

INFLUENCES OF TEACHER THINKING ON CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION IN UPPER CLASSES IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN BOTSWANA

Mavis B. Mhlauli, Moffat F. Kgotlaetsile and Philip B. Bulawa

University of Botswana

Abstract

This article comes in the wake of the dwindling research on teacher thinking over the years and intends to reignite the discussion on influences on teacher thinking. The study aims to understand how teachers' experiences and relationships influence their thinking about citizenship education in upper classes in primary schools in Botswana. Drawing from the qualitative approach, the study employed the naturalistic inquiry paradigm to understand the teachers' experiences and relationships. Eleven Social Studies teachers in six primary schools in the Central District in Botswana participated in the study. Purposive sampling through the snowball technique was used to select the teachers who participated in the study (Patton, 1990). Data were collected through interviews, focus groups, participant observations and document analysis. Data were analyzed using the constant comparative technique. The findings of the study indicated that teachers' experiences and relationships have a great influence on how they think about citizenship education in Botswana. The conclusion drawn from this study is that the way teachers think about the issues of citizenship impact their instructional decision making processes. The study recommends that teacher educators should engage novice teachers in action research for evaluation purposes and further redress.

Keywords: *citizenship education, teacher thinking, decision making, primary education, Social Studies, teacher practices.*

Corresponding author
Mavis B. Mhlauli
Faculty of Education
Department of Primary Education
University of Botswana
mhlaulim@ub.ac.bw

Introduction

In some countries Social Studies and citizenship education are regarded as similar hence the different names such as social education, Social Studies or citizenship education. In Botswana, citizenship education is not taught as a separate curriculum subject but it is embedded within the primary and junior secondary school Social Studies curriculum. Social Studies has been identified as the subject within the school curriculum that is used as a vehicle for developing citizens by equipping students with the requisite knowledge, skills, values, attitudes and dispositions relevant for producing functional and effective citizens in a democracy. The role of Social Studies education within the school curriculum is enormous. It is the Social Studies curriculum that has been charged with the responsibility to integrate knowledge from the other disciplines, the enormous challenge to provide civic education to all students (Mhlauli, 2010), provide critical inquiry into practices and social values, examine social knowledge, dysfunctional value systems and the effects of racism, prejudice, and gender inequities in the society (Smith-Crocco, 2006; Rains, 2006).

Like many democratic nations, the Government of Botswana is committed to citizenship education through the teaching of Social Studies at primary and secondary levels of education. It is believed that through Social Studies education students will acquire knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to promote citizenship, tolerance and cultural identity (Republic of Botswana, 2005). It is, therefore, imperative to understand the influences on the teacher's thinking and decision making processes when imparting this knowledge, values, attitudes and skills in their teaching. Teacher thinking is pivotal in the teaching and learning of Social Studies education as a curriculum subject in primary schools world-wide as it influences their decision making processes. Teachers constantly grapple with decisions regarding the curriculum content, pedagogy, assessment and other learning experiences that students encounter in schools.

Scholars in the field of Social Studies draw a distinction between curricular decision making and instructional decision making. Curricular decision making focuses on decisions about appropriate teaching goals and experiences and how to teach them whereas instructional decision making is concerned with how to teach within some implicit or explicit curricular frame (Thornton, 1991). Engle & Ochoa (1988) posit that teacher decision making involves the internal debate that the teacher engages in invariably in order to consider questions relating to how to engage students in understanding the complex nature of knowledge and its useful relationships between different ways of knowing. It is the teachers' conceptions of Social Studies that influence how they make decisions about what content and pedagogies to use in their day to day interactions with their students (Mhlauli, 2010). Botswana, like many other African countries' (Malawi, Kenya, Nigeria) education systems have highly centralized national syllabi and examinations (Merryfield & Muyanda-Mutebi, 1991; Mhlauli 2010), assuming that teachers teach what is stipulated in the curriculum. Often times the teachers' experiences, values, attitudes and dispositions are neglected, and how they influence the curriculum is not known or is taken for granted.

Teacher thinking and decision making are at the heart of Social Studies teaching and learning. The Social Studies curriculum focuses on developing an understanding of knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for citizenship development. Teachers constantly have to make decisions regarding their content selection, pedagogies and appropriate assessment techniques. The curriculum is centralised and teachers are expected to teach the curriculum as prescribed. However, little is known about what teachers think and how what they teach is influenced by their own experiences and relationships. It is against this backdrop that teacher thinking, experiences and relationships need to be interrogated in order to understand how they influence the decisions they make during their teaching.

The purpose of this study was to understand how the Social Studies teachers' relationships and experiences influence their thinking and decision making in their teaching since they are the ones entrusted with this mammoth task of developing citizens in a democracy. Since Social Studies teachers' are to some degree aligned to citizenship development, their influences and experiences are pivotal to the quality of citizens produced in Botswana.

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the teachers' views and experiences on decision making in teaching citizenship education in primary schools?
2. What influences teachers' thinking and decision making in the teaching of citizenship education in primary schools in Botswana?
3. What suggestions (if any) can be made to assist teachers to evaluate their experiences and decision making processes on citizenship education in Botswana?

Conceptual Framework

For its conceptual framework, the study draws from Thornton's notion of the characterization of Social Studies teachers as curricular instructional gatekeepers. Gatekeeping is viewed as encompassing decisions that teachers make about curriculum and instruction including the criteria used to make such decisions (Thornton, 1991). The idea of gatekeeping as articulated by Thornton (1991) is premised on the principle that knowledge is socially constructed, dependent on and derived from social and historical contexts and as such emphasis is placed on contextual influences on gatekeeping such as the school ethos. Thornton's framework is expanded by Barger (2016) into a model that provides a unified lens that operates within a contested classroom space as shown in figure1 below.

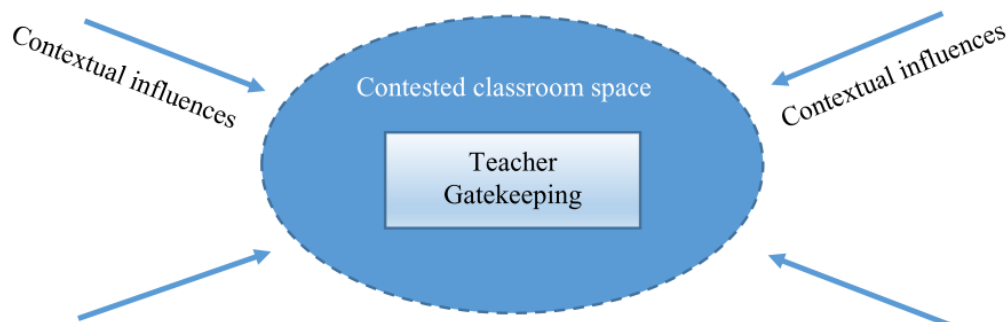


Figure1: *A unified lens: Thornton's (2005) gatekeeper operating within a contested classroom (Barger, 2016, p.9).*

By extension, Barger (2016) argues that teacher gatekeeping does not occur in a social vacuum but rather in a contested classroom space which is influenced by contextual factors. Barger's framework attests to the fact that teacher gatekeeping is prevalent in Social Studies classroom contexts and exists in a contested space hence influencing the teachers' instructional decision making processes. Therefore, teacher thinking and decision making processes are largely influenced by the experiences and relationships which occur within their environments and in this case the schools they teach in. This framework is suitable for this study in that it is in tandem with the findings in this study that teachers' experiences and relationships influence to a large extent how they make curricular instructional decisions within the school environment (Mhlauli, 2010). The notion of influences by contextual factors allows for an in-depth understanding of teachers' relationships and experiences in their decisional processes.

Literature Review

A number of studies have been conducted that sought to explore the Social Studies teachers' thinking and experiences and how they influence their curricular and instructional decision making processes (Thornton, 2005; Stoddard, 2010; Badang, 2013; Barger, 2016). Calderhead (2021) posits that research on teacher thinking can be conceived as a body of theoretical knowledge and principles about how teachers' plan and make decisions about classroom practice. These studies have shown that teachers' instructional decision making are influenced by a number of factors which are both internal and external hence the notion of Social Studies teachers as "curricular-instructional gatekeepers" (Thornton, 2005). The argument is that the Social Studies teachers' acting as curricular-instructional gatekeeping enables them to make sense of their decisional processes in the delivery of the Social Studies content. It is noteworthy to consider Barger's (2016) study as an extension of Thornton's (2005) idea that it not only looks at teachers' gatekeeping but also in conceptualizing teacher agency, beliefs and decisions within their classrooms. However, teacher feedback on peer feedback was also found to have a distinct impact on students depending on various factors such as language, beliefs and motivation.

Thornton (1991) in understanding the teacher's decisional and thinking processes uses the "teacher-as-thinker" metaphor to characterize teacher practices. This metaphor views the teachers' decision making as a process which involves proactive and interactive thinking. Teacher's decision making is usually apt during the planning stages which is complex and involves problem solving tasks such as thinking about the subject matter, students, classroom activities and skills to be gained through these interactions. Calderhead (2021) argues that teachers' hold different epistemologies as it is reflected in the different ways of thinking about the nature of knowledge that teachers' possess and how it is acquired. Badang (2013) conducted a study in which he looked at perspectives on teacher decision making in Cameroon and the findings showed that teachers did not engage as curricular gatekeepers and were unable to reflect critically on what they teach. The findings from Badang (2013) are not in agreement with Mhlauli (2010) who basically states that teacher thinking and decisional processes are influenced by various factors hence corroborating previous research on teachers as instructional gatekeepers. In their study on teachers' perspectives and practices in Germany and Hong Kong, Vajen, Kenner and Reichert (2023) found that teachers' beliefs influence educational goals, teaching practices and learning outcomes hence viewed as important for civics education and research.

Research Method

This qualitative study adopted the naturalistic inquiry paradigm. Naturalistic inquiry paradigm was chosen primarily because it uses tacit knowledge that does not only dwell on observable objects and events, but also focuses on personal experiences (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The study was conducted among eleven Social Studies teachers in six primary schools in one of the big villages in the central district in Botswana which in this study is referred to as *Marethweng* village (Mhlauli, 2010). Of the eleven teachers, four were males and seven were females. Pseudonyms such as *Nkwe, Kabo, Kgabo, Kubu, Morubisi, Batho, Lorato, Neo, Mpho, Thato and Tau* were used to protect the confidentiality and anonymity of the respondents. Purposive sampling through snowball/chain sampling technique was used to select the participants for the study (Patton, 1990). Teachers were chosen on the basis that they are experts in their specializations and are in a better position to explain what they do best.

Data Sources

Individual interviews, participant observation, document analysis and focus group discussions were used as methods for data collection. The individual semi-structured interviews were used to solicit more in depth ideas on their practices in teaching; this was used to inform the observations and further interviews (Mhlauli, 2010). Semi-standardized interviews also known as semi-structured interviews involve the use of predetermined questions which are asked in a systematic and consistent order and allows the interviewer to probe beyond the questions stipulated (Berg, 2004). The interviews were conducted for approximately 35- 50 minutes at the most convenient time for the participants preferably after school or during lunch or break time. Each interview began with a restatement of the purpose of the interview, a promise of confidentiality and a

reassurance that there are no right or wrong answers and that the interview truly desired to know what they thought.

Observations were conducted in different settings such as; classrooms and other outside activities in debate clubs, sports activities, staffroom and traditional music practices in an effort to understand what they do and why they do what they do. Data obtained through observations were used to construct follow up interview questions and vice-versa.

Focus groups and document analysis were also used to understand decisional processes of the teachers. A total of two focus groups, each lasting between one hour thirty minutes and two hours with eleven Social Studies teachers were conducted. This enabled both the participants and researcher to see the socio-cultural dynamics of the group. Focus groups have their limitations in that they compromise confidentiality. At times teachers were not free to say what they would have said if interviewed individually (Mhlauli, 2010). However, they enabled the researcher to get the socio- cultural aspects of the study.

Data Analysis

Data were analysed through the constant comparative technique (Merriam, 1998, Patton, 1990) where data collected were immediately transcribed, coded and categorized in order to inform the next interviews and observations (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). Therefore, data analysis took place at the same time with data collection and the researcher constantly used the questions raised during transcription to shape the questions for the next interviews. This process allowed the researcher to mine the data thoroughly in order to exhaust all possible gaps (Mhlauli, 2010). Pseudonyms were used to protect the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants.

Findings and Discussions

The major finding of this study was that teachers' experiences and relationships influence how they think about citizenship education. From time immemorial, experience has been dubbed the best teacher and it is not surprising that the findings in this study indicate that the teachers' experiences and relationships have a great influence on how they think about citizenship education in Botswana. The findings of this study are indicative of the fact that teachers' thoughts on citizenship education are influenced by their own educational experiences, socialization, students, mass media and educational mandates. These experiences intersect as espoused in Barger (2016) and as a result provide a synopsis of the teachers' thoughts, ideas and interpretations of citizenship education within the Botswana context. The discussion is presented according to the sub-themes that emerged from the major finding.

The Influence of the Teachers' Own Experiences

Teachers expressed that their educational experiences and relationships at various levels such as basic education or schooling, teacher education and professional experience have influenced how they think about citizenship education. The findings under this theme revolve around basic education/ schooling, teacher education and professionalism and are discussed below.

Basic Education /Schooling

Teachers mentioned their primary or secondary schooling experiences as having impacted their thinking about citizenship education and how they teach today. Drawing from his experiences as a student at primary school level, *Mr Tau* talked about how they were taught to memorize facts and what he does to change that in his own teaching. He believes that the way he was taught has influenced how he thinks about his own teaching and content delivery on citizenship education. While observing *Mr Tau* teaching Social Studies this is what transpired:

Teacher: What did we learn about yesterday?

Students: [all] Population growth rate in Botswana.

Teacher: No, No, No please raise up your hands you can't all speak at the same time
[Students raise hands, teacher picks on one of them]

Student: Population growth rate

Teacher: Yes [Teacher quickly writes the topic of the day on the chalk/board] Please open your textbooks on page 30 on population and migration. Today we are looking at "the effects of population growth"

Teacher: Now tell me the problems that Botswana is faced with in population increase. Students: The more people we have, the greater the amount of food...

(Students are encouraged to answer questions by rephrasing what is written in their textbooks)

Following up on *Mr Tau's* lesson presentation, I asked him why he made his students answer questions by reading from the book and he responded by saying:

You know, the way we were taught where we memorized facts was not good at all. Now students use their textbook to read and we summarized the sentences to show understanding...

Teachers also stated that they were influenced to a large extent by their teachers who served as their role models. Their teachers influenced their decisions to become Social Studies teachers as well as how they teach. This shows the significance of contextual influences related to the power of relationships and experiences as shown in Barger (2016) model. These findings resonate with those by Sanchez-Tarazaga, Sanahuja-Ribes, Ruiz-Bernado & Ferrandez (2023) that teachers' thinking is largely influenced by their experiences and in this case on citizenship education as it is not taught as a subject but is embedded within the Social Studies curriculum.

Teacher Education

Teacher education was also mentioned as having played a critical role in the way the teachers think about citizenship education. It was surprising that only 2 teachers mentioned how their teacher training influenced their thinking which may probably explain the teachers' perceptions and conceptualizations being multiple and varied. This may also reveal the teachers' understanding of citizenship since it is during their teacher education that they learn to become teachers. *Ms Neo* expresses appreciation for her teacher education as it played a role in moulding her behaviour by saying:

Another thing is from the college, the knowledge that I got from the college when I was training. We had a course that deals with citizenship, we were taught to be good citizens. The way I behave as a teacher, this is what the citizenship course has taught me to behave.

Teachers related their experiences as citizens to the way they were taught. They viewed themselves as practicing a democratic style of teaching and in this case democratic style was equated with openness and freedom to speak which are necessary for citizenship development. Therefore, they saw their teacher education as having played a part in developing their character as teachers which is an embodiment of citizenship development.

Professional Experience

Professional experience was also mentioned as having influence on teacher thinking on citizenship education. It was surprising that 2 teachers expressed this as their experience when they are all experienced teachers who have been teaching for not less than eight years. Mr Tau talked about how being a member of the Performance Management System (PMS) team has shaped how he thinks and this is what he said:

Since I am one of the facilitators in the region on PMS workshops and transformation which is change for the better, that alone has influenced my way of thinking and reasoning and I don't see myself retiring as a teacher...

Ms Kubu expressed how her professional experience has taught her to deal with different students of different abilities and said that:

...and then using work experience, where you find that this year you tackle different kids and the other year you tackle different ones and I would say that, those experiences taught me to teach others, so I can teach any class ...

The findings in this category clearly indicate that the teachers' own experiences influence how they think about citizenship education. They also indicate that their experiences are varied and not homogeneous even though the school environments are similar and highly centralized.

Influence of their Socialization

Teachers also mentioned their socialization as having an influence on how they think. The way these teachers have been socialized either by the family or society has a great

influence on how they think about what they. Socialization was discussed in terms of family, societal beliefs and values which included their culture.

Family

Teachers also indicated that the family as one of the socialization agents has influenced how they think to a large extent. However, only three teachers expressed this view and there was an intersection of issues of inheritance, gender and culture in their discussions. *Mr Nkwe* believes that his family socialized him to be a man and as a man he learned that he has to have a son to inherit his legacy, however, things are different for him as he does not have a son, and opined that:

As a man I was taught to believe that I should have a son to share things with so that when I get old then that person will take over where I left. Now that I have only 3 girls in my family, that has taught me to look at things differently.

Whereas, *Ms Lorato* who is pro culture believes that her family socialized her to be a woman and as such she sees herself as a mother as well thus:

As a woman when I teach Social Studies like you have realized that I like to hit hard on cultural practices, cultural inheritance, tolerance and so forth. I have learnt that as a woman, responsible for upbringing the children to be real good citizens because we have to show that motherly love.

One of the school-heads that I had the opportunity to interview was *Ms Thomas* of *Morula* primary school who talked about how her family and the society have socialized the girl-child which then influences perceptions about them in future. She lamented that:

As a lady and a citizen, I was socialized in a way that I should always work hard and believe in what I do. But, I think at times I am deprived certain things as compared to my male counterparts. For instance, when I am invited for a workshop, because of my gender as a female then people or participants will have doubts as to whether I will offer something vital as compared to a male School.

The findings in this category indicate the extent to which the family as a socializing agent influences how these teachers think and the decisions they make on a day to day basis. The family orientations dictate how they should treat both boys and girls in their classrooms. In Botswana, where modernization is said to have greatly impacted the society, it is interesting that cultural values are still maintained through the family, where in principle both boys and girls are said to be equal yet in practice there is a clear disparity between the two and the girl child is always regarded as subservient to the boy child. Issues of gender are critical in citizenship education as they enhance children's experiences and identities.

Societal Beliefs and Values

Societal beliefs and values were also seen as influencing the teachers' thinking since they acted both as promoters and a deterrent to what was to be learned. Teachers talked about beliefs based on religion, culture and traditions and how they influence what they do.

They felt that at times the curriculum is incongruent with the expectations of the society making it difficult for them to teach certain topics. They also felt that most of the time they are forced to select content that they believed is appropriate for their students while limiting their knowledge on certain issues. In discussing these dilemmas based on cultural limitations and the curriculum Ms *Lorato* said that:

You know, I am expected to teach about sex education but in our culture parents cannot talk about sexual issues with their children. So students are sometimes eager to know and sometimes as a Motswana woman it is very difficult...I am also afraid that their parents...

They also saw societal beliefs as a way of teaching people about their cultural values and a way of passing on shared cultural knowledge. Two teachers talked about traditional beliefs based on ancestors and myths and taboos. Ms *Thato* talked about how myths and taboos have shaped how she thinks when she said:

You know that in our culture we were taught not to walk backwards motion because it was believed that your mother will fall into a pot of water. This has taught me that there should always be a reason for everything you do and that is why my students are argumentative in class...

Ms *Kubu* talked about beliefs and ancestral spirits and how they help her direct her life and the way she does things. She said that:

About beliefs, yes, we as Batswana traditionally believe in ancestors, we depend on them for guidance and talk about being good to them to know what to do. We believe that they are able to see us and if we do wrong...

Most of the teachers talked about Christianity and believe that they are members of a Christian nation and as such believe in God. Teachers further talked about how their beliefs about god have helped them deal with issues of ethnicity and equality and how they encourage their students to deal with such situations and be proud of whom they are. From the findings in this category it is clear that societal beliefs play an important role in influencing teachers' way of thinking. It was surprising that only two teachers talked about myths and taboos which used to be the hallmark of Botswana's cultural heritage. Teachers seemed to align themselves to Christianity and God not realizing that these imported cultures brought by modernization have only served to erode, destroy and downplay the Tswana traditional customs, values and beliefs. It therefore goes without saying that citizenship education should be contextualized to meet the needs of the society it serves.

The Influence of their Students

Teachers talked about the nature of the students that they have and how they influence to a large extent how they deal with issues. They argued that they live in a changing world where their students do not only learn from school but get information through other sources as peers, media and technology and as such that forces them to constantly

negotiate and renegotiate their thoughts and processes on what they teach. This was evidenced by the calibre of students they have and how they react to the subject matter.

Student Characteristics

Teachers spoke about their students as having an influence on their thinking primarily because they have exposure to so many things outside the classroom such as mass media which includes television, radio, newspapers and the internet. Some children come from affluent families where they have access to the internet and nobody monitors what they see or read. These sources that students use are said to influence them to ask questions about things they do not understand even though they are not related to the curriculum. *Ms Lorato* talked about a group of students who when not satisfied with something in class would go and research on it and cannot rest until they got the right answers. She said:

You know we teach children who can find information from other sources and challenge you as a teacher...I have a group of students who will not leave you if they are not satisfied with a topic discussed and they will keep on bringing it back for discussion until they are satisfied...

The findings under this category indicate that students in primary schools challenge the status quo which is a necessity as students learn to deconstruct the master narrative to become critical citizens. This scenario above clearly indicates the influence of students' way of thinking on teacher practices which totally negates the widely held belief that students are always passive in class which may be attributed to their culture and socialization practices. These findings are supported by Glazzard & Rose (2020) who indicated that students can also be attuned to teachers' mood and could easily change the direction of the lesson toward their own interests.

Their Reaction to the Subject Matter

Three teachers also indicated that students also react to the prescribed subject matter by talking about issues that are of interest to them. Their reaction is shown through bringing issues from the news or the community that they feel are interesting and making sure that other students and the teachers weigh in on such issues. *Ms Batho* also described her students as students who are usually keen to know and debate issues and will exploit every opportunity to discuss issues of their interest. This is what she had to say about her students:

Students do ask questions about same sex relationships since they see them on mass media like television. For example there is a popular South African Soapy called *Generations* that pupils watch a lot in Botswana. In this Soapy there is a gay couple and students want to know if it is possible to have two men as a couple. They ask questions like "if there are two men or women who are couples who will bear children?" Students want to know and ask such questions; we discuss and debate such issues. I ask them, what do you think?

Citizenship education requires teachers to teach students to be open-minded in order to be able to exercise perspective consciousness. It is interesting that students were bringing discussions on issues of their interest and concern into the classroom and making teachers

talk about them. The findings also reflect the extent to which media influences the students thinking and actions. These findings also basically indicate that the calibre of students that these teachers teach exhibit a generational change in attitude and thinking. The traditional *Tswana* society is hierarchical; the teacher has always been the centre of knowledge and was seen to be the authority as students have to be subordinate to him/her (Tabulawa, 1998). Children cannot just decide to bring anything to class for discussion that is not authorized by the teacher and not related to what is being taught at that particular moment. All this demonstrates that students to some extent dictate what teachers have to do in their teaching which basically deviates from the norm as presented within the Tswana socio-cultural context.

The Influence of Mass-Media (Newspapers, Television, Radio)

Almost all the teachers spoke of how mass media more especially television, radio and newspapers shape their worldview. They saw media as an important tool in their teaching as it provided them with information on current events and issues around the world as well as broadening their scope of reference and horizons. These teachers held media in high regard and seemed to depend on it as a source of knowledge for them and their students. They believed that media promotes their knowledge reservoir and makes teaching and learning more viable. However, there were very few dissenting voices that saw media as problematic if not viewed from a critical perspective. Ms Kabo spoke about the importance of mass media to her by stating that:

I also watch news on television which helps me to know what is happening in neighbouring countries like South Africa and Zimbabwe. I learn a lot from this news because I get current Affairs, therefore, improve my daily teaching by giving examples of what is happening now.

Mr Nkwe felt that mass media including international news channels provides information that is new and up to date and this is what she said:

I also watch the news on television through channels such as Btv; Sky News and CNN. I sometimes use the Internet if it is available the problem is that I have to spend money in the Internet café. The news on television and radio usually help me with information that enables me to compare myself with what other people are doing.

Ms Neo appeared to be conversant with news around the world and how that shapes her worldview by saying:

watch channels in South Africa such as SABC 1 and 2 and France 24. They provide me with information especially in current affairs. They influence my teaching by helping me get more information from TV and radio. They also broaden my scope of thinking...

Though all of the teachers saw media in a good way, there were about two teachers who were very critical about international media that it sow seeds of discord by perpetuating stereotypes and misinformation about some countries and people. *Mr Tau* expressed mixed feelings about international media that:

The only thing is that international media and news do not have value to us as most of the time they talk of only negative things about us, e.g. wars, conflicts and diseases. This makes me have no interest in watching them. The good thing is only when it comes to sports which develop us...

While *Mr Nkwe* on the other hand felt that international media brought more harm than good to some countries and argued that:

I usually watch television channels like CNN, Sky News and France 24, but you know I have never seen them broadcasting anything good about Africa. Every time they show something on Africa it's about AIDS, poverty, wars, malaria. Do they want to tell me that there is nothing good happening in all of Africa?

It is not surprising that all these teachers saw mass media as good and praised it for assisting them to widen their scope of reference. It should be borne in mind that most of the television stations that these teachers watch are foreign media either from South Africa (SABC), Europe (BBC; France24) and United States (CNN). These media outlets continue to perpetuate stereotypes about the “other” and their hegemonic imperialist thoughts in making these teachers believe that what is foreign is better than the local. They affirm the widely held view that knowledge is external and always constructed from and are embodied in western forms of knowing (Mhlauli, 2010). It is also interesting that the two teachers who are critical of western forms of media are male, have travelled to different countries like the United States and are active in teacher capacity building initiatives in the country. This makes them highly valuable in that they possess critical thinking skills and understand the notion of transformative knowledge.

The Influence of Educational Mandates

Teachers also made reference to educational mandate as having an influence in their thinking and decision making processes. They opined that educational mandates such as the national syllabus and availability of resources influenced to a large extent what they have to teach and how they have to teach.

National Syllabus

Teachers talked about the national syllabus as having a great influence in their decisional pedagogical practices and stances. They argued that the curriculum dictated what they had to do and even stipulated the time within which they should have taught a particular subject matter. Narrating on how the syllabus influences what they do Ms Batho said that:

Even the topics in the Social Studies curriculum, they try to address issues on elections, citizenship and I think that when pupils are taught – they know about what is happening in your country

Mr Tau remarked on the objectives and subject matter that has to be covered in the syllabus by saying:

They have developed the Social Studies curriculum in such a way that it addresses topics like the family, cultures in Botswana; history of Botswana and the developing love for

their country by teaching about natural resources in the country. There are objectives that also cover citizenship education such as citizenship, governance and democracy as well as regional, continental and international organisations.

The Upper Primary School Syllabus for Standard Upper Standards (5-7) (2005) was also examined and it was discovered that it stipulates the objectives, methods and subject matter that teachers have to teach and as such teachers follow it as is. For example; going through the upper Social Studies syllabus it was stated that teachers have to use participatory methods of teaching such as group work, debates, presentations, role plays, field trips and inquiry (Ministry of Education, 2005). The syllabus also stipulated that only two hours were allocated for Social Studies per week distributed in four weekly periods of 30 minutes. The syllabus was also arranged in 5 modules that spiralled across the upper classes from standard 5, 6 and 7.

These modules are arranged in a sequential order and presented as follows: Module 1: Society and Culture; Module 2: Physical Environment; Module 3: Our Past; Module 4: Governance and Citizenship and Module 5: Economy. This indicates the prescriptive nature of the syllabus. The teachers' schemes of work were developed externally and given to the teachers at the beginning of each term. These schemes of work provide the objectives, content and activities to be covered each week and objectives that will be tested at the end of each module. These teachers are then compelled to teach for the attainment of the objectives and tests that follow. These ready-made materials seem to rob the teachers of creativity, innovation and thoughtful and meaningful teaching.

The findings in this category clearly indicate that the national syllabus does influence the teachers' thoughts and ways of teaching. The topics in the syllabus influence how teachers perceive citizenship. It should be borne in mind that the structure of the school curriculum in Botswana is highly centralized and prescriptive, therefore, making it difficult for teachers to think outside the box. Therefore, the probability is very high for teachers to see the syllabus as God-given with no modifications made with regard to the subject matter.

Testing and Examinations

Some teachers also expressed concern on the role of examinations and testing on how they impact their thinking and decision making processes in their choice of the subject matter and instructional methods. *Mr Morubisi* talked about how he teaches for examinations and how these examinations limit the scope of what he teaches by saying that:

Sometimes we just rush up the objective because we are running after time, so that during the examinations we have covered a lot of topics but not going into details.

Ms Mpho shared the same view but lamented on the amount of time allocated to Social Studies in the time table which basically influences her approach to the subject matter, she said that:

Time, looking at the fact that the time-table is so tight; you can't take a trip even for a day because you will be behind the syllabus. Syllabus got a lot of objectives and time is so short to have covered the content for students to be able to pass.

The findings in this category have shown that not only are examinations and tests major factors that influence the teachers' thinking and the decisions that they make but most importantly that they determine the mode of delivery and scope of the subject matter. These findings may shed light on issues of citizenship and how it is taught and practiced in Botswana. It is very clear that teachers teach for examinations because what is seen to be important at the end of primary education is the product and not the process. Therefore, indicating that success is measured based on the students' pass rate of the examinations and not how much those students have gained.

Resources

Some teachers mentioned that the nature of the resources they use has impacted their thinking and decision making processes. Teachers expressed concern on inadequate resources and documented an outcry of the limitations in the textbooks that they use in their teaching. *Mr Nkwe* argued that though there are textbooks and exercise books provided there was still a problem of resources in schools, and had this to say:

Well, with textbooks and exercise books are there but for instance next week Monday we will be teaching about the commonwealth and those people who are responsible in seeing to it that the commonwealth is done have provided only one poster for this school and the poster is two sided...

Ms Kabo proffers that the textbooks that the teachers use were out dated and irrelevant and this is what she had to say:

Resources and teaching materials are inadequate; some of the textbooks that we use are out dated and irrelevant and at times they are not enough for the students. But there is nothing that we can do but use them as we do not have a library where we can go and research. The community library does not have the information we need.

Ms Kubu expressed her concerns by saying that:

Remember that I rely mostly on the Social Studies textbook. The Ministry of Education sends pupils textbooks without any teachers' guides, so we end up using the textbooks in our teaching. Sometimes the textbooks are vague and do not contain a lot of information. Some books have no illustrations...

It was interesting to recognize that when teachers talked about textbooks they were mainly referring to the pupils' books and it appeared that the textbook was the only material they had access to. The dependency on pupils' textbooks as the only source of information by these teachers is puzzling and raises concern on the scope of subject matter being taught. Teachers used the textbook as a reference material, teaching aid and activity book. This reliance on pupils' textbooks is overwhelmingly surprising given the proliferation of information technologies prevalent in the 21st century.

In one of the classroom observations we witnessed a classic example of where the textbook was predominantly used to teach the subject matter for the day. The teacher, Ms Kabo, was teaching about “The Effects of HIV/AIDS in the villages”. The lesson began with an introduction characterized by a recap on the previous lesson, followed by a question and answer session and then students were directed to open their textbooks. What follows below is an excerpt of what took place in Ms Kabo’s class:

Student: Families become poor because they spend money in funerals.

Teacher: Yes, because people die, money is spent more on funerals, taking care of the sick.

Teacher: Let us stand up and take our Social Studies textbooks and turn to page 8. on effects of HIV/AIDS in villages.

(Students take out their textbook. Students volunteer to read as the teacher acknowledges those who are reading)

Teacher: Sit down class, now we are going to take some notes.

(Teacher begins to write notes on the chalkboard while students start to copy them.)

I also observed Mr *Tau* teaching about “The effects of population growth” and I noticed that he also depended on the textbook to teach the subject matter. What follows below is an extract of what transpired in his class:

Student: Population growth rate

Teacher: Yes *[Teacher quickly writes the topic of the day on the chalk/board]*

Teacher: Please open your books on page 30 on population and migration. Today we are looking at the effects of population growth

Teacher: Now look at your book and tell me the problems that Botswana is faced with the population increase.

Given what the teachers said about the nature of the pupils’ textbooks, I was compelled to do a document analysis of some of the Social Studies textbooks used for standard 5, 6 and 7 classes in order to ascertain the teachers’ concerns. The textbooks that were analysed included the following (see Table 1 below).

Table1: Pupils' Social Studies Textbooks for Upper Primary in Botswana

Standard	Title of Textbook (Pupils)	Date of Publication	Authors	Publisher
Five	Social Studies is Fun	2008	Ngongola, Gatsha & Selwe	Collegium
Six	Bokamoso Series: Social Studies for Botswana Social Studies 6	2006 2007	B.S. Thebe Saurombe & Thakadu	Vision Publishing Longman
Seven	Explorations in Social Studies 7	2006	K.M. Kebiditswe & P.S. Maphane	Mmegi Publishing House

Thorough analyses of the textbooks in table 1 indicated that these textbooks were current then as they were all published between 2006 and 2008 and are in line with the objectives of the Social Studies curriculum as articulated in the upper primary syllabus (Republic of Botswana, 2005). All these books were authored by Batswana who are teachers or have a teaching background at both primary and secondary levels of education. The topics in the textbooks are arranged sequentially according to the modules in the upper primary Social Studies syllabus. The subject matter in the textbooks was presented with illustrations, tables, graphs, maps and activities for students to do. The findings in this category raise a lot of questions on the nature of teacher education in Botswana as they reveal the extent to which teachers rely on pupils' books/textbooks for their teaching. Han & Yu (2020) contend that teacher feedback on peer feedback has profound impact on students depending on their language ability, beliefs and motivation hence the need for teachers to be vigilant in how they do things. The significance feedback between students and teachers is emphasized in Bangers (2016) as having an impact on students' learning. It appears that the textbooks are the only available resource for teachers as they were unable to state other sources of information that they use for their teaching. It also appears that teachers were unable to differentiate between teachers' resources and students' resources as they kept on referring to the pupils' textbooks) as the only resource that they use.

There was also an indication of teachers' over-reliance on the pupils' textbook as it was used as a reference, teaching aid and practice. The findings in this category from the document analysis negate the widely held belief that textbooks used in schools are authored by people who are foreign to the education system and do not have knowledge of the target group they write for. However, it would be interesting to see their references and publishers' base as they may reveal the nature and problems related to the subject matter being presented in these textbooks.

Conclusions and Recommendations

From the findings of this study, it is clear that teachers' thinking on citizenship education in primary schools in Botswana is greatly influenced by their own experiences and relationships. These experiences and relationships are drawn from a range of sources which among them are how they were taught, the prescribed curriculum, teacher-pupil

interactions and teacher education practices. Experience has been dubbed the best teacher; hence teachers rely on their thoughts in deciding on their instructional methods on a day to day basis. The conclusion drawn from this study is that the way teachers think about the issues of citizenship education impact their instructional decision making processes in their day to day interactions with their students. The study recommends that teacher educators should engage novice teachers in action research to assist them evaluate their teacher practices for further redress. Furthermore, policy makers, curriculum developers and other stakeholders should rethink about issues of citizenship education at primary school level.

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