

the Challenges
for Teachers
in the Teaching
of Topics
Associated
with

Botswana's
Vision
2016



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A pillar of Botswana's *Vision 2016* on the development of a moral and tolerant nation says:

In 2016, Botswana will accept the diversity of its people. There will be no stereotypes associated with gender, age, religion or creed, colour, national or ethnic origin, geographical location, language or political opinions. There will be respect of human rights and no abuse of children and women. (Presidential Task Group for a long Term Vision for Botswana, 1997, p. 12)

The world is a diverse ecosystem where humans and the environment must interact and live in harmony. In order to keep any society going, either at the national or global level, the importance of having visions for the improvement of that society cannot be overemphasized. It is in the light of this dream of making Botswana an enviable nation that the *Vision 2016* was published in 1997.

A pillar of the *Vision* focuses on the development of a moral and tolerant nation. An investigation of 64 teachers at the junior secondary school level and the challenges faced by them when teaching topics related to those values are reported here with their attendant remedies.

The identified challenges included the difficulty of the use of critical and ethical

reasoning methods in classes, a lack of community support, inadequate teachers' qualifications and experience, needed teaching resources, and the heterogeneity of the students, among others. The teachers provided some remedies to these challenges, while the investigator advocates for further research on the appropriate methods for teaching values in schools.

Introduction

Just like institutions and governments all over the world have their visions for the positive development of individuals and nations at large, Botswana also finds it appropriate to envisage its vision for the general improvement of its citizenry. Adeyemi and Adeyinka (2001) and Farris (2001) have highlighted the importance of the classroom teacher in bringing about the achievement of these goals of education through the teaching-learning process.

It has been argued that the role of teachers as implementers of the government's decisions on educational matters cannot be overemphasized. They, the teachers, are the facilitators at the classroom level who interact with students through the teaching of relevant topics related to the achievement of local and national goals as documented in the government's policies, syllabuses, and teachers' guides.

Further, it has been suggested that successful instruction requires that teachers themselves have goals. Even though those teacher goals may be vague statements of long-range purposes, they tend to

provide an overall orientation for teachers and decision makers (Ehman, Mehlinger, & Patrick, 1974; Shaver, 1999).

The goals at the school level of implementation usually depend on the national goals and the aspirations of the society as identified and documented by the government. Before the independence of many African nations, a Conference on African Education equated the vision of education of Africans as:

a good father who would want his child to grow to the full stature of an adult, sound in mind and body, skilled and knowledgeable, honourable, participatory in the community, courageous, peaceful and trustworthy, among others. (Conference of Ministers on African Education, 1953)

After independence, efforts have been made through various education policies (Presidential Task Group for a Long Term Vision for Botswana, 1997; Republic of Botswana, 1977; Republic of Botswana, 1994) for the building of a politically, socially, economically, and educationally strong nation. The first document, the *National Policy on Education*, or the Government Paper No. 1, otherwise known as Education for *Kagisano* (or education for social harmony), spells out the four national principles of education for the transformation of the country. Its four national principles are seen as a foundation for nation building and referred to as: *Democracy, Development, Self-reliance, and Unity* (Republic of Botswana, 1977).

Since no document is static, a review of the policy on education has culminated

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in the production of another document, the Government Paper No. 2 of 1994, or the *Revised National Policy on Education*. Then a third document, popularly referred to as *Vision 2016*, broadly envisions the effective preparation of students for life, citizenship, and the world of work, all summed up in the local concept of *botho*.

This concept refers to a person who has a well-rounded character, who is well-mannered, courteous, and disciplined, and who realizes his or her full potential both as an individual and as a part of the community to which he or she belongs (Presidential Task Group, 1997, p. 2).

It is pertinent to state the seven pillars of the *Vision 2016* as the building of:

- ♦ An educated, informed nation;
- ♦ A prosperous, productive and innovative nation;
- ♦ A compassionate, just and caring nation;
- ♦ A safe and secure nation;
- ♦ An open, democratic and accountable nation;
- ♦ A moral and tolerant nation; and
- ♦ A united and proud nation. (Presidential Task Group, 2007, pp. 5-17)

The seven pillars of this vision seem cumbersome and therefore, this article focuses on only one of them, which is "A moral and tolerant nation." This important visionary pillar has profound implications and challenges for social studies teachers at the Botswana junior level of education and at other levels as well.

Objectives of Article

The objectives of this article are to:

1. Investigate the challenges faced by junior secondary social studies teachers in teaching topics and themes related to the achievement of the building a moral and tolerant nation; and
2. Proffer solutions or remedies to the challenges faced by them.

Literature Review

There is no country that does not have its dream of transforming the society into a better place for its citizens to live in. This dream or aspiration cuts across the political, economic, social, technological, and religious fabric of the society. Dewey (1899) argues that the development of any society depends very much on having a plan which can move a society forward. It is through

the realization of such vision that a society can become a stable, prosperous, strong, united, innovative, and an enviable nation in the global arena (Merryfield, 1997).

The brief literature review in this article focuses on the "moral and tolerant" aspects as aspirations of a nation. These two concepts are values which have implications for classroom pedagogy. Morality, according to the document, *Vision 2016*, is centered on the citizens of Botswana being law abiding, religiously and spiritually strong, and coupled with the possession of high ethical standards.

'Tolerance' in the document also depicts a situation where no one is disadvantaged based on gender, age, religion, color, place of origin, language, or political affiliation (Presidential Task Group, 1997, p. 12). The *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (2002) defines morality as beliefs or ideas about what is right and wrong and about how people should behave (p. 922) while tolerance is allowing people to do, say, or believe something without criticism (p. 1521).

No wonder that the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) on November 16, 1995, adopted a Declaration of Principles on Tolerance by recognizing that:

Tolerance is neither indulgence nor indifference. It is respect and appreciation of the rich variety of our world's cultures, our forms of expression and ways of being human. ... People are naturally diverse, only tolerance can ensure the survival of mixed communities in every region of the globe. Education for tolerance should aim at countering influences that lead to fear and exclusion of others and should help young people develop capacity for independent judgement, critical thinking and ethical reasoning. The diversity of our world's cultures and ethnicities is not a pretext for conflict, but is a treasure that enriches us all.

The social studies curriculum all over the world has its foundation in values, character, and moral issues (Ellis, 2002). Values which traditionally have been easily taught through indoctrination in different cultures now become a challenge to modern teachers by way of tackling value issues in the classroom through the reflective approach or value clarification.

For instance, values can easily be taught in a homogenous society but are very difficult to teach in a heterogeneous or pluralistic setting, where the question of whose values the teacher is teaching may arise. Put in other words, cultural values may cut across boundaries, but their acceptance in a heterogeneous community will be difficult. As the saying

goes, one man's meat is another man's poison.

Today, social studies teachers are trying the use of clarification to teach values. Kolberg (1983) believes that the modern classroom is a perfect place to resolve issues of moral tensions and is a setting capable of enhancing the teaching of values, while recognizing that people progress from the lowest developmental stage of moral reasoning to the highest stage of universal ethical-principle orientation.

It should be recognized that Botswana is a pluralistic society with no less than 14 languages and many ethnic groups. For instance, the use of the paramount language, *Setswana*, as a national language is being questioned by minority groups. Further, an aim of the *Three-Year Junior Secondary Social Studies Programme* is that on completion of the junior secondary social studies, students will be able to practice concepts of justice and good citizenship and choose to participate in the growth of the society (Republic of Botswana, 1996, p. iii).

Here, the concepts of justice and good citizenship neatly fit in with the pillar of building a moral and tolerant nation. Chosen from the Form 2 (Grade 9 in the U.S.) Social Studies Syllabus, what follows is an example of a specific objective of the topics to be covered by students that can be categorized as being in the affective domain related to the pillar of a moral and tolerant nation in *Vision 2016*:

Students should be able to justify at least three global virtues of humanity (sacrosanctity of life, freedom, humility, peace, justice and development). (Republic of Botswana, 1966, p. 10)

Topics such as the importance of life, freedom, humility, and national and global peace and justice, among others, indicate the need to teach values on morality and the need for all citizens to tolerate one another for the survival of the society.

Methodology and Sample

The method adopted in this study was a very simple one. It is necessary to specify that as a social studies academic at the University of Botswana, it is often the norm to supervise teacher candidates during the teaching practice exercise between May and June of every year. Teaching practice is a requirement for student teachers in order to complete their training as professional teachers.

The exercise involves posting the student teachers or candidates into various junior and senior secondary schools across the country to teach and be assessed by su-

supervisors (teaching staff from the University and cooperating staffing in the field). The investigator used the opportunity to collect data in May and June, 2008, not from the student teachers, but from the regular teachers of social studies in the junior secondary schools visited, based on the two objectives of the research.

The investigator decided to distribute questionnaires to as many regular teachers of social studies as possible in all the junior secondary schools visited by him. In this study, not all the junior secondary schools in Botswana were covered because of the large size of the country and the constraint of time. Botswana is a country located in the Southern part of Africa with an area of 582,200 square kilometers. Some of the schools are located in remote areas with a terrain of semi-desert. As a result, it would have been too difficult to visit the schools in those areas. The sample was therefore made of teachers of social studies purposively found in the schools visited regularly by the investigator.

The instrument used was also a simple one. It was a one-page paper titled *The Challenges of Teaching Social Studies Topics for the Realization of a Moral and Tolerant Nation*. It was divided into two sections: A and B. Section A was blank, with the instruction that social studies teachers should write freely as many challenges as possible faced by them in the teaching of topics related to the development of a moral and tolerant nation as presented in the Junior Secondary Social Studies Syllabus.

Like Section A, Section B was also blank and the teachers were requested to provide and also write freely their views on the solutions to the challenges identified by them in Section A. The teachers were informed of the confidentiality of their responses. Further, interviews were held with some of the social studies teachers. In total, 64 social studies teachers responded to the questionnaire while five of them were personally interviewed for further clarification.

Data Analysis and Findings

The 64 questionnaires collected were examined and categorized according to the themes of the challenges and the remedies proffered by the respondents. Those categories are listed in Tables 1 and 2.

Method of Teaching Values

A glance at Table 1 indicates that the method of teaching values is a major challenge of teaching the topics associated with the chosen pillar of Vision 2016. Sixty

(94%) of the social studies teachers thought that avoidance of indoctrination and the use of clarification, as suggested by texts and by social studies experts, was very challenging.

While in training, teachers were taught to employ the idea of clarifying issues when it comes to teaching values. The vast majority of the teachers opined that it was difficult not to indoctrinate the students when teaching values in the classrooms. They remarked that in an attempt at clarifying issues on the topics associated with either morality or tolerance, they often swayed into indoctrinating the students. This challenge ranked first in the responses of the teachers in terms of the challenges faced by them.

Teachers interviewed were of the view that the critical and reflective analysis of issues in the social studies classroom being advocated by educational leaders seemed to be easier said than done. The five teachers interviewed concurred that the advocacy of issues clarification in teaching values is easy in theory but not in practice. These teachers further highlighted that a gap existed between theory and practice in the classroom when teaching topics related to values.

Community Involvement

Community involvement was a challenge because the teachers expected elders, both literate and not too literate in the community, to help in the teaching of issues on morals and tolerance from the perspectives of the local and modern pedagogy. According to 92% of the teachers, invitations to such resource people for help on these issues had not been very successful.

Although not directly employed by the government as teachers, community participants in the teaching-learning process, particularly members of the Parents-Teachers Association, might be helpful in meeting the challenges of teaching values in schools.

Qualifications and Experiences of Teachers

The qualification of teachers and their years of teaching experience also pose a challenge to the teaching of topics related to values. The responses from the interviews conducted by the investigator also corroborate the finding that not all the teachers were qualified to teach social studies at the junior secondary level in Botswana. This assertion was based on the possession, or lack, of various degrees and years of experience by the teachers.

While some of the teachers were actually trained in the field of social studies and knew the appropriate methods of teaching the subject, some teachers were not trained in the field of social studies but found themselves assigned to classes in that field. Invariably, use of the transmission method to teach controversial issues become the norm. This shortcoming was alluded to by 48 (or 75%) of the teachers under study.

Teaching Resources

The respondents also identified teaching resources, particularly the texts used in schools, as not actually examining effectively the teaching of moral issues in the affective domain of Bloom's taxonomy. The texts tended to emphasise the cognitive domain of learning at the expense of other domains. This situation, according to 46 (72%) of the teachers, makes teaching and learning of tenets of morality and tolerance a problematic exercise.

Heterogeneity of Students

Further, the junior secondary classroom in Botswana is typically a heterogeneous one, where, in addition to the different ethnic groups of students from within the country, there are many other nationals from different parts of the world. The traditions of these students differ according to their origins and so, teaching an aspect of "morality or tolerance" to a group of heterogeneous students poses a serious challenge.

Among their responses, one teacher asked this unedited question:

| Challenges | Frequencies of Mention | Percent (%) | Rank Order |
|---|------------------------|-------------|------------|
| Methodology/Avoidance of Indoctrination | 60 | 94 | 1 |
| Community Involvement | 59 | 92 | 2 |
| Teaching Qualification/Experience | 48 | 75 | 3 |
| Teaching Resources | 46 | 72 | 4 |
| Heterogeneity of Students | 45 | 69 | 5 |
| Students' Attitude | 37 | 58 | 6 |
| Others | 9 | 14 | 7 |

In my social studies classroom, I have Chinese, Indians, Nigerians, Zimbabweans, British, Canadians, Australians, and South Africans, in addition to Botswana (citizens of Botswana). In teaching a topic involving a moral dilemma, from which cultural perspective do I handle it knowing full well that the students come from diverse cultures?

This questions calls for caution. In as much as teachers should teach the students on the basis of the local or national environment, the promotion of a sympathetic understanding of our differences reflected by cultural pluralism suggests our curriculum should also cater to the opinions of a global citizenry. At the same time, cultural pluralism should not be allowed to endanger the indigenous local cultural basics passed from generations to generations. This is a paradox in social studies education which the social studies teachers must be aware of and work with in their classrooms.

Students' Attitudes

The challenges identified by the respondents include the students' attitudes, typically regarding social studies as not too important a subject. As some of the teachers informed me during the interviews, students had no choice but to study social studies, since it is part of the compulsory core curriculum at the junior secondary level in Botswana.

To the teachers, the students had to be in class because it was mandatory to take social studies. The teachers added that discussions with students indicated that a vast majority of them (the students) would want to pursue careers as accountants, politicians, business tycoons, airline pilots, medical doctors, and architects, and so on, without being bored down with becoming teachers of social studies.

The teacher went further:

In a situation such as this, what do you expect from the students during the teaching-learning process in the social studies classroom? The simple answer is lack of attention, lack of interest, disturbance to other students who might be interested and generally the belief that to be an important Mr. or Miss Somebody in the society, you have to choose subjects that can enable you become a member of the recognized professions earlier mentioned.

The teachers also recognized "other challenges" that are not as important. They include the global rate of unemployment of university graduates all over the world and also the importance attached to materialism. Among the responses of the 64 social studies teachers, eight of them

reported that the world recession which is affecting the rate at which university graduates are remaining unemployed after graduation is also affecting graduates of tertiary institutions in Botswana. Therefore, the zeal not to study the "less important" subjects in schools is becoming a fashion, except in situations where the students are not intellectually capable of studying the "more important" subjects capable of allowing them to realize their future career goals.

Teachers' Suggested Remedies

The 64 teachers provided some remedies to the challenges they had identified in the teaching of the topics associated with the realization of a pillar of Vision 2016. Table 2 shows the responses of the social studies teachers in terms of the remedies they suggested.

Regular Workshops

A surprising finding regarding the remedies or solution to the challenges earlier identified by the teachers is the suggestion that regular workshops be held by the Ministry of Education and the tertiary institutions in Botswana on how to handle the teaching of value-laden topics in schools. All the 64 (or 100%) teachers emphasized this need and their readiness to attend workshops focused on the best methods and strategies for teaching controversial issues like values.

Pre-service Education of Teachers

In addition, 60 teachers (or 94%) expressed the view that the pre-service education of social studies teachers should include a thorough examination of issues-oriented exercises during their training so as to enable them to teach such issues more effectively and efficiently. It is often the case that pre-service teachers in Botswana undergo four years of pedagogy in the humanities or social sciences.

Later, they undergo a one-year Diploma in Education to become trained teachers. Some argue that a course of one

year leading to a Diploma in Education is just too short to fully understand the basics of teaching controversial issues.

Some also indicated that one or more years of teaching experience is critical to enhancing teaching capability. Additionally, the possession of several years of teaching experience will increase their ability to better perform in the classroom when teaching values.

Administrative Support

Fifty-nine (or 91%) of the teachers were not very happy with the lack of administrative support in their schools or from other agencies. They argued that there is a need to have relevant textbooks and other materials to enhance the teaching of values.

This is consistent with Johnson (2005) and others who suggest that materials dealing with the proper teaching of values and beliefs must be available to guide the pedagogical actions of teachers. The need to order textbooks that discuss various values and how to teach them "without falling into the pit" is important to the 59 teachers.

In-service Education

Looking beyond the pre-service education of teachers was the suggestion that in addition to a thorough pre-service program, there should be in-service education of teachers in the field. This was seen as equally important. Fifty-two (or 81%) of the teachers shared this belief. To them, in-service training would go a long way toward explaining, discussing, and examining relevant topics associated with teaching values.

Attitudinal Change of Parents and Students

Thirty-two (or 50%) of the teachers advocated for attitudinal changes among parents and students. The "hatred" accorded social studies by both parents and students must change in order for the students to become interested in learning social studies.

Table 2
Suggested Remedies to the Identified Challenges (n = 64)

| Remedies | Frequency of Mention | Percent (%) | Rank Order |
|------------------------|----------------------|-------------|------------|
| Workshop | 64 | 100 | 1 |
| Pre-service Education | 60 | 94 | 2 |
| Administrative Support | 58 | 91 | 3 |
| In-service Education | 52 | 81 | 4 |
| Attitudinal Change | 32 | 50 | 5 |
| Others | 6 | 9 | 6 |

Further, the teachers suggested that parents should also encourage their children and not influencing them to think that some disciplines are more important than others. Students should be given a chance to choose the subjects they are interested in, but with guidance of the parents.

Finally, other suggestions by six teachers (or 9%) focused on disallowing teachers who did not actually have their Diplomas or degrees in the integrated social studies program from teaching those subjects in schools.

A Last Word

The findings from this study have highlighted the need for an improved pre-service and in-service education of social studies teachers in Botswana. The social studies program at the tertiary level of education should be of high quality to enable teachers and students to handle issues of controversy in the field.

As suggested by Tichenor and Tichenor (2004), teachers must be qualitatively sound so as to be able to perform effectively in the field. In addition, curriculum developers need to come out with sound guidelines on the modalities of efficiently promoting the teaching and learning of issue-based themes and topics.

An additional salient point is the need for researchers to further investigate the appropriate methodologies for the teaching of values in different contexts and making available their findings in the form of texts for use in schools. Authors should

be encouraged to come together and find a way of enhancing the teaching of values in schools. Community involvement in seeking ways by which values can be taught while not subjugating the local values is also a welcome idea.

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