

THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES & SOCIAL STUDIES

Dominant Ideologies of Classroom Political Learning among Civics Teachers in Tanzania Secondary Schools

Jerome Sila Machange

Senior Curriculum Developer, Department of Curriculum Development and Review,
Tanzania Institute of Education, Tanzania

Abstract:

Among other things, teachers' classroom practice is influenced by political ideologies that are dominant in society. In 1990s, the political system in Tanzania changed from a socialist to a liberal political system, which also changed from socialist political ideologies (Ujamaa) to liberal political ideologies. This study examines the Civics teachers'(CTs) dominant ideologies of classroom political learning. It sought to find out CTs' perceptions of the purpose of teaching Civics and their practice of democracy while teaching in Civics classroom lessons. The study employed the qualitative research approach, a single case study. The data were analysed using a content analysis framework described by Miles and Huberman (1994), that is, data reduction, data display, and drawing and verifying conclusions. The findings indicate that socialisation ideologies were dominant among CTs. It is established that CTs' perceptions regarding the purpose of teaching and learning of Civics, as well as their classroom practices, largely reflect ideologies of socialisation. This situation concludes that little CTs' internalisation of the ideologies of individuation is advocated by liberal political ideologies. It implies that the CTs still prefer ideologies of socialisation favoured by socialist political ideologies.

Keywords: Ideologies, individuation ideologies, socialisation ideologies

1. Introduction

In 1990s, a change in the political ideologies of sub-Saharan and other developing countries automatically affected practices related to the provision of formal civic education. This is because the two are dynamically related and inseparable. That is, formal civic education serves political ideologies. As such, Dassonneville, Quintelier, Hooghe, and Claes (2012) noted that formal classroom instruction of civic education is positively related to citizens' political ideologies. Ideologies of classroom political learning refer to social or political beliefs that influence aspects of classroom political learning, such as goals, content, and methods of teaching and learning (Lamm, 1985; O'Neill, 1990). In particular, ideologies of classroom political learning also have to do with a set of political views, beliefs, and preferences of the Civics teachers (CTs) regarding classroom political learning. In the early 1990s, the ideological ideas of individuation were adopted in Tanzania, which had previously followed socialisation ideologies advocated by the socialist political system. It is contemplated that formal classroom instruction of civic education should reflect the existing or dominant political ideologies. On this basis, a study was conducted to examine the dominant ideologies of classroom political learning among CTs in secondary schools. It sought to find out CTs' perceptions of the purpose of teaching Civics and their practice of democracy when teaching in Civics classroom lessons.

2. Theoretical Perspectives

Both theoretical and empirical literature shows that dominant political ideologies have greatly influenced the delivery of formal civic education. For instance, when the education system adopted conservative educational ideologies, the delivery of education was regarded as moral regeneration, orientation to life, and socialisation to the established knowledge (O'Neill, 1990). As such, Harpaz (2014) observed that when conservative, that is, socialisation ideologies are adopted, it advocates characteristics such as the teacher managing the classroom and imparting facts and skills to learners. It also emphasises autocratic instruction, that is, a teacher teaches content that is valuable, practical, and useful, assumes all students are the same (learning by imitation), and considers educated students will be adapted to his or her society and will have a successful career. Studies indicate that if teachers are greatly influenced by socialisation ideologies, their beliefs regarding classroom pedagogy favoured the banking or transmission model of knowledge acquisition (Dadvand, 2015; Marulcu and Akbiyik, 2014; Udoukpong and Okon, 2012; Komba, 1996).

On the other hand, when the education system adopts liberal educational ideologies, the delivery of education emphasises the need for education to develop personal effectiveness, enable the fullest realisation of each person's potentialities, and minimise institutional restraints on a personal behaviour (O'Neill, 1990). Lamm (1985) contends that when such orientation follows, teachers are influenced much by the so-called ideologies of individuation. In view of Harpaz (2014), the teacher is expected to be a facilitator in the learning process, employ permissive instruction and support individual development. It is also assumed that students should learn by self-adjustment, and an educated person is the

one who fulfils himself or herself. Some recent studies claim that if such ideologies, that is, ideologies of individuation, are preferred, teachers teaching formal civic education assume the role of being facilitators of students' learning rather than a direct transmitter of knowledge to students (Dean, 2007; Shun, 2009; Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development – OECD, 2009).

Nevertheless, little was known regarding political ideologies influencing CTs in secondary schools, particularly in emerging democracies like Tanzania. From this background, this study seeks to contribute an understanding of the dominant ideologies of classroom political learning among CTs by examining their perceptions of the purpose of teaching Civics and the practice of democracy while teaching Civics lessons in secondary school classrooms.

3. Methodology

The study employed the qualitative research approach, a single case study, in particular. The choice of this approach was grounded on the assumption that such design would provide an opportunity for the researcher to investigate the phenomenon in depth, which enabled the yield of detailed descriptions of CTs' views and practices of ideologies of classroom political learning. The study was conducted in Tanzania in one municipality of the Dar-es-Salaam region, namely Kinondoni Municipality. The municipality was chosen as the case study area because it had CTs and students who were exposed to political information that is denied in other areas in the country and, in turn, affects how they teach and learn Civics in the classroom (Riggio, 2012). For the purpose of representation, all 20 wards in the municipality were purposively stratified into two major groups:

- Group 1: wards found in urban areas, and
- Group 2: wards located in suburban areas

A purposeful random sample of 2 wards from each group was done to form a total number of 4 wards that participated in the study. Then, a purposeful sample of 2 schools (1 public and 1 private) with teachers with experience of four years or above of teaching Civics were selected from each ward to form a total number of 8 schools studied. The sample comprised 82 respondents: 8 CTs, 8 school academic teachers (SATs), 1 school inspector (SI), and 64 Form Three students. The interviews with students were conducted in groups comprising 8 students each. The respondents are referred to by using abbreviations CT (for Civics Teachers), SAT (for School Academic Teacher), and the letters of the alphabet A – H (for schools) to preserve their anonymity.

Data were collected mainly through interviews and non-participant classroom observations. In this study, data were analysed using a content analysis framework as described by Miles and Huberman (1994), that is, data reduction, data display, and drawing and verifying conclusions. The data from both interviews and classroom observations were transcribed into hard-copy texts. Then, they were read and re-read to familiarise themselves with the data. Then coding exercise was followed by highlighting the keywords, phrases, and segments that answered the questions asked. In the process of coding the data, the concepts were conceptualised as they were emerging during the process, and they were written in the form of memos or abstract concepts and then grouped into themes.

4. Results

4.1. CTs' Perceptions on the Purpose of Teaching Civics

The CTs were interviewed to get their perceptions about what they perceived to be the purpose of teaching Civics in secondary schools. This issue was essential because CTs' views and ideas about the purpose of teaching Civics influence their perceptions, particularly on the kind of students that would be produced. Likewise, teachers' perceptions and ideas about the purpose of teaching Civics could also echo their ideologies of classroom practices.

In responding to this question, the CTs came out with two major purposes:

- First, they were to facilitate learners to acquire civic knowledge and skills
- Second, they were to impart civic knowledge and skills to learners

The CTs who claimed that the purpose of teaching Civics is to facilitate learners to acquire knowledge and skills argued that the facilitation should involve aspects such as enabling, letting, inculcating, and promoting civic knowledge and skills to learners. The CT from school D, who belong to this group, had this to say regarding the purpose of teaching Civics in secondary schools.

The purpose of teaching Civics in secondary schools is to facilitate students to acquire civic knowledge and skills. That is, to enable students to understand different issues about their country, including the political system and the government, and most importantly, to participate in various political activities.

However, the CTs who contended that the purpose was to impart knowledge and skills to learners said that teaching Civics in secondary schools should involve aspects such as imparting, equipping, giving, and creating knowledge and skills to learners. On his part, CT from school A had this to say about the purpose of teaching Civics in secondary schools:

First of all, the purpose is to impart skills and knowledge to students to enable them to become good citizens. They will be good citizens if they know their rights and responsibilities. The teaching and learning of Civics in secondary school make the learners know their rights and responsibilities as citizens.

Furthermore, CT from school F added that:

I think the purpose of teaching Civics is to give or transmit knowledge to learners so that they can understand their responsibilities and rights.

Other CTs who belong to this group claimed that the purpose of teaching Civics was to create awareness among students about their rights, duties, and responsibilities. To justify this, CT from school C said:

The purpose of teaching Civics is to create awareness among students so that they can understand their country in general and how the government is run and make them aware of their rights, duties, and responsibilities.

The findings in this category indicate that CTs' views on the purpose of teaching Civics were much associated with the feature of imparting civic knowledge and skills aimed to enable the development of civic knowledge and skills to the learners. This suggests that CTs perceived the purpose of teaching Civics as giving or providing information to students. In this case, therefore, CTs' views on the purpose of teaching Civics were largely echoing the ideologies of socialisation.

4.2. CTs' Practice of Democracy While Teaching Civics Lessons

When CTs were asked to express their opinions on whether they were practising democracy when teaching Civics lessons in their classrooms, all of them claimed that they were doing so. They asserted that their democratic practices included the active involvement of students through discussions, questions and answers, and presentations. In clarifying this, CT from school A had this to share:

In my teaching, I try my level best to involve students in the learning process. I practise democracy because I give students activities to do, first individually and then collectively.

Some CTs claimed that they were practising democracy because they were giving their students freedom of expression to share their understanding and express their feelings. On this matter, CT from school D pointed out that:

Students are free to ask questions and express their views during the teaching and learning process. Through discussions, they give their views, and I give mine. We share ideas about the subject matter.

Other CTs said that using participatory teaching methods such as group discussions, brainstorming, questions and answers, and debate represented how they were practising democracy. They also said that they were providing an equal opportunity for students to contribute their ideas and allowing them to choose their leaders. In explaining why they thought so, CT from school C had this to say:

I am practising democracy when teaching this subject. The syllabus insists on what is called participatory methods of teaching. It should not be teacher-centred. There should be interactions. Teaching methods, such as group discussions, brainstorming, and questions and answers, allow me to practise democracy in my teaching.

However, the findings from classroom observations show the minimal practice of democracy during the teaching and learning process. The findings indicate that CTs' use of participatory teaching methods was limited because they could not employ them effectively. Some CTs, for example, asked students to sit in small groups and discuss a certain issue, but they did not provide enough time for students to discuss it. Some other CTs did not bother to receive answers from groups or allow students to share their answers with the rest of the class. It was noted that only a few CTs, particularly in schools A and D, fairly managed to organise and employ teaching methods such as small group discussions, brainstorming, questions, and answers.

It was also observed that students' active involvement in the learning process was poor since only a few students had a chance to express their views or participate. It was noted that even in classes where participatory teaching methods such as small group discussion, questions and answers, and plenary presentations were considered effective. Only a few students were given a chance to express their views or contribute ideas. The findings show that small groups and class discussions were dominated by a few students, especially those who could speak English proficiently.

Through group interviews, students were required to say what activities were done by CTs that showed that they were practising democracy. In their responses, the students indicated that some CTs were practising democracy while others were not. The students who supported the existence of democracy in their Civics classroom argued that CTs gave them the freedom to express their views during Civics lessons. To substantiate this, two students from schools B and H had this to say respectively:

Our Civics teachers practice democracy while teaching because there is the freedom to express our views. The teacher involves us through discussion, presentation, and the like.

Our teacher gives us freedom when teaching Civics. The teacher asks us oral questions. Through this process, we express our opinions. In other words, he gives us freedom of expression.

The findings from students indicate further that some CTs were practising democracy because they were not discriminating against students while teaching Civics lessons. Moreover, some students said that CTs were practising democracy because they did not consider themselves as the only source of knowledge. They believed that students also had something to contribute to the teaching and learning of Civics. They also argued that all students were given equal opportunities to contribute ideas.

Some students also pointed out that CTs were not practising democracy when teaching Civics lessons. Substantiating this, two students in school F had this to say respectively:

CTs do not practice democracy because when we were in Form Two, we learnt about Constitution and constitutional change, but our teacher used to explain instead of giving us a chance to discuss.

Teachers teach but do not provide any examples to relate to what is being taught and what is happening in the society. For instance, we learn about Constitution, but our teacher does not even show the Constitution itself.

Other findings were collected from SATs. SATs in schools D and E used to inspect CTs' lesson plans and sign them before they went to teach. The SAT from school H reported that he used to do the inspection and observe teachers while

teaching different lessons. By virtue of their positions, SATs were interviewed to comment on whether CTs were practising democratic principles when teaching Civics lessons or not.

In responding to this question, the SATs came out with two different situations. There were CTs who were practising democracy while others were not. The SATs argued that those CTs practising democracy used participatory methods when teaching Civics lessons. They claimed that their practice of democracy involved allowing students to share their ideas during group discussions and presentations and answering questions orally. The SAT from school **B** had this to comment about the use of democracy in Civics lessons:

They practice democracy in the classrooms. They normally use participatory methods when teaching in the classroom. So students participate in sharing ideas with teachers and among themselves. There are group discussions and presentations within participatory methods. So they practice democracy.

Furthermore, the SATs added that teachers who were experts in Civics practised democracy while teaching Civics in their classrooms. They pointed out that these teachers were practising democracy because they were conversant with participatory teaching methods suggested by the Civics syllabus. The SATs maintained that teachers, who were not experts in Civics, were not practising democracy in their classrooms because they were not familiar with the recommended teaching methods. These were teachers of other subjects such as History, English, and Kiswahili who were assigned to teach Civics, though it was not the subject of their specialisation. To substantiate this, the SAT from school **D** had this to say regarding CTs' practice of democracy while teaching Civics in their classrooms:

Teachers who were forced to teach the subject and did not study it at colleges are not practising democracy when teaching. They are not experts in the subject.

SATs also claimed that some CTs were not practising democracy when teaching Civics lessons because of little interest in the subject. They further claimed that these CTs had inadequate knowledge of methods of teaching and poor subject mastery. Substantiating this, the SAT from school **A** had this to say:

For teachers with little interest in Civics, it is difficult to practise democracy while teaching subjects in their classrooms. This is because they lack knowledge of methods suitable for teaching and learning and their subject mastery is low compared to those who are specialists.

Further, the SATs argued that some CTs were not practising democracy at all while teaching Civics lessons. The SAT in school **F** had this to say:

I can say they do not practise democracy because they are not trained to teach the subject using participatory methods. Our teachers do not use participatory teaching methods. Therefore, it is not easy for them to practise democracy when teaching. Most of them use non-participatory teaching methods so that they can finish the topics.

The findings from the School Inspector were similar to those from the SATs, which is, very few CTs were practising democracy while teaching Civics in their classrooms. It was confirmed by SATs that only a few CTs who were trained on competency-based curriculum (CBC) were practising democracy in their teaching. He claimed that those trained on CBC were familiar with participatory teaching methods and normally used them to teach Civics lessons. According to him, the untrained teachers continued to use traditional teaching methods. In this regard, the School Inspector had this to say:

In teaching Civics subjects, only a few teachers use participatory methods. Those who have been trained to teach the 2005 syllabus, the competence-based curriculum, can practise democracy by using participatory teaching methods. However, the majority have not been trained. Therefore, they still use traditional methods of teaching, which limit their practice of democracy in the classroom.

In general, though CTs claimed that they used to practice democracy when teaching in the classroom, it was observed that only a few CTs were practising democracy while teaching Civics lessons while others were not. It was noted that CTs who were experts in Civics and trained to implement the 2005 Civics syllabus were practising democracy through the active involvement of students in the teaching and learning process and the use of participatory teaching methods. The findings also revealed that some teachers were not experts in Civics subjects and, therefore, could not apply democratic principles while teaching Civics lessons. This situation implies that CTs' teaching of Civics mainly relied on traditional approaches which did not reflect the ideologies of individuation.

4.3. How Students Learn Civics Lessons in the Classroom

When students were interviewed on how they were learning Civics lessons, the responses were quite contrary to what they said about CTs' practice of democracy in the classrooms. They claimed that they were learning Civics lessons in four different ways:

- Firstly, they were learning the subject by listening to teachers' lectures
- Secondly, they were learning through the notes written by teachers
- Thirdly, they were learning through listening to explanations and answering the questions asked by teachers, that is, when teachers combine lectures and asking questions
- Fourthly, they were learning the subject through discussion in small groups or pairs and presented in the entire class

The findings indicate that teachers' use of lectures while teaching Civics was common in all studied schools. The students said that this way of learning Civics lessons occurred when CTs write notes on the chalkboard and give lectures only or define terms and write notes. For instance, in explaining when the teacher writes notes and lectures, a student from school **A** had this to say:

Our teacher gives explanations. For example, while teaching the topic of Family Life, the teacher writes notes on the chalkboard and starts explaining one point after another. This way enables us to relate his explanations to the family we come from. So it makes us understand the topic.

The students also maintained that they were learning Civics lessons through CTs' combination of lectures and questions and answers. This situation was also reported in all the schools involved in the study. They claimed that most teachers used to ask questions, and students responded to those questions, then after, the teacher continued with explanations. A student from school C commented:

While teaching, he explains and, at the same time, asks questions. So he gives explanations, asks questions, and we answer the questions.

Other students said that another method they were using in learning Civics was guided small group discussions. Besides small group discussions, they claimed that they were using think-pair-share. Through these methods, teachers used to assign them a topic or a question, and they were required to work in small groups or pairs and then present the results to the entire class. Furthermore, some students also maintained that on some occasions, they were assigned topics or questions to discuss in small groups without making presentations. To clarify this, a student from school G asserted:

Teachers give us time to discuss in small groups. After discussions, one student from each group makes a presentation before the entire class. When we finish these presentations, the teacher provides clarifications and conclusions.

Other students, however, claimed that sometimes CTs spend the entire period writing notes. To confirm this, a student from school B commented:

Sometimes, the teacher may come into the classroom and write lesson notes from the beginning to the end of the period. Occasionally, we write notes throughout the period. On some other days, the teacher comes and lectures from the beginning to the end of the period. So, it depends on the teacher's decision.

In general, the findings indicate that the popular ways that students used to learn Civics were lectures, questions and answers, and group discussions. In the case of questions and answers, CTs took the dominant role; they were the ones who asked most of the questions. This implies that learning Civics was largely teacher-centred. It was mainly characterised by features related to ideologies of socialisation as opposed to ideologies of individuation.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

The effective implementation of the Civics curriculum requires a considerable internalisation of the intended ideologies of classroom political learning by students and teachers. If teachers do not adopt or internalise the values incorporated in the Civics curriculum, they are unlikely to implement them in the classroom and, therefore, will be influenced by other political values (Komba, 1996).

The findings indicated that CTs perceived the purpose of teaching Civics in secondary schools to impart, equip and create knowledge and skills for the learners. This means that CTs' views and beliefs regarding the teaching of Civics in secondary schools focused on giving knowledge and skills to learners. This implies that the CTs preferred the didactic teaching approach, which is the transmission model, which considers a teacher as the main source of information and a student as the recipient of information. These findings confirm other findings from studies such as Udoukpong and Okon (2012) and Dadvand (2015). They advanced that teachers' beliefs regarding classroom pedagogy favoured the banking or transmission model of knowledge and skills acquisition.

This situation contradicts the principles of teaching the Civics syllabus, such as emphasis on the constructivist approach and the use of participatory strategies in teaching and learning (TIE, 2011). The Civics syllabus requires CTs to assume the role of being facilitators rather than transmitters of knowledge and skills to the learners (MoEC, 2010). Similarly, it contradicts the findings by Dean (2007), in which the researcher found that civic education educators preferred a democratic model of teaching and put emphasis on the employment of issue-based inquiries, discussion, debates, and group works. The findings also contradict OECD (2009), in which teachers are viewed as a facilitator of students' learning rather than a transmitter of knowledge.

The findings from classroom observations indicate that only some CTs practised democratic principles while teaching Civics. Galston (2003) contends that the practice of democracy in the classroom requires active learning chances for students to participate in the discussion of relevant issues and activities. Students should be engaged in active learning experiences and reflective and critical thinking, enabling them to learn and internalise democratic values (Print & Smith, 2000). In this study, it was evident that lectures were predominantly used in Civics lessons. The implication is that if CTs did not practise democratic principles while teaching Civics, it is reasonably inferred that CTs had inadequate knowledge of participatory teaching methods. Their teaching of Civics based on conventional approaches is favoured by ideologies of socialisation.

Moreover, the findings indicate that the learning of Civics lessons by students in the classroom was essentially passive. In passive learning, students submissively receive information from the teacher and conceptualise it through memorisation (Michel, Cater & Valera, 2009). In this regard, passive learning is often contrasted with participatory approaches, where students actively participate in knowledge acquisition. In this study, it was noted that students learn Civics lessons when CTs give explanations only, write notes on the chalkboard and give explanations, and define terms and write notes from the chalkboard. Further, students learn Civics lessons when CTs explain the questions asked during the class discussion.

This situation signifies that students were not actively involved in the learning process because of CTs' dominance. It is interpreted that the nature of classroom teaching and learning of Civics was basically passive because they

were verbalising information to students. This means that the classroom process was dominated by the CTs' talks, whereas students remained silent, recording and absorbing knowledge from their CTs. This is in line with Marulcu and Akbiyik (2014), who found that teachers' perspectives were weak on child-centred learning characteristics. Udoukpong and Akon (2012) also contend that social studies teachers preferred the transmission models of teaching to democratic models of instruction.

However, a few aspects related to ideologies of individuation emerged from the findings. Some CTs perceived the purpose of teaching Civics in secondary schools to facilitate learners to acquire civic knowledge, skills, and values. These results are in line with OECD (2009). He advocates that some teachers are considered a facilitator of knowledge creation rather than a transmitter of that knowledge. Further, some CTs practised democratic principles when teaching in the classroom, especially through actively involving students when teaching and providing freedom for students to express their views.

It appears that CTs who were the experts in Civics and trained on how to teach the 2005 Civics syllabus are the ones who fairly practised democratic principles when teaching Civics lessons. It was noted that teachers who were experts in Civics and trained on CBC or how to teach the 2005 Civics syllabus had higher subject mastery than non-expert teachers. As a result, these teachers tend to choose and practice democratic principles embodied in the Civics curriculum. This situation is congruent with what was found by Komba (1996), who opined that CTs with more training tend to prefer democratic values embodied in the Civics curriculum compared to those with low or no training because they were conversant with the content and recommended teaching methods. The implication is that unless the CTs are provided with in-service training, it will be difficult for them to internalise the individuation ideologies.

Conclusively, the study provides evidence that socialisation ideologies were dominant among CTs. It is established that CTs' perceptions regarding the purpose of teaching and learning of Civics largely reflect ideologies of socialisation. CTs who were not experts in Civics and trained on how to implement the 2005 Civics also did not practise democracy in their teaching. Students learnt Civics passively, the features favoured by ideologies of socialisation. This infers little CTs' internalisation of the ideologies of individuation advocated by liberal political ideologies. This situation calls for developing and implementing an in-service teacher professional development programme for secondary schools.

6. References

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