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Civic Education and Civics: Where do we draw the line?

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Abstract

Defining Civic Education and Civics is rather getting problematic especially in Zambia. There are two schools of thought with regard to what constitutes Civic Education and Civics. Experts alike in the field at times are embarrassingly not very clear on the dividing line between the two concepts. This is because of the different schools of thought surrounding the two concepts where people tend to view Civic Education as Civics and the other way round. One tends to agree with what Muleya (2017) and Evans (2009: 410-435)(as cited by Muleya (2015)who have contended that, contemporary conceptions of Citizenship Education or Civic Education reflect a certain level of ambiguity due to various views that have come into play. Therefore, in this article I attempt to discuss the meaning of Civic Education and Civics. What is the dividing line between the two concepts? How should the two concepts be viewed? Once these key questions have been addressed it will be very easy to draw a clear cut line between Civic Education and Civics. That done, I will draw the conclusion by way of stressing the point that Civic Education and Civics can indeed be confusing if the two concepts are viewed from uninformed positions. In this article I am using Civic Education and Citizenship Education interchangeably.

Key words: Civic Education; Citizenship; Citizenship Education; Civics

Introduction

Muleya (2017); Muleya (2015); Biesta (2012); Peterson (2011); among the many other scholars in the field of Civic Education contend that, there has been a world-wide resurgence of interest in the field of Civic Education. This is because there is a strong argument that Civic Education has the potential to contribute to the formation and transformation of democratic citizens and societies. It is also in the same light that people tend to view Civics as in fact one that does also contribute to the formation and transformation of democratic citizens and societies. It is this kind of confusion that this article attempts to address. There is a confusion that lies in the two concepts whereby a lot of people including experts in the same field tend to think that Civic Education and Civics mean one and the same thing. While this may sound simple from the outset, it is in fact a complex matter that requires a lot of interpretation. As such this article begins by discussing various points that tend to be used in describing the distinction between Civic Education and Civics. Furthermore, the features characterising the two concepts are brought into the discussion to show how the two concepts are used in everyday engagement. The last part of the article gives the conclusion regarding the distinction between Civic Education and Civics.

Civic Education and Civics

As a way of drawing out the distinction between the two concepts, I will discuss some assumptions from different scholars with interest in Civic Education and Civics. This is meant to understand their position on Civic Education and Civics. I will start by defining Civic Education based on their assumptions before I get down to Civics.

Carretero, Haste & Bermudez (2016: 295-308) contend

that, "Civic Education is a contested field with intense discussions about its goals and what teaching and learning processes should be privileged". They further argue that Civic Education as a subject tends to reflect a transition from traditional models of Civic Education (Civics) to new civics (Civic Education) that considerably extend the definitions of civic participation and the purposes of the traditional model of Civic Education. In other words, this assumption about Civic Education tends to provide emphasis on things like praxis, interaction with tools, objects, experiences, reflections, assumptions, approaches, paradigms, worldviews, philosophies, systems, structures and people of diverse backgrounds as the means to gain great understanding through hands-on- knowledge with civic issues and actions. These aspects show that Civic Education is complex and demands broad ways of understanding its different assumptions to development in society. Carretero et al (2016) notes that with Civic Education, the focus is on the individual's social and cultural context, the narratives, values, knowledge and norms of action to which the growing individual is exposed in different socio-cultural settings, interactions and experiences that promote or inhibit effective and relevant learning. Therefore, one gets the sense that in trying to understand what Civic Education is, it is important to appreciate the fact that it is not only centred around information about citizenship, governance, democracy, human rights but also learning from individuals' interactions, dialogue and performance of action within their different social, economic, political and cultural settings. This is also consistent with the works of Russell et al (2010); Jensen (2010); Janmaat (2008) and Banks (2001) as cited in Carretero et al (2016) who have equally stated that Civic Education is mediated by individual's experiences of membership in multiple cultural groups within larger communities such as gender, ethnic, religious or political groups. This assumption reflects

the wider meaning of what Civic Education entails and not necessarily viewed as a subject that provides information on a number of topical issues in society.

Another assumption that one can look at is probably the one provided by Muleya (2017: 59-81) who argues that the meaning of Civic Education also known as Citizenship Education is dependent on the context. For example, the context in Zambia is different from that of England and as such one defining Civic Education in Zambia might not necessarily address factors that affect citizens in England in terms of the social, economic, cultural and political spheres. Rather such a definition has to take in account the Zambian scenario in its form and content. As a result, one tends to find different names in different countries regarding Civic Education.

McCowan (2009: 3) also points out similar thinking to the assumption pointed out by Muleya (2017) that Civic Education is known differently in countries like England, USA, Mexico, Japan, and South Africa among the many other countries where it features prominently in social studies courses, and appears in different forms and content. However, the point to note is that despite it being defined differently in different countries, the subject is broadly conceptualised and cannot be reduced to some sort of classificatory scheme of either citizenship transmission or social sciences simplified for pedagogical purposes. Thornton (1994:223-254) uses Jackson's ideas (1986: 117) of citizenship transmission as "mimetic" conception of curriculum in trying to define Civic Education. Under citizenship transmission, the focus is on factual and procedural knowledge from one person to another, through an essentially imitative process. The social science simplified for pedagogical purposes as an assumption in defining Civic Education is a defensible curriculum and instruction meant to underscore the constituent components found within the disci-

pline though this kind of interpretation tends to reflect some sort of Civics within it.

Biesta (2014 as cited by Muleya, 2017), defines Civic Education based on two critical assumptions of socialisation conception of civic learning and the subjectification conception of civic learning. The socialisation concept of civic learning as stated by Biesta is a necessary part of an existing socio-political order whereas subjectification conception of learning is Civic Education defined in terms of learning that involves engagement in community matters or public policy. Therefore, I contend that this is what constitutes Civic Education because it embraces a lot of things and issues found in the public sphere. It also involves critical thinking or what I could also describe as reflective thinking which as noted by Jackson (1966) cited in Thornton (1994:223-254) is grounded in an interactive view of the curriculum thus an outcome of interactions among teachers, students and materials. It is this kind of reasoning which characterises Civic education as a broader concept as opposed to Civics which is imitative in its definition.

Meira (2014: 1-13) argued that for one to understand and appreciate what Civic Education was all about there was need to seriously examine the concept of citizenship. This is because the two were supposed to be understood from the same perspective. In other words, Civic Education is better understood in the context of citizenship because the two tend to address a broader spectrum of issues than under civics. Thus at issue for Meira, is citizenship and Civic Education are key concepts in the philosophy of education because their meanings, aims, and practices are similar, both among philosophers and actors such as parents, educators, politicians, students, and members of diverse cultural groups. This kind of position provides the basis of argument in this article that, in defining Civic Education, one should not re-

duce it to some sort of civics because it addresses fundamental issues civic in nature that are silent under civics.

Baumann, Millard and Hamdorf (2014: 14) argue that Civic Education is focused on civic significance of preparing students with knowledge and action. This means that those exposed to Civic Education are well informed and can be deeply engaged with the values of liberty, equality, individual worth, open-mindedness and willingness to collaborate with people of differing views and backgrounds towards common solutions for the public good. For them, Civic Education is anchored on key fundamental principles such as classroom instruction, discussion of current events and controversial issues, service learning, extra-curricular activities, school governance and simulations of democratic processes. Additionally, they see Civic Education from the point of view of civic competency not only civic knowledge but also civic skills and dispositions. By civic knowledge, they look at the ability of the learners to be able to apply themselves in different settings without having to struggle. By civic skills they mean both the intellectual and participatory skills and this is explained in the following statements. Intellectual skills have to do with their ability to analyze, describe, explain, and assess different matters that confront them in the community. Participatory skills have got to with how they cope with in groups and organisational settings. Civic dispositions are interpersonal and intrapersonal values, virtues and bahviours that could be exercised in the light of achieving equality and this is possible only through effective communication where listening is part of it.

Ngozwana (2017:1-17) in her article discusses different assumptions with reference to Civic Education. For instance, she argues that education in general and citizenship education in particular can be defined in terms of the linkage that it provides in enhancing democracy and political empowerment. She does so by linking her arguments to the summaries noted by McCowan

and Gomez (2012) who argued that the meaning of Civic Education is centred on enhancing the means of participation in political life and promoting better understanding of human rights by learners.

Mahafza (2014 as cited by Ngozwana, 2017) who asserts that the meaning of Civic Education in a democratic society should focus on self-government and therefore has to promote peoples' understanding of democracy ethics and the rational obligations towards the values and principles of democracy. In other words, Civic Education is being defined from a democratic point of view.

Ngozwana (2017), gives also another assumption to the effect that Civic Education could be defined within the parameters of adult education and lifelong learning. This means that one could look at it from an on-going process of learning which occurs at every level of human endeavour. In the same vein, (Andrews & Cowell, (2005 as cited by Ngozwana, 2017) noted that Civic Education at local government level also embraces educational learning and promotional activities that are carried out in a local context by or on behalf of local councils, to enable people to become more involved in democratic processes.

Kelly (1995) as cited by Ngozwana, (2017) defines Civic Education as education for citizenship which extends the democratic form of moral education by moving from theory into practice, where people are enabled to make informed decisions, evaluate policies and effectively participate in the governance of a democratic society. What Kelly has pointed out agrees with the ideas of Shizha and Abdi (2013) concerning Citizenship Education, which is expressed as '… the means by which adults acquire knowledge, skills, dispositions and attitudes that are vital for political participation or engagement'.

A democratic society requires educated citizens who can make

informed decisions, opinions and evaluations on public policy, and hence the need for citizens to access information and knowledge and have the understanding to do so (Kelly, 1995; Kymlicka, 2002; Pacho, 2013 as cited by Ngozwana, 2017). Ngozwana (2017) on Civic Education notes what Abdi (2008), Kapa (2013), Shizha and Abdi (2013) points out that in most African countries, people rarely exercise their citizenship rights, since they are not involved in providing input in the preparation and formulation of public policies, including the national budget, because there are limited channels for them to participate in civic issues; as a result the citizens' needs are not reflected. This as a matter of fact could be described as a form of knowledge which emanates from Civics. For Civics, knowledge is not open but closed so that learners are not exposed when it comes to their exercise of citizenship rights. This means that their involvement in providing input in the preparation and formulation of public policies is limited if the concept "Civics" is used to understand their participation This situation call for for Civic Education that can raise awareness among the responsible officials and instigate in them the political will that will promote active engagement of issues at various levels in the community and advance peace and stability in the country.

The Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) (2006) as cited by Ngozwana, (2017), Training Manual, Civic Education is a medium through which the social, political and economic culture of a certain society is transmitted. Civic Education, therefore, deals with rights and duties of citizens in the community and how these rights are realised. Civic Education encourages citizens within the community to participate in governance by way of getting involved in decision making processes thereby enhancing democracy.

In all the issues raised above by Ngozwana (2017) it is very clear to point out that Civic Education is indeed broad

and cannot be equated to Civics. As such, I am compelled to agree with her reflections that Civic Education has to be examined from a broader assumption and anything less than that in my view would not amount to Civic Education but rather would be negated to Civics. I do admit from this basis that the authors have one thing in common and the common position is that they all have looked at Civic Education with a broad set of ideas and no one seems to be examining the concept at the level of Civics. Therefore, Civics does not factor in broad assumptions and but operates at the minimal level of ideas.

I also note that though there are concerns out there that Civic Education and Civics are in fact isomorphic or having some kind of corresponding or similar form of relationship, the point I note here is a clear dividing line between the two concepts. Unfortunately, researchers in the field do not see that dividing line but at times it is embarrassing to note that some of the researchers and even the practitioners do have such confusions when it comes to Civic Education and Civics.

What is Civics?

Nelson (1978 as cited in McCowan, 2009:12) defines Civics as traditional Civic Education which is nationalistic in nature and pursues a national agenda through schools. As such he identified three dimensions on the nature of Civics. Firstly, it is a subject which develops positive feelings towards rituals, ceremonies, symbols, ideas, persons that express the nationalistic values and ideals; Secondly, Civics has to do with the development of competencies related to operating as a national citizen in terms of voting, reading speaking etc and the thirdly dimension of Civics is that of the development of negative feelings towards countries, ideologies, symbols and persons considered contra-national. From Thornton's (1994:223-254) point of view it is a subject closely related to a citizenship transmission curricu-

lar orientation; instruction which usually involves recitation and lecture. In this sense I see that Civics is defined from the point of view which excoriates the learners from being critical during the process of teaching and learning. As observed by Brophy, 1990; Newmann, 1991a; Wesley, 1967 in Thornton (1994: 223-254), Civics is defined a subject which promotes the uncritical transmission of information and values not helpful in educating thoughtful citizens. This is on account that it does not allow opportunities where learners could engage on any issues from both ends. In fact for McNeil (1986) as cited in Thornton (1994) goes further to suggest that in Civics teachers teach defensibly by way of organising and structuring the curriculum in ways that do not require much effort or critical thinking on the part of students in exchange for minimal student compliance in maintaining classroom order and adhering to school norms. While this argument may be the main approach that would be found in Civics it may not be the best approach bearing in mind that all knowledge is tentative rather than absolute. In Civics all knowledge claims are not challenged but rather merely given and freely received by the learners.

Mclaughlin (1992) as cited in McCowan (2009:14) defines Civics as somewhat a relation to the 'minimalist' conception of Civic Education that, involves merely an unreflective socialization into the political and social status quo. In fact McCowan (2009:22) contends that traditional Civics has a strong emphasis on knowledge focuses on government, constitution and political institutions as well as the national history. This is why for Mclaughlin the argument is that Civics cannot be defined as Civic Education because it lacks what he calls as maximal conception. For him maximal conceptions means considerable degree of explicit understanding of democratic principles, values and procedures on the part of the citizen together with the dispositions and capaci-

ties required for participation in democratic citizenship generous-
ly conceived. This kind of understanding does not resonate with
what Civics entails. Civics is somewhat minimal in nature as it
is in most cases contend led; is elitist in nature; is conservative
and not progressive and over and above does not address broader
issues as Civic Education does. Civics is also limited in its focus
and does not allow open discussions in matters related to public
policy. In fact, this is one of the major points of departure from
Civic Education.

In the next section I attempt to discuss the features that
characterise Civic Education and Civics as a way of drawing the
line between the two concepts.

Characterisation of Civic Education and Civics

Nogueira and Moreira (2011: 1771-1776) that that, "Civic Edu-
cation is a non-disciplinary curriculum area whose focus seeks to
develop mechanisms to support the teaching and learning process
in this domain". Fonseca (2003 as cited by Nogueira & Moreira ,
2011) also noted that Civic Education was more or less Educa-
tion for Citizenship. Thus, Civic Education is an intentional edu-
cational effort, across the whole school and involving it as a com-
munity, with the ultimate goal of promoting a global enrichment
of students as people and preparing them for active engagement
in society. In the case of Civics the intention is that maintaining
social and political order in the community through various tech-
niques as recitation among many others. In fact, Hertzberg (1985)
as cited in Thornton (1994) contend that Civics could be seen as
a subject that is always controlled by the teacher and always con-
sists of questions and answers that are usually fixed. The idea is
not to allow the learners to question certain processes and systems
but to accept them in the interest of patriotism and good citizen-

ship. Additionally, I see more of indoctrination in Civics than in Civic Education as learners are not allowed to question certain ideas that appear controversial and yet in Civic Education every idea whether controversial or otherwise has to be re-examined so that an informed decision is taken when deciding over an issue.

Nogueira and Moreira (2012: 1779-1783) in their study stated that, "Civic Education was mainly multidimensional, dynamic and social construction". In this context it is a subject that calls for a number of interpretations such that limiting it to basic understanding would not suffice. Given this understanding about the subject, I argue that Civics does not meet the criteria where we would define it as Civic Education because it is mainly on the surface in terms of knowledge engagement. This is what I call Procedural knowledge in which the recipient of that knowledge are not allowed to think beyond what they are given and yet in Civic Education it is substantive knowledge in which the recipients of that knowledge are allowed to engage with it.

No wonder Nogueira and Moreira (2012: 1779-1783) state that, "Civic Education is characterised by different dimensions such as citizenship education orientations, content knowledge, curriculum knowledge, resources, pedagogical approaches or practices, context in which it takes place as well as the people that get to interact with its dimensions".

Following the argument above, I contend that Civic Education is probably what has been described by Schon 1983 (cited by Nogueira & Moreira, 2012), as the integration of multiples dimensions of knowledge which occurs in a constructive process based on reflection in and on action Therefore, one of the dimensions to take into account is the orientations of Citizenship Education. Civic Education has curriculum orientations and relevant subject matter that teachers need to be aware of. The argument is that teachers' autonomy for planning and creating guidelines

according to students' characteristics and context requires an even stronger knowledge not only of subject matter and curriculum orientations but also of the purposes underling them. Additionally, Civic Education teachers are expected to integrate different knowledge domains in their lessons or activities (political, social, economic and cultural dimensions). Therefore, the absence of a clear and unique definition of Citizenship Education influences not only the curriculum and the content knowledge but also the remaining other dimensions. Bearing this in mind, resources in the field of Citizenship Education are multiple, disperse and not always reliable. Therefore, critical knowledge of resources available online and offline is crucial to gather relevant information and efficient pedagogical mechanisms interconnected with Civic Education.

In Civic Education, transforming knowledge related to a particular citizenship topic or content needs to be adapted to a specific social context with specific difficulties, characteristics and motivations of the students. However, these aspects are not usually points of discussions in Civics and hence my argument that the two (Civic Education and Civics) are not the same in many respects.

Cohen (2013) examines three key issues with regard to Civic Education and Civics. Firstly, the debate regarding civic knowledge or what has been referred to as political knowledge is set on a continuum based on the dichotomy between two types of knowledge regarding life in society – procedural knowledge and substantive knowledge (Bell & Staeheli, 2001; Gutmann & Thompson, 2004 as cited by Cohen, 2013). The procedural end represents knowledge regarding the institutions, rules, and practices of governance (Dahl, 1998; Schumpeter, 1947 as cited by Cohen, 2013), such as the understanding of the voting system or the methods with which minority voices are represented in

government. Due to its nature, such knowledge is usually taught while utilizing the pedagogy of dictation of such facts that are seen as essential under this arrangement. Clearly from this position one gets the sense that this type of position characterises Civics because there is no room beyond wanting to understand the system of voting or how wants to understand the structure of government. With Civic Education the focus is on substantive knowledge where the learners are seriously engaged in a multiple set of ideas and issues and some level of analysis is promoted to understand the political, socio-economic development of a particular case or community.

Secondly, the issue of individualistic normative and communal values stand in the way of Civic Education and Civics. The argument that learners must conform to some sort of values for the sake of maintaining peace and harmony in society is purely an attribute of Civics. Bottery (2000) as cited by Cohen (2013) explains that such values maybe explained in four different contexts: (1) values that relate to the self; (2) values that relate to the encounter with the others; (3) values that relate to society as a whole; and (4) values that relate to the environment. He further explains that in order to instil these values one must examine the different levels in which they exist. For example by asking what are the dominant values in society in which they exist? What are the values that guide the school system? And what values are present in lessons taught across the curriculum? In order to answer these questions, the individual is not given room to think outside the box but rather thinks in a controlled manner.

Buchanan (1989) as cited by Cohen (2013) draws on the work of Rawls claims that the state's role is to protect basic individual liberties such as freedoms of religion, expression and association. He adds that the state's role is not to impose any substantive views regarding the good life. As such Civic Education does not

support the restriction of the individual in terms of civil liberties. Rather it supports and allows the promotion of individualistic values that result in a classroom practice that emphasizes the development and abilities of the individual student, the adoption of the communal values will lead to civics lessons that stress the importance of interactions between different students and group work. In the words of Appadurai (1996) as cited by Cohen (2013), claiming that the nationalistic ideology is no longer relevant for our time. Due to this argument, scholars such as Nussbaum (2002) as cited by Cohen (2013) stress the need to strengthen the global alliances that are dedicated to all humanity and not to a specific nation state. In other words, this entails that in Civic Education it is not about focusing on one issue but creating opportunities in which all issues are looked at holistically. Appiah (2007) as cited by Cohen (2013) calls such alliances "cosmopolitan engagement" which means an examination of so many issues at a goal. This observation is not clearly defined in Civics.

The third characterisation which is very critical between Civic Education and Civics is one that is based on thin and thick civic dispositions. One side of this continuum represents the thin disposition, also referred to as the minimal mode of citizenship while the other side of the continuum represents thick disposition, also referred to as the maximal mode of citizenship. In the minimal mode of citizenship, the philosophy behind is to merely maintain unreflective interaction into any social order and thereby sticking to the status quo whether one agrees with it or not. This is the part which reflects Civics in many ways as it is aimed at organising society so that it conforms to established norms without bringing in contrary views. Therefore, based on this approach, the citizens of a state should not be required to be politically active beyond the act of selecting the people's representatives (Beiner, 2003 as cited in Cohen 2013).In the maximal mode of citizenship, the philosophy behind is to invoke a lot of thinking on the part of those

exposed to this kind of mode. This is where we could find Civic Education because it provides a platform where education is understood as the main tool with which the state can motivate its citizens to be active beyond the official and institutionalized venues.

Having tried to discuss the characterisation of Civic Education and Civics, I will now attempt in this last part of the article address the dividing line between the two concepts.

The dividing line between the two Concepts

It is important therefore to state here that there is a clear dividing line between Civic Education and Civics. In this discussion I will rely on the continuum suggested by McLaughlin (1992: 237). In order to better understand these ambiguities and tensions, he offers a continuum of interpretations divided between minimum and maximum conceptions of the two. Based on the minimalistic view, the suggestion one could decipher is that Civics is reduced to passive respect of law. In other words it is somewhat viewed as merely in formal, legal and juridical terms.

While on the other hand, the maximalist view sees Civic Education as connected to active participation by the citizens that is "conceived in social, cultural and psychological terms" such as the ability to think and act on social and political concerns as well as developing active, collaborative and cooperative working patterns focused on real problems in a real community.

McLaughlin (1992: 238- 239) as cited by Cohen (2013) further explains that the minimal conception's main priority is the provision of information and thus its emphasis is mainly on the procedural aspect of citizenship. He points out that as a result, this conception does not include any critical reflection or understanding. He explains that the main critique of this conception of citizenship and its influence is that it promotes an "unreflective socialization into the political and social status quo". Clearly, from

this interpretation is the understanding that in Civics, there is no engagement which is critical. In opposition to this conception, the maximal conception of Civic Education will require a "considerable degree of explicit understanding of democratic principles, values and procedures on the part of the citizen, together with the dispositions and capacities required for participation in democratic citizenship". Therefore, I and appreciate the point that the two concepts have never been the same and similar in context. Therefore the distinctions between minimum and maximum modes of Civic Education and Civics are relevant when trying to understand and interpret the different educational experiences that are enacted in various settings. For instance, civic minimalists argue, that learners exposed to minimum modes of Civics should have the right to be exempted from any part of the school curriculum as long as the education that they wish to substitute satisfies the civic minimum. Therefore, this entails that their learning should not extend no further than mandating civic minimum. While civic maximalists argue that learners exposed to maximal modes of Civic Education should learn the necessary conditions of an adequate Civic Education that cultivates the skills and virtues of deliberative citizenship. Gutmann (1987) states that, "deliberation is not a single skill or virtue". It calls upon skills of literacy, numeracy, and critical thinking, as well as contextual knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of other people's perspectives. The virtues that deliberation encompasses include veracity, nonviolence, practical judgment, civic integrity and magnanimity. By cultivating these and other deliberative skills and virtues, a democratic society helps secure both the basic opportunity of individuals and its collective capacity to pursue justice.

Conclusion

In this article an attempt has been made to provide a clear distinction between the concepts "Civic Education" and "Civics". I have noted that the two concepts are fluid and dynamic at the same time. As a result of this observation, there is a tendency by some people to view the concepts as one and the same thing and yet there is a very clear distinction between the two. I contend that, Civic Education should be examined along the lines of maximal understanding on a number of issues with a considerable degree of clear understanding of principles, values and procedures on the part of the citizens. Further, it should be looked at together with the dispositions and capacities required for the participation of democratic governance and /or citizenship. As mentioned above, I have noted that with Civics the conception is centred on passive learning which is devoid of critical and reflective thinking. It does not also support citizens in exploring broader issues but merely relies on formal, juridical and legal terms and turn learners into passive subjects as well as failing to argue out of deference to political authority. This is what actually makes Civics different from Civic Education.

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