countries that have been naturalised. In such a cultural setup there is a need for educational programmes on DCE to include all groupings.

The Concept of Democratic Citizenship Education

Findings reveal that students view CE differently. These diverse views are even displayed by students from the same institution. Similarly, findings confirm literature that the concepts citizenship and CE do not have definite definitions. Findings show that conceptualisation of concepts is influenced by social, political and economic environments and to some extent by educational standards. According to findings some of the common definitions of citizenship included '*belonging to a group or country*' and '*a responsible and active participant in national activities*'. CE on the other hand is viewed in terms of being taught about the responsibility of a citizen and how a citizen should behave.

The results further show that citizenship is viewed in terms of belonging to a group or a country. This way of seeing citizenship makes the citizens of Botswana to deem their membership to Botswana in terms of belonging to Botswana and it ends there. Simply put, such conceptualisation is restrictive in terms of one's outlook and inevitably influences their contribution towards communal and national agendas. It was worrying to notice the overemphasis on just belonging to Botswana in the responses. It shows that people basically perceive citizenship in terms of identification to their country. We thus argue that citizenship without participation is incomplete and such conception of citizenship is narrow and minimal. Findings thus confirm the republican theory which derives from theories of Aristotle (384-322 BC) that gives emphasis to duty and responsibility in citizenship.

Some students, however, showed deeper understanding of the concept citizenship. Responses such as this attest to this claim, "*To be a citizen of Botswana carries with it not only the entitlement but the contributions towards the socio-economic and political development of the entire citizenry. It should recognise autonomous legal status of all individuals regardless of gender or socio-economic background. In Addition, a citizen is said to be someone who is ready to sacrifice for the welfare of his or her country*".

Some of the citizen attributes raised by students include patriotism, loyalty, responsibility and abiding by the law. Participation is highlighted as a key element which involves dedication to one's country without differences instigated by geography and cultural traditions. Participation is deemed crucial in citizenship as it contains thirst to serve one's country. It therefore means that being a citizen of Botswana carries full and active participation in different spheres ranging from political, social and economic. Additionally, citizens should be loyal, accountable and uphold the laws of their country.

Pedagogical Issues and Social Studies Classrooms

The state of teacher training curriculum for CE at college level is not a totally desired one. Student-teachers were uneasy about the use of traditional methods by their lecturers. The failure by lecturers to be exemplary with the use of active methods of teaching has far reaching consequences, as that will most probably be reflected in their products' practice.

Findings of this study show that DCE marries well with active methods promoted by constructivism. These findings and the literature point to the fact that child-centered methods which put students at the center of the learning process are compatible with DCE. Findings thus clearly show that without such methods the teaching of DCE becomes an illusion as they turn to lack evidence and prove. CE Foundations (2012) maintains that in whatever form CE curriculum must have an active element that emphasizes learning by doing, must be interactive by utilizing discussion and debate and be relevant by focusing on real-life issues facing the society. It thus follow the need for colleges to create space for themselves in which to offer DCE in a less expensive but active way. DCE deserves outdoor and active teaching approaches which colleges could fully adopt. Botswana has a lot of natural and man-made features which could be taken advantage of, like social and cultural groupings, government departments, parastatals and non-governmental organizations, which could be visited to provide the needed data in a practical form.

Barriers to Effective Transmission of DCE

A number of challenges hampering the smooth transmission of DCE emerged from findings. Students indicated their passion for the democratisation of Social Studies classrooms and the entire college life. They

however lamented that their desires were not realised because of certain blockages. These ranged from college leadership that was deemed undemocratic to time constraints to inadequate educational resources.

It emerged from findings that student voices were left out of the decision-making process. This set up is an antithesis to the tenets of the liberal theory which points out that the purpose of citizenship is to emphasize on freedom of individual citizens to enable them to fully take part in the affairs of their nation. Colleges have Student Representative Councils who are elected annually to address various issues affecting students in the college. The results show that while this is a good initiative, evidence on the field seemed to tell the opposite. Among others, power sharing, consultation and decision-making were a challenge. This practice is against the idea of CE. We conclude that there is a need to challenge the status-quo where college principals and Social Studies Heads of Departments and lecturers act as supreme autocratic-beings with unlimited authority to make decisions without the voices of the students. Colleges are thus reminded that it is by participating with democratic educators and students, parents and community that the true meaning of democratic education can be forged (Jotia, 2010). They marginalise the voices of the students and generate an uneven atmosphere for the growth of democracy in these institutions.

CONCLUSION

I end this study by arguing that colleges of education are not doing enough in producing well equipped teachers on DCE. This argument is based on findings which showed that college Social Studies curriculum does not have adequate content on DCE. Participants unanimously indicated that Social Studies curriculum for college has a lot of deficits in terms of subject matter capable of producing the teacher of Social Studies the Botswana government needs to further the citizenship agenda. The other platform of argument is that teaching methods used in college classrooms are an antithesis to DCE. Lecturers favor active methods suitable for DCE but lamentably fail to use them in their lessons. As a matter of fact, student-teachers do not have a feel of active methods suitable for CE. We also argue that if college leadership and Social Studies departments do not change their management styles with a view to accommodate the voices of the students in college life, transmission of DCE will be an illusion.

The study reveals that there is work to be done in Botswana in ascertaining that colleges and schools are spheres for democratic possibilities that produce informed learners who can be of service to their families, community and the nation at large. To realize this, colleges need to accord a voice to students and give their opinions suitable weight in an endeavor to develop them as democratic citizens. I thus challenge colleges to take a paradigmatic shift in understanding the need of listening to students. There is also need for policy makers in the form of training officers to update curriculum developers and colleges, in particular lecturers of Social Studies, about what type of Social Studies teacher they should produce. There is a need to establish standing subject panels for college curriculum with inclusive representation of expertise from various related fields. Colleges should review their study materials to align them to the ideals of DCE.

Limitations of study

First, as is often a case with qualitative research, some participants were reluctant to take part because of thinking that the study covered a political component. The wording "DCE" made them think the study was politically oriented. This made them sceptical to participate in the study. We had to follow them up and re-explain the onus of the study with an effort to convince them to participate.

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