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Integrating Moral and Ethical Values In the General Studies Syllabus at Advanced Level Secondary School in Tanzania: Challenges and Opportunities

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Abstract: This study sought to achieve two specific objectives: First, to examine the challenges of teaching and learning moral and ethical values at advanced level secondary school in Tanzania and, secondly, to recommend ways of improving moral and ethical values among the youth. The study involved 80 students and 12 teachers, randomly selected from 4 secondary schools found in Morogoro Municipality. The data were collected using interviews, focus group discussions and review of curriculum materials. The findings were as follows: First, it was revealed that the teaching of moral and ethical values in schools faced a number of challenges, including lack of role models, inadequate human and material resources, and weaknesses of the content of the syllabus in use. Secondly, the respondents recommended that for the teaching of moral and ethical values to be effective, a tripartite of stakeholders, including teachers, parents, and the general public should work collaboratively. In light of these findings, it is recommended that the entire society and parents in particular, should serve as role models to ensure that children are both morally and ethically upright as they are brought up.

Keywords: Morals; Ethics; Syllabus; Curriculum; Secondary school.

1. Introduction

It is not uncommon in our everyday life to consider a well raised person as being either 'moral' or 'ethical'. This implies that societies aspire for good moral and ethical values. Morals are beliefs about what is right or wrong (Encyclopaedia Encarta, 2003). According to Begley and Stefkovich (2007), ethics are normative social ideals or codes of conduct, usually grounded in the cultural experience of particular societies and in some forms and social applications; they are treated as absolute values. Smith (2014) notes that ethics has got to do with behavior about a collection of people, whereas morals are highly individualistic and personal in nature.

There has been emerging student needs to acquire and develop values representative of the broader community and society, as well as that of their chosen profession, workplace and, fundamentally, their sense of self. Social acceptance in the workplace is a critical element in accessing learning opportunities (Billett, 2008). Such social acceptance often comes in the form of compliance to existing cultural values and practices. This implies that students need to be equipped with the same to navigate the increasingly important ethical aspects of their professions (Bowie, 2005). However, there is still not a universally accepted way of analyzing ethical situations (Brockett and Hiemstra, 2004; Hatcher and Aragon, 2000), but there are core values which have been found to be similar in various social groupings. Kidder (1994) list of moral values includes love, truthfulness, and respect for life, tolerance, responsibility and unity. In regard to ethics, Moss Curtis (2006) summarizes the five principles that need to be applied by educators in their teaching life as 'non-malfeasance' or do no harm to students; 'beneficence' or do good for students; 'just' or being fair and equitable in dealing with students; 'autonomy' or allowing students' personal freedom over thought; and promoting integrity.

Covey (1998) states that although people do not always live in harmony with these universal principles, they agree about their intrinsic value and want to be managed by these principles because they guarantee stability in a society. Such principles are aligned with people's expectations of behavior promoting the welfare of individuals, organizations, and communities. For instance, the practice of non-malfeasance principle in the classroom ensures that information presented in the classroom is accurate and the assessment practices in particular are fair. Similarly, beneficence applies to the well being of the students through intellectual and moral challenges, modeling appropriate behavior and insisting students to do well. On top of these moral principles, research has established relationship between acquisition of moral and ethical values and learners intellectual development. For instance, Dewey's rationale for making ethics a subject for study in high school is that it has a series of cascading benefits, such as the development of an open-minded disposition, moral imagination and the ability to address problematic practical

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situations (Dewey, 1996). Studying ethics prepares students for adult life by offering them the record and the instruments of human life itself, a curriculum that is not just relevant, but integral, to practical living (Dewey, 1996). In this way, Dewey's argument for teaching ethics in the high schools directly implicates three elements of philosophy as education. First, with regard to habit, ethics education in the high schools cultivates inquiry specific habits, such as open-mindedness and moral imagination, in the character of students. Secondly, it reinforces intelligent habits of moral choice in the area of environment and lastly, students are assisted to acquire the instrumentalities to negotiate morally and practically problematic situations. Also, Garrison (2005) observes that ethics education in the high schools improves communication skills. This is likely to improve students' overall academic performance as research shows that a positive correlation exists between students' language skills and the overall academic achievement (Komba *et al.*, 2012).

Scholars, especially educational psychologists acknowledge that children are born with certain innate endowments but not ethics or morals (Oladipo, 2009; Paul, 1993). This implies that children learn morals from their immediate environments in which they are brought up. It is the duty of parents and other close relatives to ensure that children are morally upright. The teaching of moral and ethical values is further taken over from the family setting by the formal learning institutions such as schools and colleges (Herrick, 2003).

In countries, such as China and Caribbean, this obligation has been realized well as moral education is taught right from elementary school to university (Caribbean Ministry of Education, 2006). In other countries, such as New Zealand, the government legislated that primary and secondary education must include values education as part of their core curriculum (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2007). Similarly the Australian government has been pursuing the same since 2002 (Hamston *et al.*, 2010).

In Tanzania, the role of educational institutions in fostering moral values was clarified since 1960s when such institutions were considered as agents for providing education to students and raising the necessary awareness on the importance of ethics (Nyerere, 1968). Moral and ethical values are integrated with the school curriculum from primary school where such values are specified in a subject called Sports and Personality Studies where students learn basic moral and ethical values of trust, love, respect and good conduct (MoEVT, 2005). In secondary schools, the same values are taught at Advanced level in a general studies subject (MoEVT, 2009) while in teacher training colleges, the college tutors are urged by the Ministry of Education and Vocational training to enforce moral and ethical values although such values are not taught formally as a subject. Studies by Anangisy (2010) and Mngarah (2008) have revealed that policy intentions on the promotion of moral and ethical values are not in harmony with what is actually implemented in schools and colleges. Although moral and ethical issues have been included in the general studies' syllabus and teaching of the same is done, many students graduate with a lot of moral and ethical deficiencies. This study was therefore conducted to achieve two specific objectives: First, to examine the challenges of teaching and learning moral and ethical values at advanced level secondary school and, secondly, to recommend ways of improving moral and ethical values among the youth.

2. Theoretical Underpinnings

Facilitating learning around value and ethics presents some considerable challenges and may at times be controversial (Hill, 2004). The learning of value systems needs to consider two important aspects: transferring knowledge of established value systems and the capacity to practice such value systems. Goodman and Lesnick (2001) argue further that little would be gained if education shapes the action without shaping the person, thus educators would need to consider beyond the practice of value systems (action) and explore how students could also transform such value systems (shaping). Goodman and Lesnick's thinking was paralleled by the argument that students should not only know what is right but also develop 'moral courage' to do what is right (Ayling, 2006), which implies developing integrity. A person with integrity is someone who acts consistently and makes decisions regarding similar situations by following the same pattern or logic (Garcia-Zamor, 2012). The argument made here is that students need not only to develop a moral compass to detect what is right and wrong, but also the ability to critically consider the proper response and course of action.

Approaching the learning of values by didactic delivery of a prescribed list of values is not sufficient (Crain, 1985). Explorative conversations which need to be explicit and clear are also required (Lovat and Toomey, 2007). Learning around values and ethics, should focus on the process of developing moral reasoning and capacity building rather than direct content knowledge (Crain, 1985; Lovat and Toomey, 2007). These capacities are best developed by using examples where ethical issues are discussed and moral reasoning is called upon (Pritchard, 1992). In addition, Kohlberg presents the Heinz Dilemma, which explores the interesting issues of conflicting values, forcing students to engage with moral reasoning around different value systems (Crain, 1985).

Work placements present unique learning opportunities for students. Engaging in work integrated learning involves complex learning for students as they are according technical skills, knowledge, soft skills as well as shaping their professional identity and subsequently their own values (Campbell *et al.*, 2009). Thus, post-placement students are able to draw on real, relevant and highly contextualized examples, based on their experiences in their relevant workplace. Required to draw upon these experiences and advance learning post-placement, guided enquiring-reflection needs to occur, which is scaffolded in a programme. This approach would draw on reflective learning techniques of reflection after action, as outlined by Schon (1983), which influences students' views on their value systems and future responses when faced with a similar context. The use of group discussions, where ethical situations are reflected upon and analyzed, would allow other group members to widen their contextual

understanding of how workplace ethical situations and the moral reasoning used, in the context relevant to their profession. Reflective essays could also be drawn upon, where on an individual basis students explain a practical real event and then expand on their reasoning. However, the above consideration does not consider the processes of preparation which students may require prior to commencing a programme.

Students do not present at a particular education level as 'blank sheets' or *tabula rasa*, devoid of pre-existing histories and dispositions. They already have an 'interpretative lens' which they use to understand the world around them, including the workplace (Billett, 2006; Campbell *et al.*, 2009). It is therefore important that students explore and understand their own value systems. Workplaces do essentially shape the value systems of students by advancing their professional identity. However, the process of modification and shaping can only occur in an environment that is well set. For example, Kohlberg and Fenton did an experiment in which they trained junior high social studies teachers in the art of conducting discussions about moral dilemmas. To be more specific, the teachers were trained in the Socratic teaching style of conducting discussions (Rosenzweig, 2005). Results revealed that through Socratic style, one-third to one-half of the experimental groups were stimulated in their moral reasoning enough to move up one stage in their reasoning. Many years after this study was conducted, the Kohlberg and Fenton model is still used in integrating moral cognitive development into educational curricula (Rosenzweig, 2005).

Therefore, from the hinge points of the surveyed literature, one could conclude that participatory methods of teaching moral and ethical values are highly recommended. In the *general studies syllabus* in Tanzania the same methods such as discussion, guest speaker, project, case studies, and field trips are also suggested (MoEVT, 2009). Nevertheless, there are limited studies that have been conducted to examine the challenges of integrating moral and ethical values in the general studies syllabus used by advanced secondary school students in Tanzania.

3. Methodology

This study adopted a structured survey and it was conducted in Morogoro region, involving teachers and students from some selected schools found in Morogoro Municipality. The region was randomly selected to represent other regions in the country, considering that curriculum issues in Tanzania are centralized and thus, all schools found in all regions follow the same school syllabus. A total of 4 schools were randomly selected, including two schools from two different strata: community schools and private schools. Community secondary school students are mostly from low social economic class whereas the majority of those schooling in private schools are from middle and high social economic classes. The researchers assumed that moral and ethical values of students from higher social classes are significantly influenced by the global multicultural factors compared to students from low classes. Teachers who teach *general studies* from the four selected schools were identified and their list was prepared from which, a total of 12 teachers were randomly selected. With regard to students, 20 students were selected randomly from advanced level classes in each school, making a total of 80 students from the four schools. The data from teachers and students were collected using interviews and focus group discussions respectively. In addition, the *general studies* syllabus was reviewed by the researchers in order to relate its content and teaching/learning experiences. The collected data were analyzed using content analysis to generate themes which are presented in the following section.

4. Findings and Discussion

As pointed out in the introduction section of this paper, this study sought to achieve two specific objectives: to examine the challenges of teaching and learning moral and ethical values at advanced level secondary school in Tanzania and secondly, to recommend ways of improving moral and ethical values among the youth. The findings have revealed that the teaching of moral and ethical values faces a number of challenges as reported by *general studies* teachers in Morogoro Municipality. In particular, teachers were of the concern that students join schools with deviated moral and ethical values from home. For example, one of the teachers had this to state:

In the society we live, the youth are influenced by the environment to engage in immoral behaviors despite the fact that moral and ethical values are taught in schools. For example, through TVs and other mass media, children watch and learn a lot about the western culture, such as indecent dressing, which is quite different from and actually, not acceptable in the African traditions.

There were many other similar observations from the interviewed teachers, who stated that western movies in the mass media have gained popularity among the youth in African countries and that the movies have transformed their mindsets to the extent of considering the African traditions and outdated.

During focus group discussions, students admitted that they are, to a great extent, attracted to the western styles of life when they see the same through mass media as they are characterized by beautiful houses, roads, cars, and attractive recreational sites. These are unlike African life styles which are normally featured by poverty, outdated technology and illiteracy. The observations imply that despite the integration of moral and ethical values in the advanced level secondary school syllabus, the teaching of the same could not transform the youth as they seemed to be more attracted to the western values than their own African values. Furthermore, the interviewed teachers pointed out that the spread of western values among African societies is intensified by globalization which is in parallel with developments in information technology. In this regard, one of the interviewed teachers gave examples of the changing life styles of the youths as they interact with social networks like *jamii forum*, face book, you tube, twitter, and others as follows:

Through social networks, youths interact with others worldwide at any time. They can exchange personal information like contact details, interests, status, and many others. The sharing of such information may result in sexual relationships or engaging in immoral acts such as drug trafficking and drug abuse, robbery, cyber crime hijacking emailing systems and plagiarism in academics.

It was also revealed during interviews with teachers that secondary school students are not allowed to possess cell phones as they lack control in using the devices responsibly. However, despite such restriction, most of them own one or more smart phones which can be used to access internet and, thus navigate through various social networks at their convenient time. Teachers were of the opinion that the use of smart phones exposes students to situations where immoral and unethical values can be acquired and pay less attention to moral and ethical values recommended by their teachers, parents, elders, religious leaders and others. Therefore, it seemed that teaching students against what they embrace in the social networks was challenging.

The other remarkable observation from teachers was that of lack of parent role models that who reinforce good moral and ethical values among the youth. On this aspect, one of the teachers had this to say:

Children witness today's parents being involved in a number of immoral and unethical deeds like rapping, drug abuse, corruption, prostitution, infidelity, drunkenness, robbery, theft and the like. In the same light, it is not uncommon to hear that school teachers or religious leaders, who are essentially supposed to take a lead in inculcating good morals and ethics in the society, are also implicated in scandals associated with such unwelcome behaviors. In such a situation, what do you expect?

Similar remarks were also given by In addition, the teachers pointed out that lack of knowledge and skills in teaching moral and ethical values as specified in the syllabus was another challenge. It was revealed that the current general studies syllabus was introduced in 2009 with no in-service training to the teachers, who are the cornerstone in the process of implementing the syllabus. Lack of in-service programmes for teachers following a curriculum review is cited as a great challenge in Tanzania's education system (Komba *et al.*, 2012; Mosha, 2012). The situation is even worse considering that the syllabus used for teacher training programmes has no aspects of moral and ethical values. This means that the teaching of moral and ethical values in schools is dependent upon intrinsic motivation of individual teachers who are forced to find appropriate teaching and learning materials from any possible sources and learn how to share the same with students. The other challenge of teaching moral and ethical values, according to the interviewed teachers, is linked with the point that both teachers and students come from different family backgrounds such that when they meet at school, the perception of what is moral or ethical becomes so varied. For example, while some students thought that wearing putting on certain clothes of the western fashion indicated modernity, others were of the opinion that it was immoral and unethical according to African traditions. Moreover, some students (32%) from three of the four schools thought that an individual's success was not essentially related to the extent to which they were moral or ethical, implying that the teaching of such content would not be such important enough to merit attention.

The interviewed teachers further indicated that the general studies syllabus was too long to be covered during the specified duration for which students were at school. In this regard, the teachers pointed out that the topic on moral and ethical values, which is the last in the syllabus, was mostly taught without due attention and, sometimes not taught at all. In addition, the shortage of teachers for general studies subject, which is a subsidiary one, makes the case even more serious and it was learnt that students do not take the subject seriously, thinking that it has less contribution on their future careers.

In regard to using participatory methods in teaching moral and ethical values as suggested in the general studies syllabus, all the interviewed teachers pointed out some challenges of using such methods for teaching moral and ethical values such as discussions, library search, debates, guests speaker and field trips as suggested in the general studies syllabus (MoEVT, 2009). In particular, teachers thought that participatory methods consume a lot of time which is a limiting factor in covering the syllabus on time. Instead, the teachers noted that they used non participatory teaching methods, including non interactive lectures. This concurs with William (2008) who found that teachers rarely allowed students to perform activities in classrooms which is contrary to constructivism principles which consider learning as a process triggered by experiences that can be physical, mental, or social and that for meaningful learning to take place, students need to interpret the experiences in order to make meaning and develop their own personal understandings (Palmer, 2005).

Two of the four schools visited by the researchers had no library rooms. In such schools, the teachers reported that it was difficult for them to employ library search as one of the teaching strategies. To overcome this challenge, some of the interviewed teachers reported that in some cases, students were provided with assignments which required them to visit external libraries, such as the regional library, located far from their schools. However, the teachers admitted that this was rarely done and it was upon individual teacher's commitment. The situation in the other schools which had libraries was different as students in such schools were able to use the libraries access materials needed to accomplish the assignments given. In regard to guest-speaker as one of the methods of teaching moral and ethical concepts listed in the syllabus, the findings revealed that the method was not employed for the reason that inviting guest speakers had cost implications which were difficult to be met by the schools. Other teachers were of the view that this teaching method consumed a lot of time which would make it difficult to have the subject content covered within the specified duration. Nevertheless, both teachers and students in the visited schools admitted to have had some fieldtrips for other subjects like history and geography but not intended for learning moral and ethical values. The challenges associated with this teaching method as reported by the interviewed

teachers included financial and time constraints. These observations seem to be similar with those of Ballantyne (1999) who found that lack of time, lack of resources, lack of school support and lack of knowledge and motivation among teachers were main challenges for employing field trip as one of the teaching methods.

Regarding the second objective which sought to recommend ways of improving moral and ethical values among the youth, all teachers and students who were involved in this study in recommended the following:

First, it was recommended that the whole society, including parents and teachers, should feel that it is their responsibility to teach the youth's desirable moral and ethical values. All respondents believed that if the entire society took this responsibility seriously, the youth would transform their minds easily. Secondly, the respondents suggested that religious leaders and institutions should organize sensitization programmes on moral and ethical values among their believers.

Third, both teachers and students pointed out that parents should serve as role models to their children and monitor their behavioral development closely so that in case of any deviation, the children are corrected immediately. This is particularly important as the respondents stated that some parents left the entire responsibility of monitoring their children's behavior to teachers. Fourth, teachers recommended that all schools should have discipline committees which should be responsible to guide and counsel both teachers and students on appropriate moral and ethical values. Such committees should also plan for appropriate means of rewarding both teachers and students who become exemplary in desirable moral and ethical values. Likewise, the committees should also provide guidelines for appropriate disciplinary actions for both teachers and students who demonstrate immoral and unethical behaviors. Lastly, it was recommended that teacher training programmes should capitalize on issues of moral and ethical values so that upon graduation, the teachers can effectively teach the same to students in the schools they are posted to serve the nation.

5. Conclusion

This study has revealed that despite the positive effect of the development of science and technology, featured by the increased use of information and communication technology, the same have significantly contributed to moral decay among the youth. In light of this, it is recommended that the entire society should use the technology responsibly and parents in particular should serve as role models to ensure that their children are both morally and ethically upright.

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