

Rationale for the infusion of family life education in the social studies curriculum of junior secondary schools in Botswana

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The welfare of the family is important if we are to live peacefully in a global society. The family is a unit in which all the acceptable norms and behaviours of a larger society are imbibed. In fact, the overall reflections of the global community are deeply rooted in the way the smallest family units are built. In so doing, family life education which consists of the knowledge, skills, and attitudes acquired at school and particularly at the family level, has a significant role to play in the way humans behave at the global level. Global stability, economic, political and social development, and in fact, the world order depend to a large extent on how the smallest units of individual families are morally equipped with the wherewithal to deal with challenges in an effort to make the world a better place to live in. The purpose of this paper is to provide rationale for the infusion of family life education in the social studies curriculum of Junior Secondary Schools in Botswana by way of further coverage of topics on family life education, encouragement of positive socialization and morality, and the acquisition of decision making processes at the family level.

Introduction

Many colonies, particularly in Africa, started becoming independent as from the 1950s. For instance, Ghana attained her independence in 1957 while several other African countries gained independence in the 1960s: Nigeria (1960), Tanzania (1961), Uganda (1962), Kenya (1963), Malawi (1964), Zambia (1964), Botswana (1966) and Zimbabwe (1980), just to mention a few. Before and shortly after independence, emphasis was on the British curriculum while knowledge of history and the social sciences was mainly based on memorization with the recall of information such as the names of kings, queens, rivers, lakes, cities, hills and valleys of the British Isles (Adeyemi, 1995). Pedagogical programmes, generally unsuitable to meet the needs and aspirations of the youth and the society at large were designed by the British Colonial Office for implementation in the colonies (Akinlaye, 1981, Adeyemi and Adeyinka, 2003). While some countries in Africa were colonized by the Dutch (e.g. South Africa), the French (e.g. Cameroon), the Portuguese (e.g. Mozambique) and the Belgians (e.g. Democratic Republic of the Congo), Botswana was a British Protectorate, due to the threats of the Boers of South Africa (Tlou and Campbell, 1984). Since independence, efforts have been made to redefine educational goals and values in African countries. Individuals, organizations, societies, as well as governments have made tremendous efforts to outline educational policies, values and goals which are deemed suitable for various societies in Africa. It was in line with these efforts that innovations in the area of school curriculum were being made to produce citizens who are capable of participating in a democracy.

As a result of the calls for a change in the educational set-up in many African countries, notable conferences were held both in and out of Nigeria to make education more appropriate to the yearnings and needs of citizens. A significant one was the Mombasa Conference of 1968 which resulted in the formation of the African Social Studies Programmes (ASSP) now known as African Social and Environmental Studies Programme (ASESP) with the inclusion of environmental education in its areas of interest. Botswana, a landlocked country located in the southern part of Africa and situated between latitude 10 and 26S and longitude 20 and 30E is a member of the African Social Studies and Environmental Programme.

Going by the educational policy in Botswana, children are eligible to enrol in Standard 1 following their sixth birthday. After a period of seven years they graduate as primary school leavers. These primary school leavers are then admissible to junior secondary schools for a further period of three years to become junior secondary school leavers. They may proceed further to the senior secondary for three years in order to become senior secondary school leavers and finally for a period of four years to become university graduates.

The aims of the Three-Year Junior Secondary Social Studies programme in Botswana are line with the aims of the African Social Studies Programme which are:

1. Understanding and appreciation of Botswana's environment, society, development and their inter-relationships;
2. Recognising the importance of culture within Botswana and the problems that accompany cultural or societal change;
3. Understanding the main development issues facing Botswana and the main social problems facing humanity;
4. Appreciating Botswana's position within the African continent in terms of regional, political, and economic groupings and its bi-lateral relations with other countries;
5. Understanding the concept of governance and structure of the government of their country;
6. Practising concepts of justice and good citizenship and choosing to participate in the growth and development of society;
7. Analysing and using simple statistical information and maps;
8. Collecting, organising, evaluating and using data. (Republic of Botswana, 1996, p. ii).

A review of the *Three-Year Junior Secondary Social Studies Syllabus* depicts that topics relevant to concepts concerning family welfare education together with their general objectives include aspects shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Topics and General Objectives related to Family Life Education

Topics	General Objectives
Family	<p>Understand the purposes, composition, types of families and changes that are occurring.</p> <p>Develop an awareness about child abuse and the types of child abuse practices.</p> <p>Generate a gender analysis on the heading of households by women and men in Botswana.</p> <p>Understand themselves, their families and population through family variables such as those of structure, values and totems.</p> <p>Understand the relationship between culture, family and citizenship.</p>

Extracted from Republic of Botswana, (1996), *Three-Year Junior Secondary Social Studies Syllabus* pp. 3, 8, and 17

A close study of the overall topics of the Three-Year Social Studies Syllabus depicts that the topics on family are taught under two units out of a total of 22 units overall for the entire programme.

From the general objectives, some elements of the family such as composition, types, child abuse, gender analysis, and some values and population variables are some of the sub-topics learned by students.

This, in the view of this author seems inadequate taking into consideration the important role of the family and the understanding that the family is one of the basic institutions of mankind which serves as the focal point for national and global development. The general behaviors of humans can be linked to the behaviours imbibed from the family levels. I assume and agree with UNESCO's stand therefore, that if proper attention is paid to the individual and the family, problems at the community and national levels will take care of themselves (UNESCO, 1978, p. 47). In support of this statement, UNESCO has suggested that learning should ideally begin close to the individual's own experience before progressing to matters beyond the immediate experience which can focus on how family and the life cycle events affect and are affected by broader population processes. There is evidence indicating that family forms, both nuclear and extended, are undergoing structural changes as a result of modernization (Women and Law in Southern Africa Research Trust, 1997), yet I concur with the movement that the family should mould their children with acceptable societal norms for the creation of a peaceful environment. Even though the family is now influenced by modernization, the need to still go back to our roots for some positive traditional family values is necessary. To this end, I advocate the infusion of family welfare education into the social studies curriculum of junior secondary schools in Botswana.

What is Family Life Education?

Literature on the definition of family welfare education shows that it is a very recent innovation which is of interest to researchers, educators, civil servants, policy makers and academics. Various definitions have been advanced for family welfare education. According to the International Planned Parenthood Association (1985), family life education is an educational process designed to assist young people in their physical, social, emotional and moral development as they prepare for adulthood, marriage, parenthood, ageing as well as their social relationships in the socio-cultural context of the family and the society (p.9).

From this definition, the Association further identified the objectives of family life education as assisting the youth in learning how to:

- Cope with physical, emotional and social changes which are part of the process of growing up.
- Understand that they are becoming more and more sexually mature and to realize the importance of guiding these sex-drives into wholesome sex attitudes and behaviour.
- Develop knowledge of the physiological processes of human conception and birth, the consequences of adolescent pregnancies and parenting and to be aware of alternatives to pregnancy and conception.
- Realize that acquiring sexually transmitted diseases (STD) is one of the problems that sexually active adolescents can encounter and to stress the value of fidelity and to increase the understanding that STD is a social as well as a medical problem.
- Understand and cope with changes in the adolescents' lives and in the society in which they live; for example, the breaking down of traditional social structures, the changing roles of men and women and marriage practices.
- Develop a good knowledge of the concept of the family, family roles and functions to recognize the various tasks that need to be undertaken for the well-being and maintenance of the family.

- Establish and maintain satisfying relationships with members of the family, with friends, and with others whom they come into contact.
- Develop the knowledge, values and skills necessary for adult life, marriage, parenthood and participation in the life of the community.
- Communicate effectively with others and make wise decision about all matters connected with family life, personal relationships and membership of the community.

An examination of the objectives of family life education above calls for great dedication on the part of the teachers, the learners and the parents. Further, the realization of the objectives will depend very much on the seriousness attached to the way various topics on family welfare education are handled in terms of the methods and materials and the follow-up of what is taught at school by parents at home and the students themselves. While this paper may touch on some aspects of these concerns, the paper is mainly concerned with building a rationale for the infusion of family welfare education in the social studies curriculum in junior secondary schools in Botswana.

Building a rationale for Family Life Education

There is no subject within the school curriculum that does not contribute to the overall development of the learner. Social studies in particular has been recognized in many African countries as a subject that helps to develop in learners the practice of reflection and participatory citizenship. It is increasingly realized that the family is a unit where the children imbibe skills in socialisation. It is often argued that children, particularly in their adolescence, spend more time at home than in school. Therefore, it becomes necessary to target the family as a unit in order to achieve the educational goals deemed fit for the society. In so doing, I recognize four areas of argument to buttress my case for the infusion of family life education into the social studies curriculum at the junior secondary school level in Botswana. I base my arguments on the following premises.

Inadequate coverage of topics related to the family

As mentioned above, a close study of the Three-Year Social Studies Syllabus indicates that only two of the 22 units of topics taught are on the family (Table 1). Even though topics such as family composition, child abuse, gender analysis, structure, values and totems of the family are some of the topics included under the family unit, I propose that more topics should be included. In doing so, I suggest the addition of family unity, love and affection, sexuality education, growing up, adolescence, courting, marriage, naming ceremonies, spacing of births, child care, family budgeting, sex roles, emotional and psychological problems associated with age, cultural values placed on children, working parents, effects of tradition of modern couples, acceptable and unacceptable norms, friends, neighbours, peer groups, family quality, and population education, among others.

Central to the existing and the additional topics or themes should be the development of the art of creativity, critical thinking skills for problem solving and conflict resolution. Further, a good part of our culture which depicts family norms should be integrated into the teaching-learning situation at the classroom level and in homes.

Societal benefits

It has been recognised that many agents come into play in the socialisation process. The parents, and more significantly the mother, are powerful socialisation agents. The mother is a key variable because her personality inevitably influences the manner in which the child grows. The family members, whether nuclear or extended, also play a major role in the socialisation process. Love is an important feature in the home. The children need the love and affection of a

stable home-life with the involvement of both parents in an attempt to build a psychologically and socially well-balanced environment. The role of the peers in the process of socialisation of the individual cannot be over-emphasised. It is likely that as children become adolescents, they participate less in family activities and experience all sorts of pressure from their peers. They tend to seek for peer support at that developmental phase. The school contributes in no small measure to the socialisation process of the individual through the formal and hidden curriculum. The rural or urban community and to some extent the global community affects the exposure of the individual in the overall socialisation profile.

Socialisation evolves because of interaction between and among individuals. It is a very broad term and is more than just formal education. When there are two or more people, a form of interaction is bound to occur. Interactions can also take place between humans and their physical environment. Interaction includes the acquisition of attitudes and values, behaviours, habits and skills transmitted in school, family, neighbourhood, ethnic group, religious group, nation and the world at large. Socialisation is made more complex by access to the media e.g. radio, television and other forms of electronic devices. Socialisation is the process which converts individuals into people (Ogburn & Nimkoff, 1940), and it is the process by which someone learns the way of a given society or social group so that he or she can function within it (Elkin, 1960). To Wrong (1961), socialisation is more than the transmission of the particular culture of a society to an individual at birth, it is the process of becoming human and acquiring uniquely human attributes from interactions with others, primarily in childhood and secondarily in adulthood. Crane (1992) and Coleman (1992) agree that socialisation is a process whereby individuals become participating members of the society, which in turn, induces its members to behave in socially acceptable ways absorbing the values, standards and beliefs current in that society.

Merrill (1969) identifies the specific aims of the process of socialisation as: (1) Teaching the fundamentals of life in society; (2) instilling the societal aspirations; (3) transmitting skills important in the society; and (4) teaching to fulfill social roles. While these aims are fostered by social studies education, salient topics from family life education could also be infused with those already existing in social studies to further enrich the content.

Morality

Awino (2000), Ganguli, Mehrotra and Mehlinger (1981) and other scholars have examined the issue of moral education in their writings. Ganguli et al (1981) quoting Smith (1973) defined a moral act as any corrigible human action that has a significant impact upon the character or well-being of any person or upon any creature capable of feeling pain. The act of behaving well in the society is guided by moral norms which are binding on all citizens. Any deviation from the norm is regarded as immoral, although what is moral in one society may be immoral in another depending on the principles, standards and the rules governing the society.

Awino (2000) in examining the relationship between social studies and moral education in Africa and specifically in Botswana noted that the two disciplines are complementary in their objectives. Both subjects have many themes in common that are geared toward the production of an educated, informed, productive, caring, democratic, accountable, moral, united and tolerant society. Attempts are being made in many African countries to separate Moral Education from Religious Education or Social Studies Education. It should however be noted that most of the themes in Social Studies, Religious Education and Moral Education are complementary.

Vogler & Schwartz (1993) highlight the importance of the development of good character. In like manner, Mechikoff & Estes (1993) note that no other civilization in the history of the world embraced athletic competition and intellectual development as did the ancient Greeks, emphasising the fact that the Greeks believed in the physical development of the body in a way that was aesthetic as well as athletic. Hellison & Templin (1991) point out that personal-social development claims have been an integral part of education. Personal-social development is related to the attributes of the affective domain such as self-esteem, courage, cooperation and fair play which in turn enhances the central role of moral and ethical character development, and also the person as a whole.

In fact, Stevenson (1975) as cited by Shields & Bredemeier (1995) sums it up by submitting that, 'in the final analysis, it is the rationale of 'character building', of moral development, of citizenship development, of social development that justifies the existence of educational institutions' (p.487).

In social studies, goals designed for students are intimately related to those of family life education. Both cater for the development of the psychomotor, affective and cognitive domains. For instance, the National Curriculum Council (1990) identified some foundation subjects to provide a broad and balanced curriculum which:

- promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at the school and in society
- prepares pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life (p.1).

The aims of the teaching and learning of social studies and family life education in African countries are intimately linked to the above general objectives. It then follows that the topic of Family Life Education be fused with those of Social Studies since the former does not exist as a subject in the curriculum of junior Secondary Schools in Botswana.

Decision making

Decision-making is the heart of social studies instruction (Engle, 1960). A number of researchers have stressed the need to teach decision-making if youths are to be rational actors who can make reasoned decisions from a group of alternatives. Individuals need to perfect their decision-making abilities and use their acquired information in dealing with day-to-day problems (Adeyemi, 2000). Individuals therefore need to figure out what they know, believe, or do and how to use knowledge by employing data. Decisions should be made on the basis of rational and systematic examination of information, alternative courses of action, and the consequences of those alternatives. Ellis (2002), Farris (2001), Banks, Banks and Clegg (1998) further support this view and suggest that in any democratic society citizens should participate as fully as possible in decision making processes.

There are many decisions that are being made at the family level on daily basis. The teenagers who form the cream of junior secondary school students in Botswana should be given the opportunity, not only at school, but at home in the family setting to develop into responsible, rational actors who are capable of successfully leading the country in the future. It is recognized that majority of students spend more of their time at home than in school. Therefore, parents have the responsibility of providing wonderful opportunities for their children to grow in as many areas as possible that are related to civic responsibility and citizenship to complement pedagogical efforts at school. It is from the foregoing that I am calling for the emphasis, and in fact, the fusion of family life education into the existing social studies curriculum to better enhance the knowledge, skills and attitudes in the day to day activities of our children and for their healthy development.

One pertinent area of concern to parents is the high prevalence of HIV/AIDS among youth in Botswana. Government has made tremendous efforts at curtailing the spread of this pandemic through the infusion of AIDS related topics into the syllabus. Adeyemi (2003) conducted a research on junior secondary school students and found that their awareness level of the causes, effects and prevention strategies of HIV/AIDS was significantly high. Yet the cases of infection continue to rise. Given this situation, it becomes necessary for parents to get more involved in helping to reduce the incidence of the disease by creating a home environment which focuses on rational decision making.

I suggest that parents talk openly about HIV/AIDS to their children at home. A situation where it is culturally impermissible to discuss issues related to sexuality, marriage and healthy living should give way to open discussion by focusing on decision making process. The benefits and the dangers of making a decision from an array of alternatives should be encouraged at the family level. As an example, I offer the story below to parents as a puzzle to initiate decision making at the family level by putting it across to their children after dinner during a moon-lit night under the tree as traditionally done in the village:

There is a very handsome boy in a village not far from here. He is also very brilliant and has many girlfriends. He has sex with them without taking any precaution. He insists on unsafe sex every time. Eventually he becomes infected with HIV virus. He now has a new HIV-negative girlfriend who insists on safe sex. The boy refuses. (Adeyemi, 2003: 227)

A question may be put to the children: If you were to be the boy or the girl, what would you do? Parents should expect varying answers from their children because a sort of moral dilemma and decision making process is being created. However, the opportunity should be used to reinforce our positive value system by examining the alternatives that border on self-discipline. Therefore, parents should provide numerous opportunities for children to develop the art of decision making in order for them to participate effectively in the ever changing global society.

Conclusion

In 2005, the US Bureau of the Census estimated the world population as 6.4 billion with a growth rate of approximately 1.2%. In most African countries, the population pyramids indicate that the youth account for over 50% of the population in almost all the countries. In Botswana, the population is 1.7 million while the growth rate is 2.4% according to the 2001 population census. In the attempts by various African governments to make their countries economically strong and politically stable, and for the youth to become responsible future leaders, it becomes necessary to teach family life education, not only at the school level, but at the family level. In the context of Botswana, this paper has suggested the inclusion of additional topics related to family life education, the social benefits, the development of positive morality and the acquisition of decision making processes as the basis for the rationale to infuse family life education into the curriculum of junior secondary schools.

Endnote

English and American texts are used in this paper because the influence of both countries is overwhelming. Botswana was a British Protectorate which later on earned its independence in 1964. USA on the other hand, also had tremendous educational influence on Botswana through its many agencies including the USAID.

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