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A blueprint for democratic citizenship education in South African public schools: African teachers' perceptions of good citizenship

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The notion that South African public schools have a distinctively civic mission is recognised in all national education policy documents published since the first democratic election in 1994. The teaching of democratic citizenship education in public schools is a newcomer to South Africa. The purpose in this article is to summarise scholars' views on the attributes of a good citizen and the role of the school in this regard and to report the outcomes of a research project on African teachers' perceptions on the factors contributing to good citizenship. Ascertaining what scholars and African teachers thought would provide a reasonable starting point for addressing the issue of education for democratic citizenship in South African public schools.

Introduction

South Africa's first democratic election in late April 1994 stands as a political watershed in the country's history, because it signalled the end of racially based rule and the beginning of a constitutional democracy (Olivier, 2000:18). Although it has been argued, according to Evans (1997:20), that the establishment of proper institutions is sufficient to maintain a free and democratic society, world events (fascism in Japan, Italy, Germany, 1920s–1930s; Cold War in Europe, 1940s–1980s) are there to remind us that even the best-designed institutions are not sufficient. Ultimately, a free and democratic society has to rely upon the knowledge, skills and virtues of its citizens and those they elect to serve in public office on their behalf (IDASA, 1999:2). According to scholars, such as Carr (1991:373-378) and De Tocqueville (1969:12), the "habits of the mind and the habits of the heart", the dispositions that inform the democratic ethos, are not inherited. Each new generation has to acquire the knowledge, learn the skills, and develop the dispositions that underlie a constitutional democracy. These dispositions have to be fostered and nurtured by word and study and by the power of example. Every democratic society therefore faces the challenge of educating succeeding generations of young people for responsible citizenship (Burchell, 1993:17-18; IDASA, 1999:1-3).

Learners have to be prepared for their future responsibilities as citizens of a democratic society. Many institutions help to develop citizens' knowledge and skills and shape their civic character and commitments: family, religious institutions, the media, and community groups all exert important influences. Schools, however, bear a special and historic responsibility for the development of civic competency and responsibility (Dayton, 1995:135; 155-156; Dewey, 1916:115). As Giroux (1995:6) has reiterated:

> ... citizenship and democracy need to be problematised and reconstructed for each generation ... public schools must assist in the unending work of preparing citizens for self-governance in an evolving social environment. Through the public schools, learners can be taught the values and skills necessary to administer, protect and perpetuate a free democratic society.

Statement of the problem

The problem that underlies this study centred around the question of how public schools in South Africa, charged with delivering democratically-inspired citizenship education, should meet the challenge. Prior to 1994 citizenship education was taught, indirectly, via History and subjects such as Youth Preparedness, Inkatha Studies, and Right Living. Learners learned about the nature of government, the electoral process, the national holidays, and the leaders and historical figures — limiting citizenship education during this period to the inculcation of knowledge and the promotion of an unquestioning acceptance of the *status quo* (De Lange, Engelbrecht & Taunyane, 1989:236-238; 252; South African National Department of Education, 2001:11; Trümpelmann, 1986:4-7). According to Butts (1988:180) an effective democratic citizenship education programme should not only provide learners with the necessary knowledge but also with opportunities for the development of desirable traits of public and private character such as justice, respect for individual worth, fairness, co-operation, persistence, moral responsibility, empathy for others, caring, civility, respect for law, civic mindedness and honesty. Generations of South Africans thus passed through school with little exposure to democratic citizenship education that at the end of study, as John Adams (quoted in Batho, 1990:91) wrote, "is to make a good man and a useful citizen". As a result, at the time of the first democratic election in 1994, there was widespread ignorance of the system of government, the political process and other civic issues, an ignorance which still exists in South Africa today.

This 'civic deficit' poses a possible danger to South Africa's new-found democracy. Any democracy which neglects citizenship education for specific democratic qualities does so at its peril. Democracy and the rule of law are not historical necessities, but a victory of the human moral sense that needs to be reinforced and renewed constantly in the minds of all individuals (Dayton, 1995:20). The ANC government realised immediately that South Africa had neglected something very important and, if the new-found democracy was to survive, education for democratic citizenship had to be taught to every future generation (Kagiso Publishers, 1991:1). For this reason, citizenship education has re-emerged as an important issue in all national education policy documents, Curriculum 2005 (Department of Education, 1997), the Revised National Curriculum Statement (Department of Education, 2002), etc., published since the first democratic election in 1994.

According to scholars such as Davies, Gregory & Riley (1999:44) conclusions reached or recommendations offered which are based only on opinion and conjecture have little merit, particularly when speculation presumes to offer recommendations intended to effect change. Intellectual theory alone should not inform and influence educational practice. Whilst the results of informal explorations of a topic may well provide valuable information, Davies *et al.* (1999:45) are convinced that if research activities are to go beyond mere speculation it is important to have in place a firm scholarly foundation for conclusions or recommendations. That "firm and scholarly" foundation can, according to them, be provided by empirical research methodology and findings. An empirical research project which would be of value to the teaching of citizenship education in South Africa would be a project aimed at discovering African teachers' perceptions of the characteristics of a good citizen. Finding out what African teachers think will provide a reasonable starting point for addressing the issue of education for democratic citizenship in South African public schools.

Aim of the study

The aim of this study was to summarise scholars' views on the attributes of a good citizen and the role of the school in this regard and to report the outcomes of a research project on African teachers' perceptions on what factors contribute to being a good citizen. The policy-makers, public bodies, curriculum developers, and education administrators involved in the drafting of a blueprint for education for citizenship in South African public schools, can then use the summary of the scholars' views and the outcomes of the research project in their planning of citizenship education programmes that will successfully educate young South Africans for responsible citizenship.

Clarification of concepts

Any study on citizenship education must start with defining the core concepts that are frequently used in this regard.

Democracy and constitutional democracy

The concept democracy comes from the Greek word *demos* meaning people. In democracies, it is people who hold sovereign power over legislators and government, either directly or through officers elected by them. Simply put, it is government by the people for the people. The key elements of democracy are: citizen involvement in political decision-making; some degree of equality among citizens; some degree of freedom to citizens (speech, press, religion); a system of representation; and an electoral system of majority rule (Dayton, 1995:150). Patrick (1991:6) adds two central concepts to the above minimal definition of democracy: constitutionalism and civil society. His motivation for doing this is: protection of the political and personal rights of citizens including those in the minority, depends on constitutionalism (the rule of law) and civil society (the network of freely formed voluntary associations). The suggested and widely accepted definition of the concept of democracy is therefore, according to Patrick (1991:7), the following: A democracy is a political system institutionalised under the rule of law. In a constitutional democracy the power of a person or group in government is limited by a set of laws and/or established customs (a constitution) which must be obeyed. The civil society, acting independently or in partnership with state agencies, collaborates through mechanisms of political parties, and establishes through freely contested elections a system of representative government.

Citizenship and citizenship education in a democracy

The definition of the concept citizenship is a precarious one. The concept has evolved with social, economic, and political developments and is still "under construction" (Burchell, 1993: 20). The concept is nevertheless defined as:

> a historical contract between the individual and the state ... , and in the strict sense, citizenship concerns the integration of the individual in the political framework and the participation of citizens in the institutions of law; citizenship ... is expressed in the continuing participation of individuals in the co-management of public affairs (Giroux, 1995: 7).

In a constitutional democracy citizens are actively involved in their own governance; they do not just passively accept the dictums of others or acquiesce to the demands of others (De Tocqueville, 1969:81). As Aristotle (1967:115) put it in his "Politics": "If liberty and equality,

as thought by some, are chiefly to be found in democracy, they will be attained when all persons alike share in the government to the utmost". In other words, the ideals of democracy are most completely realised when every member of the political community shares in its governance. Members of the political community are its citizens, hence citizenship in a democracy is membership in the body politic. Membership implies participation, but not participation for participation's sake. Citizens' participation in a democratic society must be based on informed, critical reflection and on the understanding and acceptance of the rights and responsibilities that go with that membership. Hence, citizenship education in a democratic society needs to be concerned with promoting understanding of these ideals (Burchell, 1993:19-21). According to Butts (1988:184) citizenship education means explicit and continuing study of the basic concepts and values underlying democratic political community and constitutional order. Scholars such as Butts (1988:187) and Barber (1992:36) agree that citizenship education also involves development of skills in making decisions about public issues and participating in public affairs. In a constitutional democracy, citizenship education is supposed to involve both preservation of core concepts and values, and liberation from single-minded teaching and learning about them. Hence, in citizenship education there should be an effort to maintain the foundations of constitutional order and to improve upon it through informed critical reflection, deliberation, and action. In a constitutional democracy, effective citizenship education is a necessity because according to Barber (1992:37)

> the competence to participate in democratic communities, the ability to think critically and act deliberately in a pluralistic world, the empathy that permit us to hear and thus accommodate others, all involve skills that must be acquired.

The goal of citizenship education is, according to Olivier (2000:6), therefore competent and responsible participation in local, provincial and national civic and political life. Such participation requires the acquisition of a body of knowledge and understanding; the development of intellectual and participatory skills; the development of certain dispositions or traits of character; and a reasonable commitment to the fundamental values and principles of constitutional democracy.

For the South African National Department of Education (2001:23), education for democratic citizenship entails "the explicit and continuing study of the basic concepts and values underlying ... democratic political community and constitutional order" and consists of

> Learning activities, curriculum, and/or educational programmes ... concerned with rights and responsibilities of citizenship — the purpose is to promote knowledge, skills and attitudes conducive to effective participation in civic life.

Review of literature

In this section, I review the literature pertaining to scholars' views on the attributes of a good citizen in a constitutional democracy and the role of the school in this regard. According to Patrick (1991:18) the main issue regarding citizenship in a constitutional democracy is which knowledge, attitudes, and intellectual and participating skills a citizen of a democratic country should possess so that he/she is able to understand the process of political decision-making and to participate in the civil society and in political decision-making if he/she wishes to do so. However, Patrick (1991:18) substantiates that:

> Some critics have charged that the concept citizenship is so vague and all-encompassing that it can mean anything to anybody; ... and although researchers and scholars are not in

total consonance about the meaning of the concept citizenship, there is considerable agreement about the attributes of a good citizen.

According to scholars, such as Angell (1991:241-266); Berman (1990:75-80); Boyer (1990: 4-7); Butts (1988:187); Callan (1994:190-221); Colville and Clarken (1992:8-7); Drake (1987:200-306); Drisko (1993:105-119); Fowler (1990:81-83); Harwood (1992:47-86); Harwood and Hahn (1992:63); Levitt and Longstreet (1983:142-148); Mullins (1990:29); Newmann (1989:357-360; 366) and Pratte (1988:303-312), the attributes of a good citizen in a constitutional democracy and the role of the school in this regard are, among other things, the following:

Understanding of and commitment to democratic values

Good citizens understand and are committed to the values inherent in the Constitution and Bill of Rights (Butts, 1988:186). According to scholars such as Butts (1988:187), Drisko (1993: 105-119) and Levitt and Longstreet (1983:142-148) these values are justice, freedom, equality, diversity, authority, privacy, due process, human participation, truth, patriotism, human rights, rule of law, tolerance, mutual assistance, personal and civic responsibility, self-restraint and self-respect. Butts (1988:187) identifies the following twelve core values as fundamental to the theory and practice of democratic citizenship: the six obligations of citizenship, including justice, equality, authority, participation, truth and patriotism; and the six rights of citizenship, including freedom, diversity, privacy, due process, property, and human rights. Butts calls the above group of values the "Twelve Tables of Civism". Drisko (1993:105-119) identifies three elements that schools must provide as part of high-quality civic education: a curriculum that is based on the fundamental principles as put forth in the national documents; a school culture that is based on principles of democracy; and opportunities for students to apply their knowledge of democracy. Levitt and Longstreet (1983:142-148) argue that discussion of controversial matters in classrooms is essential to developing authentic democratic values such as equality, freedom, human rights, and self-restraint in students.

Respect for the common good

Citizens in order to be effective and good need to act from respect for the common good, i.e. they need to be willing to deliberate about the nature of the public good and how to achieve it. They also need to possess compassion, ethical commitment, social responsibility, a sense of interdependence among people and between people and their environment, and they need to express their commitment to the common good through their actions, such as voting, volunteerism, serving on juries, petitioning the government for change, etc. (Drisko, 1993:118-110). Harwood and Hahn (1992:63) proceed from the assumption that "the essence of healthy democracy is open dialogue about issues of public concern", and identify research findings about effective approaches for holding classroom discussions on controversial issues. Colville and Clarken (1992:8-7) describe research showing the effectiveness of citizenship education in developing socially responsible citizens by improving their knowledge and abilities such as clear reasoning, critical thinking, empathy, reflection, and decision-making. Drake (1987: 200-306) describes an array of pressing international problems — widespread poverty, overpopulation, human rights abuses, environmental pollution and so on — and makes recommendations for actions citizens can take to address current world problems.

Newmann (1989:357-360; 366) argues that programmes designed to foster civic partici-

pation in students must also include opportunities for them to reflect about community participation. He describes the kinds of issues that emerge when people engage in community participation and suggests ways that educators can help students to deal with these issues. Pratte (1988:303-312) describes problems with citizenship education as it is usually practised in the schools and suggests an alternative approach. He contends that teachers should focus on the moral significance of all school subject matter they teach so that students will acquire both the disposition and the habit of acting for the public good.

Knowledge and understanding of political concepts, issues, structures and systems

Effective and good citizens should have knowledge and understanding of, among other things, the national documents, the structure of government, the political process and the global context in which a country functions (Boyer, 1990:6). Boyer (1990:4-7) argues that preparing students to assume citizenship responsibilities is one of the main purposes of education, claims that education for citizenship is not adequately addressed in schools, and discusses the elements that should comprise citizenship education programmes such as knowledge and understanding of political concepts, issues, structures and systems. Mullins (1990:29) recommends that students should develop citizenship skills as well as knowledge and understanding of political concepts, issues, structures and systems via active learning approaches in reading, writing, observing, debating, role-play, simulations, use of statistics, decision-making and problem-solving.

Higher level thinking skills and a patriotic feeling

Competent citizens require skills in higher level thinking processes — critical reasoning, problem solving, decision-making, perspective-taking, divergent thinking, constructing hypotheses, and evaluating evidence (Callan,1994:200). Callan (1994:190-221) describes two extreme points of view toward politics and government — a blind uncritical patriotism that he views as "sentimental", and a hypercritical outlook that leads to cynicism and apathy. He offers a third position — a conception of political virtue that allows for both critical thinking and patriotic feeling. Harwood (1992:47-86) reviews research from the 1990s which investigated the relationship between climate measures in Social Sciences classrooms and student attitudes toward the political process. In general, open classroom environments featuring student participation and free expression have a positive effect on student attitudes toward the political process. There is some slight evidence which indicates that open classroom climates also positively impact political knowledge, participation and a patriotic feeling.

Social skills

Social skills identified as important in critical high-functioning citizens include communication, conflict management, consensus building, and working in co-operative endeavour (Berman, 1990:76). Berman (1990:75-80) defines social responsibility as a personal investment in the well-being of others, identifies the knowledge and skills necessary for practising social responsibility, and suggests ways the knowledge and skills can be imparted in schools and classrooms. He also describes some programmes aimed at developing social responsibility in participants.

Attitude of participation in democratic processes

Effective and good citizens believe in the efficacy of civic participation, are interested in participating, and have a feeling of obligation to participate (Angell, 1991:260). Angell (1991:241-266) reviews research on the relationship between classroom climate variables and students' civic dispositions and skills. Desirable outcomes such as feelings of interest and obligation to participate in democratic processes in society were found among students whose classrooms were characterized by co-operative activities, opportunities for free expression, respect for diverse viewpoints and participation in democratic discussion and decision-making. Fowler's (1990:81-83) discussion focuses on a hands-on curriculum, community service, and voter registration as key elements in developing actively participating citizens.

The above review has revealed the following: a good citizen in a constitutional democracy is someone who possesses among other things the following characteristics: understanding of and commitment to democratic values, respect for the common good, knowledge and understanding of political concepts, issues, structures and systems, higher-level thinking skills and a patriotic feeling, social skills, and an attitude of participation in democratic processes; and that democratic citizenship education in public schools is important for the survival of a constitutional democracy.

Method

Individual interviews were conducted to obtain more explicit information about what African teachers believed about citizenship and the characteristics associated with being a good citizen. The interviews were set up by sending a personal letter, followed by a telephone call (where possible). Respondents were told what the interview would be about, and assured of confidentiality. A careful "set-up" process was used so that a range of teachers would be represented:

1. GET (General Education and Training; Grades 1 to 9) and FET (Further Education and Training; Grades 10 to 12) phase teachers. The GET phase teachers comprised foundational (Grades 1 to 3), intermediate (Grades 4 to 6) and senior phase (Grades 7 to 9) teachers.
2. Teachers responsible for different subjects and/or learning areas. Subject teachers of English, Zulu, Mathematics, Science, Biology, History, Geography, Accounting, Business Economics, and Economics. Learning Area teachers of Social Sciences, Economic Sciences, Mathematics, Natural Sciences, Languages, Technology, Life Orientation, and Arts and Culture.
3. Schools within one geographical area, namely, the East Rand in the province of Gauteng.
4. Teachers from different catchment areas. Township schools located in the former townships or locations with mainly African learners. Multi-ethnic schools located in the former white towns and cities comprising white, Indian, coloured and African learners.
5. 15 teachers from five primary schools and 15 teachers from five secondary schools.
6. Male as well as female teachers.

The teachers were interviewed, using the agreed schedule of questions (see later). The interviews lasted approximately 35 minutes. Interviews were conducted privately, where distractions would be limited. Each interview began with a restatement of the purpose of the interview, a promise of confidentiality and a reassurance that there were no right or wrong answers, and that the interviewer truly "desired to know what they thought". Interviewees were first asked to provide informally a brief sketch of themselves (i.e. professional background, teaching subject

and/or learning area, and any biographical information they chose to share). Then the standard questioning began. All teachers were asked the following questions:

- When you hear the word citizenship, what comes to your mind? What characteristics do you think of?
- When you think of a good citizen of South Africa, what do you think of? Why do you so describe him/her? Why are the characteristics he/she possesses so important?
- Would you describe yourself as a good citizen? If so, in what ways? If not, why not? Who strongly influenced you in your growth towards becoming a good citizen? Are you rewarded in any way for being a good citizen?

Finally, at the close of the interviews, teachers were asked if they wanted to share anything else which they had not been given the opportunity to mention. Teachers were then thanked for their personal time and professional contribution to the project.

The hypothesis investigated was: because of African teachers' human rights philosophy of *ubuntu* and the legacy of apartheid they would see a good citizen of South Africa as someone who possesses the following characteristics: responsible attitude toward the welfare of others; participation within the community; tolerance of a diversity of views; morality; patriotism; knowledge and critical thinking skills. Involvement in research projects and teaching activities, concerning *ubuntu* as human rights philosophy and history as a discipline, provided the researcher with the necessary prior knowledge to include the above two notions in the hypothesis. During the apartheid years, laws which laid the foundation for discrimination and segregation were in place. These laws restricted the movement, employment, education, political rights, etc. of the African people in South Africa (Mulaudzi, Bottaro & Visser, 2003: 16-17). The dispossession, disempowerment and disenfranchisement of the Africans would, arguably, have had an impact on their views regarding citizenship and the characteristics of a good citizen. *Ubuntu* as a traditional African moral concept is used pre-scientifically as a tool of transformation, affirmation and pride. It relates to communality, humanness, equity and social justice. Solidarity (people who stand together) and collective unity (the group is stronger than its members) are seen as core values of *ubuntu*. *Ubuntu* helps to recognise not only the rights of the individual, but also the responsibilities and duties towards other people (Smith, Deacon & Schutte, 1999:26).

Results

All interviews were recorded and transcribed. Transcriptions were then analysed. Interviewees' responses to the questions were assessed on a scale of 1 to 6. Strong support for a characteristic was represented by 6, to no support for a characteristic by 1. A mean score of 3.5 or greater was interpreted as a positive view of a characteristic and a mean score of less than 3.5 as a negative view of a characteristic. Table 1 summarises the rank order of each of the eight qualities viewed by the total sample of African teachers (N=30) as constitutive of being a good citizen.

Analysis of the data lent itself to three clear categories of characteristics African teachers associated with being a good citizen, namely, communitarian, public, and knowledge. The factor mean scores were calculated by averaging the responses to each of the questions on the individual factors. The factor mean scores are interpreted in the same way as the item means. Table 2 summarises the factor means, rank order, and percentages for the entire sample of teachers (N=30) for the three categories of characteristics.

Table 1 Rank order by means of total sample (N=30) of the eight qualities of a good citizen

Variable	Mean	Standard deviation	N	%
Responsibility	5.62	0.63	28	93.3
Morality	5.49	0.77	27	90.0
Tolerance	5.39	0.85	25	86.6
Participation	5.12	1.06	24	80.0
Critical thinking	4.88	1.01	20	66.6
Patriotism	4.84	1.08	20	66.6
Obedience	4.63	1.17	17	56.6
Knowledge	4.58	0.97	8	26.6

Table 2 Factor means, rank order and percentages for the entire sample of teachers (N=30) for the three categories of characteristics

Factors	Mean	Percentage
Communitarian characteristics	5.5	80
Public characteristics	4.4	6
Knowledge characteristics	4.0	4

According to the above data, the teachers saw communitarian characteristics as more important in the characteristics of a good citizen than the other factors. An examination of the mean scores reveals the following: 26 (about 80%) of the total sample of teachers rated the communitarian characteristics as more important in a good citizen than the public or the knowledge characteristics; 2 (about 6%) of the total sample of the teachers rated the public characteristics as more important in a good citizen than the communitarian or the knowledge characteristics; 1 (about 4%) of the total sample of the teachers rated knowledge characteristics as more important in a good citizen than the communitarian or the public characteristics. The above percentages do not add up to 100%, as some teachers viewed two or more factors as equally important. The hypothesis as set out earlier for this project was therefore confirmed.

Findings

All interview quotations serve as examples only and are in no way presented as "proof" of the findings. A close reading of the research results and the teachers' comments generated the following characteristics which they associated with being a good citizen:

Communitarian characteristics

There were four main issues which were highlighted by teacher responses:

- *Responsibilities*: The respondents associated being a good citizen with meeting the responsibilities owed to others as fellow members of the community: *umuntu ngumuntu ngabanye* (a person depends on others to be a person). These were typical comments:

  My understanding of being a good citizen is that you look after and you help others, the elderly, the homeless, the AIDS orphans, ... and we as Africans we're supportive,

being a supportive community.

We all have different histories, we all have different capabilities and it's a good citizen who uses whatever capability he or she has to help others.

The community, as found in teacher responses, was preponderantly locally conceived (largely in terms of the community within which individuals live their lives). It was common to find teachers describing discharging one's responsibilities as a good citizen in terms of supporting others in time of need, not letting anyone go without food, shelter, support, etc., and the contrast being made with those behaviours that are careless of people's welfare. The latter were seen as definitive of what it is not to be a good citizen. The rationale for the kinds of behaviour noted and approved of was that such behaviour was indicative of the fact that

everyone has a responsibility to keep the community functioning.

one discovers one's humanity through interaction with the community ... you know ubuntu.

- *Morality*: Respondents, while recognizing that being a citizen was partly a matter of legal status, affirmed that it was the moral dimensions of citizenship that mattered to them. This was a typical comment:

  The legal aspect of citizenship doesn't bother me. I see it more as a moral issue.

  In keeping with the implications of the moral dimensions of citizenship, a distinction was drawn between the bad South African citizen who acts in ways contrary to the welfare of others and the wider community; the good South African citizen who is conscious of the welfare of others and the wider community and acts accordingly; and the passive South African citizen who is someone who speaks the language of good citizenship but who does nothing to further the interests of others and the common good. The language of caring, solidarity, equality, unselfishness, co-operation and demonstrating respect was used to give substance to the distinguishing characteristics of the good citizen.
- *Tolerance*: Tolerance of a diversity of views, values, beliefs and of people unlike themselves figured as constitutive of good citizens. The following quotation captures the gist of this issue:

  For my value and belief system ... even my African traditional beliefs ... to be accepted even if it is not the same as that of the coloured, Indian or white people, and equally I should accept theirs. I think that kind of tolerance is what being a good citizen in South Africa is about — the Rainbow Nation. In terms of the community functioning effectively, if you don't have that tolerance, ... you know we still remember Verwoerd's apartheid years ... it can't work.
- *Participation*: The notion of participation in the community emerged as a key concept in discussion of how one discharged the responsibilities of being a good citizen. Participation embraced the idea of working towards some collective goal of the local community to which one belongs. It was not uncommon to find remarks such as the following in response to the questions as to whether respondents were good citizens:

  To be a good citizen I must try to get very involved with all my brothers and sisters ... I would hope that by getting involved I'm a good citizen of Tembisa.

  It is about participation ... you can't sit in your home and think nice things ... . You have to contribute and do your thing; I think in that way the African or black people develops and runs itself ... simunye *(we are one).*

Being a good citizen of Daveyton and South Africa is an expression of duties and responsibilities towards others for their own sake, because that is how one must behave, one towards the other.

Public characteristics

There were two main issues which were highlighted by teacher responses:

- *Obedience*: References in interviews to the importance of being law-abiding, might be used as evidence of a recognition of the importance of authority in human affairs. It is fairly common for teachers, in response to the question of whether they are good citizens, to cite their own characteristic obedience to the laws of the country as evidence. These were typical comments:

  Yes, ... I would say, I am a good South African citizen because I obey all the laws in the South African Constitution.

  But there was not any evidence of being law-abiding and rule-following for their own sake. All the references to following the law were invariably qualified by a statement of why it was that laws promote social harmony and solidarity. These were typical comments:

  I don't break the rules that are there for the good working of my community ... and country.

  I obey the rules and do it for the sake of all South Africans (black, white, coloured and Indian.
- *Patriotism*: The idea of patriotism figured very prominently in the interview data. The respondents reiterated that being a good citizen was to love one's country because of the values, sentiments and principles for which it stands. The following were typical comments:

  I love the South African flag, the national anthem, ... all that kind of thing.

  I like Nelson Mandela a lot, also the South African flag, our Constitution and Nkosi sikelel' iAfrica (*Lord bless Africa*) ...

Knowledge characteristics

There were two main issues which were highlighted by teacher responses:

- *Knowledge of political issues and concepts.* There was a great readiness among African teachers to associate citizenship with the enjoyment of political rights. These were typical comments:

  As South African citizens we have political rights ... freedom of speech, freedom of press and political participation through elections, ... participation within a political party — Thabo Mbeki's ANC ... it brings political liberty, and political freedom ... Well, for me, it's to understand democratic processes such as the upcoming elections in 2004 — you know our tenth anniversary — and the importance of them ... , I think it's to do with the way democracy and politics work.
- *Knowledge of political structures and systems and critical thinking.* Some teachers mentioned the importance of knowledge of political structures or systems:

  Knowing the structures of South African society, the political structures ... and that these things are essential for a free and democratic South Africa and that we need to know these structures and how to participate in them.

Awareness of how political systems, our democracy, work means that if you wish to be free, happy and empowered, you go within these frameworks.

The teachers did not favour a simplistic return to the apartheid approach of teaching the South African Constitution. Teachers emphasized that the knowledge had to be used as an aid to critical thinking rather than merely be received. The interview data emphasized the need for critical thinking as opposed to the acceptance of information:

how important it is for us as Africans to make up our own minds and to think about things.

Conclusion and recommendations

Schools are not only needed for educational but also for political reasons: on the school, more than upon any other institution, will depend the quality and nature of the citizenship of the future. There is a clear link between knowledge of civic institutions, active citizenship, and the maintenance of democracy. South African public schools are definitely the best place to educate democratic minds because their doors are open to everyone. The neighbourhood school is the general meeting place and the centre of a community of learning. It is a place where democratic values may not only be taught, but also modelled by words and deeds. However, education for democratic citizenship is an education that is far more rigorous in its expectations and far more difficult to deliver than schooling in the other subjects and/or learning areas. It is an education that, among other results, encourages critical thinking and co-operative solutions; celebrates diversity; challenges the *status quo*; and fosters a broader sense of citizenship than the narrow nationalist approach of the old apartheid citizenship education has done.

To make sense of the introduction of citizenship education in South African public schools, I have outlined scholars' views on the attributes of a good citizen and the role of the school in this regard, and listed and described a number of teacher-identified qualities of a good citizen. A comparison between the findings of the literature review and the empirical study reveals that African teachers have a very specific, community-oriented understanding of citizenship, whereas the international literature reveals a somewhat more individualistic understanding of citizenship. It is also interesting to note that most African teachers were not prone to political critique.

The debate about democracy and citizenship in Africa falls outside the scope of this article. However it remains a very important issue within the citizenship and citizenship education debate worldwide. Citizenship is not an unproblematic, universal concept. Its content is hotly debated, and its historical location often has a lot to do with how it is understood. The citizenry, whilst theoretically a homogeneous entity, are in fact generally diverse and fractured with prominent inequalities that infuse debates about who a citizen is and what his/her rights are. The ideal characteristics of a citizen and their implications for citizenship education have been put forward in this article.

As only African teachers were part of the research project, the findings of this research project cannot be claimed to be representative. Other teachers' understanding of democracy is also relevant as illustrated by the current debate which attempts to make sense of group rights as opposed to individual rights, and which struggles to understand how these can be kept in a just balance. Few, however, could disagree that South Africans need democratic citizenship education.

Against the above backdrop, the article is concluded with the following recommendations:

1. Necessary infrastructure: For the successful promotion of citizenship education in South African public schools, an infrastructure is necessary that helps to increase the quality of citizenship education and thus the quality of democracy. Elements of such infrastructure may be: citizenship education organisations; publishers that produce adequate teaching materials and specialised magazines for teachers and learners; a curriculum development unit (preferably independent); committees that evaluate and assess the educational process for citizenship; institutions for citizenship education that produce services and activities and offer advice on citizenship issues; government funding for curriculum materials and professional development, supported by syllabus revision and mandatory testing, etc.
2. Dissemination of information: The dissemination of information regarding the nature and importance of citizenship education to parents and other role-players is essential. Ways to disseminate information may be brochures, community newsletters, advertisements, option and parents' evenings, songs, plays, posters, etc.
3. Status emphasised: The status of citizenship education in public schools needs to be emphasised. One of the most obvious ways to do this is by appointing a senior member of staff to exercise clear responsibility for citizenship education. This does not mean giving one of the deputies yet another job to add to the many he/she already does but, rather, undertaking high-profile initiatives which involve regular, frequent and meaningful consultation, target setting and review. However, the success of citizenship education ultimately rests with teachers at the classroom level. Not only will more need to be done to convince teachers that citizenship education deserves a place within the curriculum, but there must also be ongoing support through professional development and provision of teaching resources. Citizenship education should also be promoted as a central concern from Grades 1 to 12 , whether it is taught as a part of integrated studies or in separate units or courses.
4. A head start: The South African system of government relies for its efficacy and legitimacy on an informed, active, knowledgeable, and vigilant citizenry. In order to maintain the light of democracy which was established in South Africa in 1994, public schools can, and should, undertake the major responsibility for cultivating engaged and active South African citizens. Effective citizenship education is the primary means for teaching and learning the democratic values that underlie the South African system of ordered liberty, which provides majority rule with protection of minority rights.

The above was only an exploratory study. Issues which deserve further attention are classroom strategies for teaching the characteristics of a good citizen as listed by African teachers, and ways to address alarming current realities, such as xenophobia, homophobia, femicide, etc.

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