

Teaching Controversial Issues in Primary Schools in Botswana: Reality or Illusion?

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Abstract

This article is drawn from a larger study that was conducted among eleven social studies teachers in six primary schools in one of the major villages in the central district in Botswana. The major purpose of the study was to explore the social studies teachers' conceptualizations, experiences and practices of educating citizens in a democracy like Botswana. I used the post colonial lens to interpret the teachers' ideas, beliefs and practices. The study was qualitative in nature and used the naturalistic inquiry paradigm. Qualitative methods which included interviews, focus groups and participant observations were used to collect data. Data were analyzed using grounded theory and employed the constant comparative technique. One of the findings of the study revealed that teachers acknowledge the merits of teaching controversial issues but find it difficult to discuss some of the issues with their students. They attributed their reluctance to discuss certain controversial issues such as HIV/AIDS and Sexuality with students to their culture, religion and socialization. Since the discussion of controversial issues is part and parcel of democratic education, then the absence of their discussion in the social studies classrooms is a negation of the very principles that underpin citizen participation and action. Hence, the conclusion that citizenship education remains an illusion rather than a reality in the social studies classrooms in Botswana. The study recommends a thorough review of the social studies teacher education programs in order to ascertain that teachers are equipped with knowledge and skills reminiscent of the 21st century.

Keywords: *Controversial issues, social studies, citizenship education, naturalistic inquiry, socio-political issues, postcolonial theory, sexuality, HIV/AIDS.*

1. Introduction

Botswana is hailed as Africa's premier example of a liberal democracy (Sebudubudu and Osei-Hwedie, 2006; Nyamnjoh, 2003; Bradshaw & Ndegwa, 2000). Botswana's position as a senior democracy in Africa is attributed to its ability since independence to have been able to have relatively free and fair elections, political tolerance, multiparty competition where political parties are free to organize, meet and engage in intense criticism of one another (Bradshaw and Ndegwa, 2000), and the rule of law and universal franchise have been maintained (Sebudubudu & Osei-Hwedie, 2006). Furthermore, the civil society groups have been formed, private newspapers have become persistent reporters and evaluators of government policies, elected officials and civil servants attend a wide array of public meetings and there has not been a threat of a military coup so far (Bradshaw & Ndegwa, 2000). Therefore, Botswana as a democratic nation aspires to develop citizens who can be players in the global arena. In order for such citizens to be developed, there is need for a paradigm shift within the social studies curriculum to equip learners with requisite knowledge, skills, values, beliefs and dispositions ideal for the democratic project in view of the fact that democracy is not genetically inherited and citizens do not spring from nowhere (Harber & Serf, 2006).

One way in which democratic participation that fosters deliberation, debate, discussion and decision making among citizens can be fostered is through the discussion of controversial issues as these are essential to develop the knowledge, skills and values needed for democratic life (Hahn, 2001; Hess, 2004). The inclusion of controversial issues in the teaching of social studies has been on the agenda of curriculum reform for decades. Over the history of social studies, many prominent scholars and thinkers such as (Engle & Ochoa, 1988; Evans & Saxe, 1996; Hunt & Metcalf, 1955; and Oliver & Shaver, 1966) have advocated for curriculum reform with greater emphasis on an in-depth study of controversial issues (Evans, Avery and Pederson, 1999). Advocates for controversial issues in social studies view the teaching of controversial issues as preparing students for effective citizenship (Hess, 2004, Hahn, 2001). One of the key features of ideal social studies teaching and learning is captured by NCSS (2001) in its vision that "social studies teaching and learning are more powerful when they are challenging"(p.4). This vision further identifies teaching about varying and conflicting opinions on controversial issues in order to stimulate and challenge the students' thinking.

Social studies as citizenship education seek to provide students with the knowledge, skills, values, dispositions and attitudes which will enable them to actively participate as citizens in a democracy (Ajiboye, 2009). Since its introduction in the primary school curriculum in Botswana in 1969, there have been doubts as to whether the subject is achieving its major goal of developing good citizens. These doubts emanated from recent trends and evidence from studies that suggest that products of schools are exhibiting behaviors that are not in tandem with good citizenship as encapsulated in the social studies curriculum (Ajiboye, 2009; Preece & Mosweunyane, 2004). The National Commission on Education (1993) also documented an outcry from the Botswana public about the moral decay prevalent among the youths that was not aligned to the *Setswana* culture hence negating the efforts of developing good citizens that are ideal to Botswana.

The social studies teachers' understanding of educating students for citizenship in a democracy is crucial to the achievement of the major goal of social studies since they are the ones at the frontline of any curriculum implementation and have a moral and social obligation of preparing future citizens. This view is in line with Thornton's (2005) characterization of teachers as curricular-instructional gatekeepers which basically reflects their well known role as

controllers of what is taught and how that is taught in their classrooms. Sim (2008) reinforces the teachers' role by asserting that a large part of how teachers tend the gates hinges on how they understand the subject, and in this case citizenship. Like in many developing countries, the discourse on citizenship education in Botswana is still to be implemented by teachers, yet very little is known about what social studies teachers' think and say and their understandings of citizenship within the Botswana context. It is therefore critical that subject specialist teachers of citizenship and in this case social studies teachers understand what it means and be in a position to explain what they do best regarding the teaching of controversial issues. Therefore the study sought to:

- 1.1. To explore the social studies teachers' ideas, beliefs, experiences and practices of educating citizens in a democracy through the teaching of controversial issues
- 1.2 To make recommendations regarding citizenship development in social studies classrooms.

2. Research Questions:

- 2.1 What are the social studies teachers' understandings of controversial issues?
- 2.2 What controversial Issues do you discuss with your students and why?
- 3.3 Why do you think controversial issues are important or not important in the teaching of social studies?

3. Theoretical Framework

I used post colonial theory to explore the social studies teachers' ideas, experiences and practices on teaching controversial issues in social studies classrooms. Post colonial theory advocates for a number of issues in relation to education that range from "decolonizing knowledge and the production of transformative knowledge, mapping out the manifestations of power of the west to the rest, and locates how the dichotomous representation of the world establishes a rigid division between local/global, citizen/foreigner, civilized/uncivilized, and also challenges the discourse of nationalism" (Subedi & Daza, 2008, p.2). This querying nature of post colonial theory makes it undoubtedly an invaluable tool for the analysis and unpacking of the perpetual legacy of colonialism and its forceful mechanisms since the nineteenth century imperialism left very few places on earth untouched by colonialism (Said, 1993).

Scholars have drawn a relationship between formal schooling/education and colonialism arguing that education played a pivotal role in institutionalizing colonialism (Rizvi, & Lingard, 2006; Tickly, 2004; Smith-Crocco, 2005). The inheritance of western educational practices has been seen as a "key institution through which colonial modes of thinking were produced and reproduced and where postcolonial aspirations could also be worked towards" (Rizvi & Lingard, 2006). Therefore, formal schooling reinforced and legitimized the trusteeship status of the colonial master while subjugating the colonized (Tickly, 2004). In his book, *The idea of Africa*, Mudimbe (1994) highlights how education was used as a space and instrument for inscribing colonial ideology of 'otherness'.

Mudimbe (1994) further argues that not only was colonization geographical, but also sought to colonize the minds. The colonizers entrusted the missionaries with education and they used the bible to further relegate the colonized to subordination and domination as well as alienating their students from their cultures and people. Christianity is said to have created an "African Otherness" by labeling Africans as "barbarians, savages, uncivilized" non-believers who had to leave their cultures to appropriate the Christian faith (Chilisa, 2005). In this case

education was used as a disciplinary tool that was divisive in terms of loyalties and identities. This further gave the colonizer the power and control over the colonized.

4. Review of Literature

The significance of discussing controversial issues in social studies has been articulated by a number of scholars (Hess, 2004, Hahn, 2001; Engle & Ochoa, 1988) and they all seem to agree on the importance of such issues within social studies. Scholars have provided a number of reasons that basically show the significance of controversial issues in the teaching of social studies and the development of citizens and some of their justifications includes among the many; creating multiple perspectives, increased democratic dispositions, and the development of critical skills.

4.1 Create Multiple Perspectives among Students

Teaching controversial issues is important in the development of citizens because they have the potential to open students' eyes to perspectives on race and other cultures to which they have not been previously exposed to. Research has shown that when students are engaged in controversial conversations and examining why they were offensive, led to an expansion of their knowledge, opening new thoughts and not closing off the old ones (Davis, 2007; Barton and McCully, 2007). On the same issue, an illuminating example of multiple perspectives is provided that "when we dialogue with those with whom we disagree-even though we 'know' they are mistaken, we benefit because we gain a clearer perception and livelier impression of truth, produced by its collision with error" (Martinson, 2005, p.119).

4.2 Increased Democratic Dispositions

Discussing controversial issues provides positive results for students. Davis (2007) opines that discussing controversial issues increase civic competence, heightened understanding of democratic values and deeper understanding of the context of the content. He provides three strong reasons that may hamper social studies if controversial issues are avoided in classrooms. Firstly, that psychologically, avoiding genuine controversy may increase students' dislike on social studies. Secondly, that intellectually, avoiding controversial issues is tantamount to an assault on the students' intellect. Thirdly, morally, to suppress competing perspectives is in totality to violate their dignity. Finally, pedagogically, such a stance is perceived as counter-productive. It is further emphasized that "knowledge without action is meaningless, and action without knowledge and deliberation is irresponsible" (Hahn, 2001, p. 19).

4.3 Development of Critical and Interpersonal skills

The discussion of controversial issues is viewed as a way of developing critical and interpersonal skills which are at the heart of preparing citizens who can participate in the democratic decision making processes within a pluralistic society (Davis, 2007). This is further emphasized by Hess (2002) when stating that students should be encouraged to construct new knowledge that challenges established ways of thinking, a process that Engle and Ochoa (1988) called counter-socialization. She further argues that through discussion students' develop critical thinking, gain insights and share information with their peers and developing mutual trust.

According to Hess (2004) participation in the discussion of controversial issues appears to have an influence on other forms of political engagement. One of the most extensive studies was conducted by Torney-Purta (2002) commissioned by International Association for the

Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) on civic engagement in schools in approximately thirty countries over a period of eight years. The Researchers reported that discussion of controversial issues in an open classroom climate is a significant predictor of civic knowledge, support for democratic values, and participation in political discussions, political engagement and the ability to vote.

Another IEA study (Hahn, 2001) was conducted among six western democracies (Denmark, Germany, UK, Netherlands, Australia, and USA) among secondary school students aged between fourteen and nineteen years and focused on exploring the teaching of controversial issues. Classes observed in Germany, England and Netherlands also discussed controversial issues. The findings of the study revealed that students regardless of which country this occurred, it was found that students who reported discussing controversial issues in an open atmosphere were more likely to be interested in politics and be politically engaged as opposed to those who have not had such experiences (Hahn, 1999).

In Botswana, citizenship education is not taught as an independent subject but is rather infused through the social studies curriculum. It is the social studies curriculum that is entrusted with citizenship education as it has to inculcate necessary skills, values, knowledge and attitudes that are necessary for developing responsible citizens (Ajiboye, 2009). The Botswana social studies is modeled around both the traditional village integrated citizenship education and the demands of a modern nation. Therefore, indicating that the curriculum is in agreement with the principles of social studies around the world as “ *citizenship education starting with a country’s own cultural identity, integration of subject content, and the development of decision-making skills*” (Department of curriculum development and evaluation, 1990, p. 7).

5. Research Methodology

The study was qualitative in its approach and employed the naturalistic inquiry paradigm. Naturalistic inquiry is said to demand a natural setting. This is so because “phenomena of study, whatever they may be-physical, chemical, biological, social, psychological- *take their meaning as much from their contexts as they do from themselves*” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, 189). Lincoln and Guba further emphasize that naturalistic inquirers begin their research with the belief that constructions of realities cannot be separated from the world in which they occur or are experienced therefore emphasizing the relationship between time and context to understanding the phenomena under study. Due to the nature of naturalistic inquiry, I found it suitable for the design of my study as it was flexible, required more time in the natural setting and allowed the study to take shape and form as it progressed.

5.1 Participants

The study was undertaken among eleven social studies teachers in upper classes in six primary schools in one of the major villages in the central district in Botswana. In this study, purposive sampling was used to select the teachers who participated in this study. This type of sampling requires that one establishes criteria, bases, or standards necessary for units to be included in the investigation (Patton, 1990). Therefore, these teachers were chosen on the basis that they are experts in the area of social studies, have taught social studies for more than 3 years, are implementers of the curriculum and can explain what they do best. For this study, snowball or chain sampling was used to select the participants. The teachers who were identified at the beginning were requested to refer the researcher to other teachers in other schools who met the set criteria. After identifying such teachers, they were interviewed individually to get the final

group that participated in the study. Those identified as potential participants were requested if they would like to participate in the study and were reminded that participation was voluntary. Pseudonyms were used to protect the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants.

5.2 Data Sources

Qualitative methods which included individual interviews, participant observations and focus groups were used for data collection. The individual interviews were used to solicit more in depth ideas on issues and problems encountered in their teaching; this informed the classroom observations and further interviews. The questions were based on what the teachers' think as opposed to asking content knowledge. Interviews have their own limitations, for instance, I interviewed teachers during break, lunch or after school. This made me rush over the interviews as teachers would either be in a hurry to go to the next class or tired after a long day of teaching. I observed the social studies teachers in different settings such as; classrooms and other outside activities in debate clubs, sports activities, staffroom and traditional music practices in an effort to understand what they do and why they do what they do in relation to citizenship education and to listen to their normal chats and gossips. The data obtained through observations was used to construct follow up interview questions and vice-versa. Focus groups were used to enable both the participants and researcher to see how the individual responses contributed during discussions differ from or reinforce those of peers. Focus groups have their limitations in that they compromise confidentiality. At times teachers were not free to say what they would have said if interviewed individually. However, they enabled me to get the socio- cultural aspects of the study in that I was able to observe them when they are together on issues they agree or disagree on.

5.3 Data Analysis

This study adopted grounded theory techniques for data analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1994). Data analysis involved making sense of what the researcher has seen, heard, and read. It also requires analyzing, categorizing, synthesizing, searching for patterns and interpreting the data (Glesne, 1999). Data were analyzed inductively using the constant comparative analysis (Merriam, 1998; Patton, 1990). Data collected were immediately transcribed, coded and categorized in order to inform the next interviews and focus groups. The constant comparative analysis is said to be a process that "combines inductive category coding with a simultaneous comparison of all social incidents observed and coded (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993, p.256). Data analysis took place at the same time with data collection and questions raised during transcription were used to shape the questions for the next interviews.

6. Findings and Discussions

The discussion of controversial issues has been widely recognized as a crucial aspect in the development of democratic citizens as it promotes discussion, debate, deliberation, decision making and critical thinking. Interestingly, all the participants agreed that the discussion of controversial issues was necessary in the development of 'good' citizens. However, the findings of the study revealed that teachers acknowledged the merits of discussing controversial issues with their students and found it difficult to discuss some of the issues. From what they said they were reluctant to discuss any controversial issue they may be confronted with and tended to be selective in what they needed to discuss with the view that students do not need to be told everything. The teachers' were reluctant in discussing issues of sexuality and this reluctance

may be attributed to their socialization, culture or religion as in *Tswana* cultures discussion of sexual matters has always been a taboo.

One participant, Ms Batho, had an interesting view about the importance of teaching controversial issues that:

Controversial issues are important in that they broaden the students' knowledge, to be aware of different sides to a story and what is happening around the world. It encourages students to gain knowledge about their surroundings. It also helps them to build the spirit of tolerance when they discuss, argue or debate issues. They also accept diversity in views as they listen to one another. But as teachers we have to be careful on what we discuss with these students because some information is not necessary.

The view held by Ms Batho clearly shows how she perceives the teaching of controversial issues and solidifies the notion of content selection. There is no doubt in her mind that such issues have to be taught. However, Mr Morubisi was quick to acknowledge the importance of discussing controversial issues but offered a different perspective that:

You see, controversial issues are important but they are not covered in our social studies curriculum. I follow the curriculum most of the time but I do discuss them whenever they crop up depending on what they are or how sensitive they are. I was brought up as a Christian and some issues are not supposed to be discussed in my religion.

From Mr Morubisi's perspective, it can be deduced that he selects what he feels is important to teach and ignores anything that is against his values and beliefs as he confides about his Christian religion. From his explanation there is a clear reluctance to discuss any issue brought up by the students or one that does not comply with his belief system.

Throughout the interviews and focus group discussions, teachers expressed difficulty in discussing certain controversial topics such as sexual orientation or sexuality because they violated their beliefs, religion, culture or legal system. Even those issues such as HIV/AIDS that they believed they discussed, it was evident that they took a very comfortable and silent approach with no controversy at all. Some of the controversial issues that teachers felt were important to discuss in their classrooms were on HIV/AIDS and socio-political issues such as poverty, ethnicity, racism, conflicts and wars. They felt that they were important in that they affected their everyday lives hence students needed to know and debate about them. Interestingly, all the participants even when probed avoided talking about issues of sexuality. The findings are categorized and presented in three themes namely; HIV /AIDS, socio-political issues and issues of sexuality.

6.1 HIV/AIDS Issues

One of the controversial issues that teachers felt were important to be discussed with their students was that of HIV/AIDS. Though in their culture it is taboo to discuss sexual matters with children, they believed that when it comes to HIV/AIDS students needed to be made aware for a number of reasons. Advancing the reasons for teaching about HIV/AIDS, Ms Lorato commented that:

Even though in my culture I am not supposed to talk about sex with children when it comes to HIV/AIDS I am forced to. You know, with HIV/AIDS it is because Botswana is one of the countries that are affected. They should know how to take care of themselves when they are affected or infected. They should know what to do and what is expected out of them.

Ms Kubu shared the same view indicating that HIV/AIDS does not discriminate against the rich or poor, that it affects people of all ages hence the need to talk about it in class and said that:

HIV/AIDS, the scourge that affects all, and makes them sick, young or old, rich or poor. They have to know what to do when they are infected or affected. They have to be knowledgeable on this issue as it is a serious and hazardous issue. We are living with them. We meet them, we can share this knowledge and experience with them. So they have to have the knowledge on these issues, so that they will make their own choices and decisions. They will also impart this knowledge to others. Some people are illiterate and they are living with the disease.

Ms Kabo reinforced earlier sentiments held by her colleagues and laid her concerns and fears about HIV/AIDS by commenting that:

There's this one of HIV/AIDS, I talked about it because I didn't want them to come to a situation whereby they discriminate one another. They have to know that HIV is there is not a joke and when there's an infected person they know they shouldn't discriminate him/her. Like when they work together in groups in classroom, by so doing there are going to accept and tolerate one another regardless whether there are sick or not.

The reasons advanced by the three teachers was a clear indication of how they struggle with the idea of discussing about HIV/AIDS but are forced to equip students with knowledge about it since it a problem that is ravaging their society. It appears that if it was not of the fears and concerns that they have about HIV/AIDS, it would not be an issue for discussion as it relates to sexual matters which are not open for discussion in their culture. It is also interesting that all the teachers who expressed their concerns about the disease were women and this may be attributed to their role as care givers, mothers and breadwinners within their society.

6.1.1 Dealing with Stereotypes and Stigmatization

Teachers also spoke about what they do to dismantle some of the stereotypes that students may have about HIV/AIDS. They wanted their students to understand that the disease is real and does not discriminate among people and wanted their students to exercise caution. In trying to deal with the stereotypes associated with HIV/AIDS, Ms Kubu during their focus group said:

Issues that are usually talked about here in Botswana we have got a problem of HIV/AIDS of which these pupils must know. I believe they must know that the disease or this infection is not only for people in Botswana and that it is there in other countries around the world. All they have to know is how the disease is spread, how can you be infected by the disease and that does not mean if you leave Botswana and go and study in Europe you are not going to get infected by the disease as long as you have sexual relationships with people who may be positive, then that is how you will be infected by disease. It is not for a black person only is for everyone.

Though Ms Kubu wanted to deal with the stereotypes associated with HIV/AIDS, she appeared to be raising a concern about the way the disease is being portrayed as though it is a problem for people of Botswana or Africans only. Her view was to demystify exotic representations that are widely held by western media about HIV/AIDS ravaging Africa. Ms Neo alluded to the issue of discrimination and stigmatization for people with HIV/AIDS and had this to say:

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stigmatize him/her. Like when they work together in groups in classroom, by so doing they are going to accept and tolerate one another regardless of whether they are sick or not.

The results in this category are indicative of the realities and perceptions of teachers on HIV/AIDS and the teaching of controversial issues. Teachers appeared to talk about the disease because it is a threat to their children's lives and not because it is necessary for the development of citizens. However, it was difficult to sense the controversial nature of the issue as teachers appeared to be taking a more subtle and salient approach to the issue by providing information as opposed to discussion or provoking a debate.

6.2 Socio-Political Issues (Poverty, Conflicts/Wars, Tribalism)

Teachers talked about the socio-political issues that were a concern to them such as poverty, conflicts and wars, religion and tribalism. These issues were seen to be controversial as they tend to affect people generally around the world regardless of where they occur. There was an intersection of issues such that it was difficult for teachers to discuss each one in isolation as they are typically interwoven. These issues were also important to them because they affected people in the African continent and their immediate neighbors. Talking about the relevance of teaching about poverty Mr Tau had this to say:

I discuss issues of Poverty so that students are aware of what is happening in the country and other African countries such as Ethiopia, Somalia, Zimbabwe, Malawi, Rwanda, Uganda, Kenya and other countries that I have not mentioned. I make students understand that what is happening in these countries may happen to them one day. The importance of teaching about these issues is to develop citizens who can understand other people's problems, be compassionate, caring and supportive.

Ms Kubu also spoke about discussing issues on poverty and explained that:

We discuss issues about starvation or Poverty. Most African countries are experiencing some political unrest and as such their people are caught in poverty due to wars and conflicts.

Teachers also talked about conflicts and wars and their implications as well as conflict resolution. They reiterated on the consequences of conflicts such as refugees, competition for social amenities and the job market. Ms Kabo had this to say about conflicts and wars:

Conflicts in other countries, like the Zimbabwean issue, and it is affecting us because those people are coming here and some of them seek medication and end up getting medication which could be used by Batswana. They get job opportunities. If today Botswana finds itself fighting with Zimbabwe or Namibia what it means is that some Batswana might find themselves in Zambia, Malawi or South Africa as refugees.

We have refugees; we have people moving from those countries to other countries for security reasons.

Ms Thato talked about the need to teach about conflict resolution and said that:

The other one I talked about earlier on that I discuss with my students is conflict resolution, that there are different conflicts around the world, people fighting over the borders, where they share resources. They know that they have to come together discuss issues peacefully and come up with solutions to the problems rather than fight. The countries should listen to one another.

Ms Batho also weighed in on teaching about conflict resolution and associated it with issues about human rights and said:

They should think about ways that countries affected by wars can apply to resolve their problems...If you teach them about human rights they should know that the rights that they are having in that country is the right that other people in outside their country should have.

Some of the socio-political issues that teachers said they taught their students about was that of discrimination on the basis of ethnicity, tribalism and race. Ms Lorato who belongs to one of the so called "minor" ethnic groups was very critical on teaching about issues of tribalism and mentioned that:

I also teach them about tribalism because this is a concern since in other countries people have gone to war because of tribalism where some tribes are regarded as minor while others are seen as major tribes. This may cause emotions as our grandparents have fought for this country and we are not recognized. Knowing about these things will help us avoid problems like riots and discrimination which have caused civil wars in other countries. Citizens should know what is taking place in the world...I think there is an issue of tribalism that I think even today tribalism is still there I think to the extent that some people do not feel free to identify themselves with their ethnicity.

Mr Tau spoke elaborately on ethnicity arguing that students need to be taught about what is happening around the world as these conflicts can provide teachable moments for Botswana. Reacting to teaching about issues of ethnicity Mr Tau had this to say:

Ethnicity-One area where people are discriminated in is due to their ethnicity. For example many countries have gone to war because of discrimination based on ethnicity. Even in Botswana here the issue of major and minor tribes nearly divided the nation if it was not attended immediately. The world has witnessed genocides in countries like Rwanda/Burundi between the Hutu and the Tutsi. Such things should be avoided at all costs. As we speak there are riots in Nigeria based on either Ethnicity or religion between the Christians and Muslims. Let's look at what is happening in Iraq, Iran, Palestine, Afghanistan and many other countries in the Middle East. There are serious lessons that we can learn from these countries that are marred with conflicts

Ms Kabo spoke about discrimination on the basis of ethnicity and racism and how these provide a breeding space for xenophobia citing the way Botswana treat Zimbabweans who are in the country due to economic problems in their country, below follow an excerpt from her interview:

Yes I do teach about issues of difference such as discrimination on the basis of ethnicity; xenophobia that is; ill-treating of foreigners like where Botswana mistreat Zimbabweans while knowing what they are experiencing. We talk about racism because it violates other people's human rights and freedoms as we saw it dividing people in the former South Africa. We discourage our students from thinking that some people are better than others based on the colour of their skin. This is bad and can divide a nation.

The findings in this category do indicate that teachers teach about issues that they believe affect them either directly or indirectly such as poverty, conflict, ethnicity, wars and discrimination. To them these issues are important as they might find themselves in the same situation. Their concerns are valid in view of the fact that Africa, where Botswana is situated is always portrayed as a continent in turmoil due to wars, conflicts and disease. There is never a situation where the continent is portrayed as peaceful or progressive economically as is the case with Botswana and other countries. So there is need for these teachers to be able to recognize these stereotypes and

misinformation and make their students aware of the realities of life. However, observing them teaching and speaking about these issues they tended to use the 'tell them' approach and there was never a debate, discussion or deliberation of such issues. This approach is detrimental to the learning of these children as they are not exposed to any form of argumentation from a tender age. The probability is that our education system will produce citizens who are gullible, cannot critique or question the status quo. This approach nullifies the essence of social studies and citizenship development in Botswana hence rendering it an illusion rather than a reality.

6.3 Issues of Sexuality

Another controversial issue that teachers tended to avoid talking about in their classrooms is that of sexual orientation. Even when probed in their interviews teachers were uncomfortable and reluctant to discuss issues about gays, homosexuals and lesbians. They confided in me that they do not talk about "such" issues and the use of "such" carried negative connotations in that it indicated that it was something abominable and could not even say the words. While probing on issues of sexuality during focus group discussions, Mr Morubisi emotionally charged equated same sex relationships with an act of sin and had this to say:

I usually infuse issues of sex education and this includes teenage pregnancy, HIV/AIDS, sexually transmitted diseases. I never talk about same sex relationships because I am not comfortable with such issues. I feel it is a practice of Satanism or related to Satanism. From long time back we only know a man should be married to a wife. This is just out of hand! Talking about such things will be bringing negative things to the students. I don't think they should be included in the curriculum because pupils may try to practice them.

Mr Nkwe shared similar sentiments using religion and the notion that Botswana is a Christian country to advance his argument that:

Issues of homosexuals are new in our society that's why there is resentment on them. Honestly, I never teach about same sex issues or marriages because I don't know why they happen. This is wrong and students should be discouraged from them. Since Botswana is a Christian country, it is stated in the bible that marriage is between a man and a woman, to have same sex marriages is against our beliefs and culture.

Mr Kgabo insisted that he did not talk about same sex relationships because they are not in the syllabus and against his culture and religion. His comments were:

I do not discuss such issues because they are not part of the curriculum and I also do not see the importance of talking about them. Same sex marriages or relationships are not good to the society since they go against the society's culture sometimes I even wonder how they reproduce. In Botswana these things are unacceptable and very recently there were demonstrations against gays and lesbians by churches in Botswana, this is an indication that they are against our culture because Botswana is a Christian country and follow the bible. In the bible it is clearly stated that marriage is between a man and a woman, what are these people trying to teach our children? They copy things from other countries and want to bring them here.

Ms Thato who describes herself as a Christian saw same sex relationships as immoral had this to say:

I do not discuss such issues because I am not comfortable talking about them. I am a Christian and I grew up knowing that a man should marry a woman not gays, lesbians or homo sexuality. According to me this is a sin and children should not be taught about such issues. They are also illegal in our country, against our culture and immoral.

Almost all the teachers mentioned that they would not discuss or teach about homosexuality, gays or lesbians, or transgender issues because they are against their culture. It is interesting that in talking about their culture they tended to make reference to Christianity, immorality and sin. Teachers also described themselves as Christians and their country as a Christian country. The notion of *Batswana* (People of Botswana) seeing themselves as Christians clearly shows the extent to which modernization has permeated the very fabric of the Botswana society. This is very interesting in that these teachers are unaware of the fact that Christianity and colonialism in Botswana are inseparable as missionaries paved way for the colonization of the Batswana lands. It was Christianity through missionaries that undermined and eroded their culture, identity and religions and has often been associated with promoting the African “Otherness” as it labeled Batswana as uncivilized, barbaric, and illiterate (Chilisa, 2005).

7. Conclusions and Recommendations

The findings from this study have shown that teachers are faced with a lot of challenges regarding the teaching of controversial issues. The challenges may be attributed to their teacher education, socialization practices, culture and the silent nature of the curriculum on such issues. Furthermore, this study has shown that teachers even censor themselves in anticipation of possible negative reactions from either parents or the community and avoid topics that would generate controversy under the guise that their culture does not accommodate discussing certain issues with children. These findings have led to the conclusion that the absence of the discussion of controversial issues in social studies is detrimental to the development of active and effective citizens; hence citizenship education in Botswana schools remains an illusion rather than a reality. The findings have implications for teachers, teacher educators, curriculum developers and policy makers to insure that controversial issues are used both as a method of teaching and subject matter in social studies if indeed they want to develop democratic citizens. The study makes the following recommendations for consideration:

1. A study be commissioned on an evaluation of the social studies’ teacher education programs in Colleges of Education and University of Botswana to find out if they have incorporated mega trends on citizenship education as a field of study in an effort to insure that they prepare teachers who can compete globally.
2. Pre-service and In-Service teachers be equipped with skills that will enable them to deal with the dynamics of an issues-centered curriculum
3. Teachers should conduct a self study in order to interrogate their beliefs, attitudes and values in an effort to balance the curriculum and needs of the students.

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