

CIVICS AND ETHICAL EDUCATION IN ETHIOPIA: CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION OR MEANS OF INDOCTRINATION

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ABSTRACT

Civics and ethical education has been introduced in to Ethiopian school curriculum during the period of emperor Haile Sillassie I as a separate discipline. Since then, the name and the content vary from regime to regime. The change indicates as the subject is used as a tool, i.e., indoctrination for the different regimes. Moral education (during the period emperor Haile Sillassie I) was used to preach about the monarchy rather than talking about citizens' rights. Derg's political education was used to inculcate socialist ideology. In the post 1991 FDRE government, Civics was first introduced then Ethics was added. In this period, though the contents seem universal, at face value, the details are imbued by indoctrination. The control by the government in curriculum development and book preparation signifies the intention of the government to use the subject for its' instrumental value. It is intended to foster obedience to regime norms not for critical engagement.

Key words: Civics and Ethical education, citizenship education, indoctrination,

INTRODUCTION

This article investigates whether the subject Civics and Ethical Studies which is incorporated in the Ethiopian school curriculum is destined for enabling students for critical engagement or accept the beliefs of the government at power. It begins with succinct presentation of Citizenship education followed by the criteria by which education becomes indoctrination. It continues to Civics and Ethical Education in Ethiopia, where it presents analysis on how the subject is a means of indoctrination.

What is Citizenship [Civic] Education?

Citizenship Education is the teaching or fostering of knowledge, values, attitudes and behaviors related to governance and community (Nilson, et'al:2014, 11). According to Halstead and Pike, 2006 and Levinson, 2014, Citizenship education, has three aims which are different in scope. First, to produce informed or politically literate citizens, second, to produce active citizens with a commitment to public values and practices of moral and social responsibility and community involvement and third to produce autonomous, critically reflective citizens who participate in political debate and discussion and campaign actively for change where they consider it appropriate.

Civic education in a democratic society is education in self-government, where citizens are involved in their

own governance. This can be achieved if citizens have the knowledge, the skills and the will to bring it about. That knowledge, those skills and the will or necessary traits of private and public character (civic dispositions) are the products of a good civic education (Janmaat⁷ 2013). Civic knowledge is concerned with the content or what citizens ought to know where as civic skills comprise intellectual skills of identifying and describing, explaining and analyzing, and evaluating, taking, and defending positions on public issues and participatory skills of interacting, monitoring, and influencing and civic dispositions, refers to the traits of private and public character essential to the maintenance and improvement of constitutional democracy (Branson and Quigley, 1998).

What is indoctrination?

Indoctrination is commonly regarded as reprehensible and antithetical to education or some educational ideals such as autonomy, rationality or open-mindedness. The pejorative meaning of indoctrination, however, is fairly recent as 'indoctrination' and 'education' were used interchangeably more than half a century ago, with indoctrination referring to instruction. It is in the 20th century that it finally acquired a derogatory connotation similar to propaganda and brainwashing and came to be regarded the antithesis of education for life in democracy.

(Palmer, 1957, Puolimatka, 1996, and Tan, 2008:1)

Modern philosophical discussion has suggested various ways of distinguishing indoctrination from educative teaching. The main criteria are content, method, intention, or a combination of two or more of them and **the effects of teaching** on the intellectual life (Snook, 1972, McCauley, 1970, Lee, 1991, Puolimatka, 1996, Barrow & Woods 2006 and Momanu, 2012).

I) The content criterion

The content criterion explicates indoctrination as being derived from the word "doctrine", which means

¹ The inclusion of such subjects in the curriculum is regarded as a sign of the indoctrinative approach. While they should not be taught within the framework of public

"a belief which, if not false, is at least not known to be true. The reason why indoctrination must be used in the teaching of certain doctrines is the untenability of these doctrines in light of critical scrutiny. If they are taught with the aim of producing beliefs, they cannot be taught openly and critically (Flew, 1972).

The content criterion provides with three defining features of indoctrination. Teaching is indoctrination (a) if it bypasses the moral, political and religious pre-suppositions of the contents of teaching¹, and (b) if it fails to clarify what is being taught and to distinguish its contents from the criteria for its justification, c) if it fails to activate and open up the analytical capability of students (Puolimatka, 1996:115).

II) The method criterion

The method criterion has two different versions according to whether it is understood a) as a general teaching approach or b) as a set of concrete methods. Understood in the latter sense as a set of particular methods of teaching, the method criterion is marked by the following characteristics: (1) The teaching situation provides few opportunities for questioning; (2) the content is drilled or "drummed in"²; (3) free discussion is not allowed (Snook, 1972, Parker, 2006, and Momanu, 2012). If teaching uses these methods described, it qualifies as indoctrination (Puolimatka, 1996).

III) Intention as the criterion

Intention as the criterion of indoctrination defined as follows (Snook 1972:119-120 and Parker, 2006): teaching pupils a proposition or set of propositions believe regardless of the evidence. It is to make pupils believe a proposition even though the evidence would not confirm the belief if it were presented fully and honestly. Evidence is used tendentiously to produce unquestioning convictions.

IV) Consequences as the criterion

The other approach distinguishes indoctrination from education in consequences: the end-product of indoctrination is a person whose mind is closed to

education, everyone should personally form his own opinion about them (Puolimatka, 1996: 112 and Momanu, 2012).

² repetition of contents

rational argumentation at least in that particular area of human thought where he has been indoctrinated. Such a person does not hold his views "evidentially", and is unable to question them in the light of new evidence. His mind is closed to the possibility that those beliefs might not be true (Barrow & Woods, 2006:73-74).

CIVIC AND ETHICAL EDUCATION IN ETHIOPIA

In Ethiopia, the name, contents and methods of civic education have been changing from regime to regime. The nature and orientation of the prominent political philosophy of a particular political system also determined the contents of civic education. Therefore, a great reliance on and sensitivity of Ethiopian education in general to such short-lived ideologies and subject-specific realities hindered the possibility of a standard and working curriculum (Meron, 2006:288).

In Ethiopia, the first form of civic education was attempted during the imperial period (Hailesilassie I) by the name Moral Education. Textbooks were prepared for this purpose. Moral education aimed at spreading the idea of the perpetual rule of feudal lords. It took the lead in inculcating the religious values and the system of absolute monarchy (rule by one). After the downfall of the imperial government, the military government (Derg) sought to construct the country and reorganize the society along the line of the then Soviet Union's version and vision of socialist ideology. The Derg adopted a form of citizenship program entitled political education. The fundamental objective of this political education was to create class-conscious and hardworking body of citizens with national, international and scientific worldview. The government introduced this program at various levels of the Ethiopian school system starting from grade four. In general, political education was highly skewed to inculcating the socialist ideology in the minds of the students. (Ibid, 2006)

In the post 1991 era, after two years of discussion, the first curriculum of Civic Education was announced in 1993. The process started with the Grade 9 curriculum that was enacted in 1996. Other grades of secondary school followed year after year until 2000. At first, the subject was called Civic Education, but was then

renamed Civic and Ethical Education after a curricular reform in 2000 (Yamada, 2011:98).

A series of governmental interventions to reform Civic and Ethical Education (CEE) have coincided with national elections (2000, 2005, and 2010), which indicates the significance attached by the FDRE government to this subject (Yamada, 2014). In this respect, it is clear as the government intended/s to use the subject for instrumental value, i.e., for its benefit.

The concepts taught in the CEE curriculum are seemingly universal. However, tracing the development of the curriculum and textbooks will provide insights on how democracy, human rights, and other related concepts are modified to fit the government's political agenda. In the Ethiopian CEE textbooks, the concept of democracy is explained in close relationship with the control of power and tolerance (Yamada, 2011:98). In this regard, though the contents are universal, at face value, in the details the intentions of the government are visible. It is too noticeable in the textbooks to find many sections which condemns the past and glorifies the current government.

In Ethiopian CEE textbooks, the constitution is mentioned everywhere: in the text, in case studies and/or in discussion questions. It may be natural to relate issues of legitimacy, rights, and duties to the statements in the constitution. However, it would not be clear to all learners and teachers why the constitution legitimately guides the country (Yamada, 2011). The problem in this regard, is what the constitution says, which is of course included in Civics and Ethical Education, doesn't exist on the ground. For instance, the ruling party and the bureaucracy are closely linked, the orders of the bureaucracy may be taken as party orders, and vice versa. The message of the government to promote a multi-party democracy is twisted, because at the village level and above, the presence of the EPRDF is dominant and closely linked with the government itself.

Throughout the post-1991 period, the CEE curriculum and textbook development process have been decided by a small group of people. There are names which one encounters often when one talks about CEE in

Ethiopia and they have been at the center of the decision-making process throughout. In this sense, one can say that the ministry controls the content and process of curricular development and textbook authoring of this subject³ (Yamada, 2011). This fact indicates as the subject Civics and Ethical Education is intended by the government to indoctrinate. Clearly the contents emanate from the government's intention. In the meantime, the contents are repetitive⁴. The methods may be participatory⁵, but no one dares to say as free discussion is allowed on all issues. For instance, it is untenable to say that students, at class, can criticize the constitution.

CONCLUSION

The inclusion of Civics and Ethical Education in the school curriculum has paramount importance. However, it is also a subject to be twisted for the benefit of the party at power. Whenever Civics and Ethical Education is a citizenship education, it aims to teach the citizens of the country about rights and duties thereby enabling to be active participants in different affairs of the country. The current Civics and Ethical education says this, in written form. But, this is not a mere rhetoric rather needs a practical implementation. To be blunt, students are not allowed to criticize the government, more fundamentally the constitution. The subject is being used as instrument to indoctrinating the beliefs of the party at power. The intention is vivid; the government tightly controls contents and textbook preparations. The contents are of course universal at face value. The details are perverted to what the government needs. Besides, there is content repetition at different grade levels.

Since the inception of the subject in the Ethiopian school curriculum, the period of Hailesillassie, it is used as a means of indoctrination. It is used to manifest the interest of the group/party at power. In the post 1991, period even if the government touts as the subject is Citizenship education, it is not. The intention, the detailed contents and content repetitions are ascertain as Civics and Ethical Education is a means of indoctrination.

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³ The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) Education Sector Development Program III document published by Ministry of Education in 2005 incorporates Civics And Ethical Education in the cross-cutting issues. The document, on page 61, states "Curriculum content and materials [Of Civics and Ethical Education] will be revised [are revised] to give due emphasis to the political, economic, and social and ethical values of the country". It is fine to contextualize contents the country's realities. However, much of the contents are intended to explain about the government on power; in the process it is used to curse the previous governments particularly emperor Menelik, empeor HaileSilasse and Derg era and to exalt the post 1991 FDRE government.

⁴ These are the contents, chapter topics, included in textbooks in all grades where Civics and Ethical Education is a subject: (1) building a democratic system, (2) the concept of rule of law, (3) equality, (4) justice, (5) patriotism, (6) responsibility, (7) industriousness, (8) self-reliance, (9) saving, (10) active community participation, and (11) the pursuit of wisdom. Morality is later added as 12th chapter.

⁵ See the standard for Civic and Ethical Education teachers (grade 5-8) and grade 9-12 for contents of the subject and methods

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