

An analysis of the role of the school in teaching democratic values: A case of three selected primary schools in Shamva district, Zimbabwe

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ABSTRACT

The role of schools is critical in the effective teaching of democratic values in learners worldwide. The effective role of the schools should be reflected through the products churned out to the community. This study was necessitated by the continual abuse of democratic values by school leavers in Shamva district before, during and after elections despite the expected role of the schools. Though the study is cognisant of the possibilities of other factors influencing the output of school graduates, the study wonders if schools really teach democratic values as enshrined in the curriculum, basing on the noted behaviour by school leavers. This paper examines the role of primary schools in promoting democratic values of justice, equality and liberty in pupils in Shamva district, Zimbabwe. Using a qualitative approach, the study is located within the interpretivist research paradigm. A case study design was adopted, and three primary schools in Shamva district were purposefully, and conveniently selected for this study. The study was underpinned by Rogan and Grayson's theory of curriculum implementation and reconstructionism theories. The findings of the study revealed that schools had challenges in teaching democratic values to learners. Challenges included difficulties in interpreting the syllabi on teaching of democratic values in learners; community challenges regarding democratic values viewed as sensitive content usually misconstrued to be favouring certain political agendas and lack of a clear-cut democratic values in the curriculum framework to guide teachers on teaching democratic values. Some of the recommendations were that teachers should be protected by legal instruments to enable them to freely teach sensitive content. Teachers also need empowerment in syllabus interpretation on the teaching of the democratic values to be able to effectively promote the teaching of democratic values.

KEYWORDS

Democratic values, justice, liberty, equality, empowerment,

1. Introduction

In Zimbabwe, the 1982 Social Studies, and the updated 2015-2022 Heritage and Social Studies syllabi, and the primary and secondary curriculum framework empowers the schools to interpret and organise content in the best way schools sees it fit to implement the curriculum (Dzavo, 2020). This role should allow schools to promote the teaching of the democratic values as enshrined in the 2013 national constitution and the curriculum. Despite the fact that the teacher respondents in this study were all qualified, and experienced, they were facing challenges in promoting democratic values in learners. This observation was also similar with the one done by Botha, Joubert and Hugo, 2016 and Ferreira & Schulze, 2014. The observation was also in contrast with the observation done by Subba (2014) and Dzavo (2020), on the expected role of teachers in the promotion of democratic values.

Bafaneli and Setibi (2015), and Alvaro & Vredevoogd (2001) view democratic values as fundamental principles, and standards, which direct actions to live democratically. Fundamental principles or standards, as mentioned here, portray democratic values as those most critical social needs society cannot do without for its sustenance.

Botha, Joubert and Hugo (2016), in the same vein, view democratic values as the values that a community or country expects from its members where individuals act as members of the community or the country. The values expected by the community as serving a common good by all participating in the activities of the community or country at large, are regarded as democratic. These are values which allow justice to prevail. For justice to prevail, individuals should exercise their liberty without unnecessary hindrance. This should happen where citizens regard each other as equals, and hence, deserving respect of the other person against any possible harm.

That being the case, the societies concerned with future or continual survival, should be seen to be taking critical steps to deliberately plan, and include the teaching of the democratic values in their education system. This would probably guarantee peace, and sustainable development, across the globe. In this paper, democratic values are those beliefs, and principles, that allow for tolerance, freedom, justice, equality, liberty and harmonious participation in citizenship activities in given institutions.

According to Tibbitts (2015), teachers in Australia were consulted regarding democratic value related curriculum development. Their feedback was quite useful in coming up with a democratic-value-related curriculum. The curriculum helped foster learners' commitment to national values of democracy, equity and justice. The inclusion of teachers in Australia, in designing curriculum content, brought in ownership mentality amongst teachers, and as a result, teachers in Australia support democratic values curriculum implementation. Where teachers are informed, and included, in decision making on curriculum issues they become empowered to implement the curriculum at hand (Rogan & Grayson, 2003). This is the missing aspect in the curriculum development process in Zimbabwe, which follows the centre to periphery approach. This approach, position teachers as consumers of the curriculum than active participants in its formulation.

Teachers, however, may not support the implementation of democratic values due to a myriad of factors. Some of the key factors are lack of knowledge of what constitutes democratic values, approaches deficiency, lack of resources to implement certain programs in line with democratic values and socialisation as well as cultural practices. Socialisation and cultural practices regard the background of both the teachers and the learners on how they were brought up, their beliefs as well as interests (Mwamwenda, 2014; Dzavo 2020; Mhalauli, 2010).

In India, importance is attached to teachers because they play a pivotal role in teaching democratic values, and ultimately serving as instruments of change. In turn teachers provide free space to learners to practice democratic activities (Subba, 2014). This great recognition, in India, of the role of schools, provides ammunition to schools to promote teaching of the democratic values, and this brings about positive results to any democratic nation. Teachers therefore, should embrace democratic values in schools of freedom, equality, justice, tolerance; acceptance of difference, if the teaching of the democratic values in learners is to be realised as is the case in India.

Vinterek (2010) posits that democratic values have a prominent position. Swedish Democracy forms the basis of the national school systems in Sweden (National Agency for Education, 2006 p.3). The first chapter of the Swedish Curriculum for Compulsory School is about fundamental values and the task of the school is that democracy forms the basics of the national school system. The school activities are structured in accordance with fundamental democratic values. In Sweden, everyone working in the schools has the responsibility to counteract all activities; working against the proper teaching of the democratic values. The school has the task of imparting, instilling and forming in pupils, fundamental democratic values. When schools are so clear of their mandate, then, curriculum implementation is not a challenge but a normal daily routine. As a result of this supportive environment, Swedish schools play a critical role in the promotion of democratic values.

Thornberg and Elvstrand (2012) concluded that naïve and grounded trust have an impact in promoting of the democratic values in learners. Naïve trust which is based on inexperience or immaturity claims that something is true, good, or right simply because someone in authority says so, rather than because it is supported by good arguments or evidence. Learners just trust and believe in teachers, just because they are adults and teachers. This results in abuse of authority, and subsequently, abuse of the democratic values by school authorities, and most probably later by school leavers, when they occupy various positions in society. In contrast, grounded trust is where learners trust, and believe in teachers because of good arguments and explanations from teachers, fair negotiations and joint participation in decision making. Teachers apply naïve trust when faced with difficult environments such as large classes, and lack of resources and this hamper promotion of democratic values (Dzavo, 2020; Halpin, 2014).

Community interference, as noted in China and Rwanda, created challenges in advancing democratic values in these respective countries. The socialist experience in China, limited the teachers from exercising their role on implementation of democratic values. On the other hand, in Rwanda, contention over what content of the curriculum in line with the teaching of democratic values to be included, was noted. This delayed the effective implementation of democratic values in that country (Liu, 1998; Berghof Foundation, 2012; Hilker, 2010). Zimbabwe remains engulfed with some socialist remnants through the Look East Policy as she once adopted scientific socialism. As a result, the country found as having difficulties in implementing democratic values like its major ally already propounded.

Basing on the discussion above, schools play a major role in the teaching of democratic values. What is needed is epistemological empowerment and necessary conducive school environments to support the promotion of democratic values.

2. Theoretical underpinnings

This paper is underpinned by theories of curriculum implementation (Rogan & Grayson, 2003) and reconstructionism by Brameld Theodore, and others, (Conrad, 2016; Lynch, 2016). Rogan and Grayson's theory focuses on the learning environment being the centre of analysis. This is so because the learning environment is where learners, teachers, curriculum and educational resources meet. This, however, does not sideline the significance of administrative, and governance, levels as critical pivots in curriculum implementation (Rogan & Grayson, 2003). The theory was relevant to the research because it focuses on the strengths of various educational components present in the education system, such as teachers, learners and the school environment in the implementation of curriculum. For the curriculum to be effectively implemented, teachers should be well trained, learners should be willing to learn, and the school should provide a conducive environment. This study used the three construct to assess the current situation on the role of primary schools in promoting democratic values in Shamva district. The theory, however, is silent on inclusion of content in the curriculum, and it was, therefore, used in conjunction with reconstructionism.

Reconstructionism is concerned more with the inclusion of democratic values in the curriculum, and demands that the democratic values be taught in schools. The theory emphasises addressing a social question, and a quest to create a better society. Reconstructionist educators focus on a curriculum that highlights social reform as the aim of education. It is a philosophy of values, and purposes, with a democratically empowered world civilisation as the central goal of education. The theory further takes education as the means of preparing people for creating a new social order. To the reconstructionist, the curriculum focuses on student experiences while taking social action on real problems such as violence, terrorism, inequality among others. The theory, in addition, advocates for strategies for dealing with controversial issues and bringing the world into the classroom. The thrust of this theory, therefore, is that because the leaders are the product of schools, schools should provide a curriculum that fosters their development.

In this study, the two theories complemented each other in guiding this study on understanding the situation in primary schools in line with their role to promote the democratic values of liberty, justice and equality in Shamva District.

3. The problem

Despite the fact that democratic values are enshrined in the national constitution and the curriculum, schools in Shamva district appear not to be doing their role of teaching the democratic values to learners. This problem appears to manifest itself in school leavers as they engage in acts that abuse, democratic values before, during and after elections. This problem further compromises peace and sustainable development. It is against this backdrop that the paper examines how empowerment of schools could alleviate this problem.

Against the aforesaid, the research objectives of the study were to establish teachers and learners' views on democratic schools. Further, the other objective was to establish challenges in teaching democratic values to learners in Shamva primary schools. Guided by these objectives, the paper answers, among others, research questions notably how do teachers and learners view democratic values? What challenges do teachers face in teaching democratic values in Shamva primary schools?

4. Methodology

The study was located in the interpretive paradigm. According to Saunders et al. (2012) and Zukauskas, Vveinhardt & Andriukaitiene (2018) the interpretivism paradigm is the way human beings attempt to make sense of the world. The focus is to understand fundamental meanings attached to social phenomena by interpreting participants' views, and understanding their environment.

The interpretation of democratic values of justice, liberty and equality may differ from community to community. Schools as miniature communities also interpret and implement democratic values differently. The reasons for these differences in implementation are explained in Rogan and Grayson's (2003) theory, also guiding the study.

The sensitiveness associated with the democratic values as enunciated by Brameld's reconstructionism, (Conrad, 2016; Lynch, 2016) which guides this study, further makes the creation of multiple interpretation of these values a reality. It is to this effect that the choice of this paradigm was made to establish the analysis of the views of the various respondents in different set-ups, both physically and mentally, regarding the role of schools in the teaching of the democratic values of justice, equality and

liberty in primary schools in Shamva district.

In this paper, focus is laid on the respondents' narrations of the role of schools in teaching the democratic values of justice, equality and liberty in Shamva primary schools. Based on the narrations, the researchers sought to appreciate the situations at different schools, within the same district, without generalising the situation in one school to other schools. This helped in understanding issues behind the teaching of the democratic values of justice, equality and liberty at those schools. Thus, the paradigm allowed the researchers enough space to generate essential data. The assumption was that different teachers at different stations interpret and implement democratic values differently due to their sensitiveness to undemocratic communities. This resonates quite well with the two theories guiding the study. Basing on the paradigm, the researchers developed answers to the research questions based on the outcome, and analysis of the findings.

The research design chosen for this study was the case study design. Cohen et al. (2011) state that case studies strive to portray what it is like to be in a particular situation, to catch the close-up reality, and thick description, of participants' lived experiences of thoughts about and feelings for a situation. The teaching of the democratic values of justice, liberty and equality is not expected to be uniform across the breadth and length of a country; hence, the choice of a design that required a concentration of small parts showing indicators of a possible lack of these values. This, therefore, led to the selection of a case study design for this analysis.

The researchers chose a case study because it helped the researchers appreciate a complex social phenomenon of the democratic values of justice, liberty and equality in schools within their own communities. This case study allowed the researchers to interview teachers and learners living in the communities where the schools are found, focusing on the role of schools in teaching of the democratic values of justice, liberty and equality. This study was, therefore, a case study of three selected primary schools in Shamva district, Zimbabwe.

The sample was made of three (3) primary schools heads, three (3) deputy heads, nine (9) teachers, (15) prefects, aged between 10 and 15 years old.

Data was generated through semi-structured face-to-face interviews, focus group interviews and the following documents were analysed; Social Studies primary school syllabus, Social Studies text books, the constitution of Zimbabwe and Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education Curriculum framework, to check for the content and approaches that promote the teaching of the democratic values in schools.

5. Findings & Discussions

The respondent T.1.1 (Teacher from school 1)

The respondent cited challenges that had to do with the availability of resources in the school. The respondent felt that when there are scarce resources like textbooks then the teaching of the democratic values of justice, liberty and equality would be difficult. The respondent had this to say:

As teachers we need a lot of adequate resources, but we end up sourcing for ourselves. Under such an environment, talking of justice and liberty proves to be a challenge. As a teacher, I have to employ approaches that will make me achieve my objectives. Mentioning equality where resources and the environment are not supportive is not even proper.

As much as adequate resources are needed in teaching and learning, one wonders if this aspect could be used as an excuse to undermine the practice and teaching of democratic values. Teaching should be guided by syllabi and not by text books. Textbooks only act as interpretation tools of the syllabus which may be

relevant or not. Textbooks are also produced for commercial reasons. So, what is contained in them may not be the best content to advance the agenda of democratic values. What is important are the skills to interpret the syllabus, and use the understanding to play a role in promoting the democratic values of justice, liberty and equality in primary schools.

The respondent T.1.3 (Teacher from school 1)

The respondent highlighted that there were challenges in the application of the democratic values of justice, liberty and equality due to the function of rules. She further indicated that she used force to control her class, though she knew corporal punishment was not permissible in the country. Below is her response:

In class, I use corporal punishment to enforce discipline, although corporal punishment is not good but this promotes good behaviour in learners because if you keep on talking, lower grades do not quickly respond, so I beat them up. Yes, I know the negative side of corporal punishment in the sense that learners can be injured, sometimes they may not have freedom in classroom because of fear of the stick. Aaaaa! At the lower grades as I have already said, giving liberty to the learners can result in chaos and poor performance because they do not understand why they are in the school. I think by using force I am doing justice to the parents who pay fees and would want to see positive results from their children.

The practice by the respondent, of enforcing discipline, may be viewed as sending a negative signal to learners; that, when one person differs in opinion or action, is punishment of the less powerful individual through violence. This may appear as teaching of a violent culture to learners. Such an environment may create short term results for the teachers, but negative long term democratic challenges for the society. Society can only survive when the democratic values of justice, liberty and equality are respected, observed and practised by all stakeholders, schools included. In this regard, the actions of the teacher were negatively impacting on the promotion of democratic values in the school. The conclusion here is that there was lack of teaching and practice of the democratic values of justice, liberty and equality by the respondent against the expected role of primary schools.

The respondent T.3.1 (Teacher from school 3)

The respondent had this to say;

Bad mannered learners who are bullies are usually a challenge to the practice of the democratic values of justice, liberty and equality. Faced by learners of such behaviour the space for liberty is to be limited. In addition, too large teacher-pupil ratio makes it difficult to deal with learners in a democratic manner and as a result the teacher has to employ teacher centred approaches disregarding the demands for the democratic values of justice, liberty and equality. Resources have to be adequate as well, if we are to achieve promotion of these democratic values.

The issue of resources highlighted by the respondent was also highlighted by learner respondents under 'Prefects'. There is a possibility that learners had observed how their learning was being affected by the scarcity of resources in their schools, and the impact of that on democratic values. The issue was observed in all three schools. Levelling the blame on learners as is done by this respondent is unfair. The researchers observed that learners expressed their desire for fair treatment when dealing with them, and were ready to cooperate when working with adults and fellow learners. Large classes in schools posed a problem for the proper implementation of democratic values as resource allocation contributed to difficulties in the practice of democratic values. The conclusion, therefore, is that the availability of resources in primary schools was critical in the promotion of the democratic values of justice, liberty and equality.

Head 3 (Head of School 3) shows the epistemological gap that exists in schools as far as the teaching of the democratic values is concerned and the following was his response to his views on the teaching of the democratic values in primary schools:

This interview on democratic values is an awakening for us on our role to promote democratic values. I hope schools learn about how to do this, because if you give the learner the freedom, the mind of the learner will grow well. We hope your document upon completion will assist all schools on these issues of democratic values.

The respondent T.2.1 (Teacher from school 2)

Justice is quite difficult to exercise in most cases when it comes to issues of allocation of roles and management of my class...mostly I consider the ability of learners to delegate leadership roles in my class. I also assess whether learners are able to lead others. In addition, I also check whether learners are able to control others. It is also my responsibilities to see if learners are responsible enough to be given duties. I also consider the less intelligent so that they can also participate in the school activities. The value of equality does not apply here; neither does the value of liberty where learners need to be given the freedom to choose their leaders or do as they like, as propounded by theories. It is my role to see who fits where.

The respondent's answer shows that the selection of learner leadership was the sole responsibility of the teacher. There was no place for the learners to participate in the choice of their leaders. To the learners, leadership selection was the prerogative of the teacher. The teacher was the centre of power in the classroom and decided on whom to give and not give that power. This perspective shows a possible negative view of democratic values, where justice is the sole interpretation of an individual. Liberty in this regard, was highly threatened as learners had to dance to the tune of the teacher in order to taste roles delegated to them by the teacher. Equality was also threatened as learners were not viewed as equal partners in teaching and learning who also needed to be consulted for their views in terms of their own leadership. This finding is in great contrast with the practice in India, where teachers give learners free space to practice democratic values, in choosing their leaders and managing their activities (Subba, 2014). The highlighted sentiments also contrast with the practice in Sweden, where school activities are structured in accordance with fundamental democratic values (Vinterek 2010).

Deputy Head 3 (Deputy Head of School 3)

The respondent was not able to narrate the feasibility of the teaching of democratic values of justice, liberty and equality in primary schools. She took the aspect as though it had not crossed her mind that much during her professional practice. The following were some of her views:

What? kkkkk, A-eee kkkk {laughter} democratic values of justice, liberty and equality in primary school; maybe to a lesser extent because we will be trying to bring Ubuntu in a person.

The response showed a gap in the appreciation of democratic values by the respondent. This scenario creates an unfavourable environment for the teaching of democratic values in primary schools. From this response, one can conclude that the respondent was far from promoting the democratic values of justice, liberty and equality in the school.

The responses resonate with Ferreira and Schulze's (2014) thinking on the South African experience where teachers, despite having the learning materials, wanted help in interpreting the materials to advance democratic values. The help needed in the Zimbabwean experience extends to the community which the respondents felt were not ready to allow the schools do their role freely without interference if the promotion of the democratic values were to be realised. Community interference in Shamva district schools was similar to the Chinese Socialism experience where teachers indicated that they faced challenges with the community in advancing democratic values (Liu, 1998). Hence, the need for support to align the communities

through workshops or national campaigns towards promotion of democratic values in schools. In Rwanda, contention over the content of curriculum in line with the teaching of democratic values was also noted. This delayed the effective implementation of democratic values in that country (The Berghof, 2012; Hilker, 2010).

The views of the Heads 2 and 1 as well as that of deputy head 2 on the practice democratic of values in schools, showed the challenges schools face in the teaching of the democratic values in the selected schools. Below is what they had to say:

Head 2 (Head of School 2)

When selecting learners' leadership, firstly, we consider the behaviour of learners. Teachers, however, do a provisional selection in their respective classes and come with two learners and submit to the office. An assessment is then done. Part of the assessment is to check for the ability to speak in English. In this regard, we think justice prevails because we allow teachers to select learners at respective classes and this also caters for liberty, because we do not interfere with what teachers do in their classes in order to come up with the two learners I mentioned.

Deputy Head 1 (Deputy Head of School 3)

At this school I should say 'yes', when it comes to selection of learner leaders in terms of our respect of the democratic values of justice, equality and liberty. First of all, we consider skills learners exhibit, that is, does the learner have the ability to organise others? We look at whether the learner has the qualities to lead. We also consider whether the learner comes to school early or not. Is the learner always dressed smartly or not? A learner should have good morals and respect elders for us to select him or her to become a leader. At times, we ask learners to select their class monitors. I am sure that you can now agree with me that the aspect of including learners at times brings in the issue of justice, liberty and a bit of equality...

Head 1 (Head of School 1)

I have a special way of responding to the values of justice and equality at this school. For example, I delegated the role of selection of learner leaders to my subordinates. We have a disciplinary committee headed by the Deputy Head in our school. It is this committee which chooses learner leaders basing on the character and performance of these learners.

In the responses given Heads and Deputies showed that the role of selecting learner leaders was reserved for them and a group of teachers. The common words are 'we consider...' 'We ask teachers to...' It was only Deputy Head 1, in addition to those phrases, who went on to say, "at times teachers ask learners to select their own class monitors." This claim by Deputy Head 1 was not confirmed by teachers from the same school who were interviewed. Common phrases from teacher respondents were 'I consider...', 'I look at...'

From the pattern of responses above, it is clear that the place of learners in the selection of their learner leaders was minimal. The evidence provided showed that the selection of learners was an adult activity in the primary schools in Shamva District. This scenario created an environment where the democratic values of justice, liberty and equality were undermined. Learners were considered as probably fewer equal partners when it came to selection of their leaders. Their liberty was in this regard limited to certain levels as their success in terms of selection for leadership was dependent on making the adults in the school happy. Justice in this regard was tilted in favour of adults who were the selectors. Learners were not being exposed to the normal community life where citizens are supposed to freely select their leaders through elections. Teachers were expected to demonstrate respect for children by establishing children's decision-making bodies that participated in the formulation of rules that affected them. This practice in primary schools sampled in Shamva District was, therefore, seen as undermining sustained democratic practice.

The views of teachers and administrators in Shamva District on democratic values,

basing on their responses as provided in this section, could be concluded to be negative. The practice in schools as shown by the views of the respondents highlighted here align quite well with, Thornberg and Elvstrand (2012)'s naïve trust phenomenon that builds in learners that something is true, good, or right simply because someone in authority says so. This makes learners just trust and believe in teachers, just because they are adults and teachers. This results in abuse of authority, and subsequently, abuse of the democratic values by school authorities, and most probably later by school leavers, when they occupy various positions in society. (Dzavo, 2020). The way we socialise learners contribute much on what they become when they grow up (Mwamwenda, 2014; Dzavo 2020; Mhalauli, 2010).

The study also found that learners had a positive regard for democratic values. Learners expected school authorities, and peers, to respect them and involve them in decision making. They were able to spell out areas where they were consulted and not consulted. Learners further highlighted areas where justice was expected to be practiced. In addition, learners were able to demonstrate why they thought they were equal partners in the operations of the school, hence, they needed to be respected for the democratic value of equality. Below is part of what was captured from their focus group interview:

Prefects 2:

When I am reporting an issue, I want to be listened to so that I am able to control others as a prefect; I want justice to be practiced in our school by being treated fairly. I also want my liberty when interacting with fellow learners as well as members of staff, so that I feel like a normal human being; I also expect to get help from other people since I am a learner like any other learner in the school, so I expect equal treatment from others in the school.

Prefects1 mentioned this:

At this school, we want justice to be practiced by our school authorities. We do not want learners sent home due to failure to pay fees, we feel they should talk to our parents because when we are sent home, we are left behind because our counterparts whose parents can afford to pay continue learning during our absence this compromises on equality on the part of learners yet we are expected to write the same tests at the end of the course; We also do not want bullying or fighting we want to be respected; At this school we are not at liberty to make our own rules, teachers do, and they hand the rules to us.

Prefects from school 3 wanted a fair treatment from both teachers and fellow learners. The following responses from focus group interview help buttress their expectation:

Prefects 3 mentioned this:

We want justice; we don't want to be looked down upon because of our ages or because we are learners. We want to be at liberty to associate and share our views with others. We want our fellow learners not to fear us but befriend us. We also need equal treatment from teachers. In addition, we need to help others in times of need and share ideas with them.

Learners also highlighted that at times they were consulted by the school authorities on issues that affected learners. However, they felt they needed adequate learning resources availed to them by school authorities.

Responses showed that learners wanted a just environment. They wanted equality and justice to be practised by both fellow learners, and their teachers. They also wanted their liberty to prevail. This scenario from the learners' perspective set the tone for the teaching of democratic values in primary schools if addressed by all stakeholders concerned. It is to this effect that schools were expected to play their role in promoting the teaching of the democratic values of liberty, equality and justice in order to complement the desires of the learners, and to the benefit of society in general.

Learners wanted to be treated fairly as equal partners in the school, and they did not want to be disadvantaged in terms of resource allocation, and learning time. This view in Shamva sampled schools was similar to the South African established research by Botha, Joubert and Hugo (2016) that discovered that learners had a positive attitude

towards democratic values and Learners expected their peers, themselves, and adults to respect democratic values. This scenario from the learners' perspective sets a tone for the teaching of the democratic values in primary schools if addressed by all stakeholders concerned. This, therefore, showed that at times schools let learners down on teaching of the democratic values.

Democratic values are highly regarded as sensitive content in schools by social reconstructionist theorists, such as Brameld Theodore, which certain political minds may not be comfortable with. However, they need to be schooled if society is to enjoy peace and realise sustainable development (Conrad, 2016; Lynch, 2016).

In document analysis, the paper established that the 2013 National Constitution had articles that encouraged or promoted teaching of democratic values. The 2015-2022 general curriculum framework stood guided by the articles in the constitution including values aspects in the framework. The framework suggested quite a number of approaches which respondents could have utilised in the promotion of democratic values of justice, equality and liberty. The framework, empowers heads and teachers to promote democratic approaches, and practices in the schools and extend these to the communities in which they operate from. The framework clearly puts that such a practice supports sustainable development, peace and tolerance in society. Having access to such a framework and understanding it, that is, interpreting it well, should assist our school authorities to promote teaching of the democratic values of justice, equality and liberty in primary schools in Shamva district.

The Social Studies and Heritage/Family and Social Studies syllabi have democratic value content. Though the syllabus aims were supposed to be speaking, supposedly, to the ten topics in the syllabus, one topic with political content was not adequately covered. This topic had content that speaks much more about democratic values than others. Though democratic values of justice, equality and liberty could be addressed through all the ten topics or any content in the primary school curriculum it was louder in the topic rules and laws.

Some textbooks analysed had appropriate content and assessment activities for use in the promotion of democratic values whilst others had discrepancies. The observation made in this regard showed that not all textbooks interpreted the syllabus adequately. The role of the teacher is called in to ensure that the main guide remains the syllabus. Where a textbook does interpret adequately then the teachers should be able to note and use them wisely as observed in sampled textbooks in this section.

The scope of the syllabus covered key areas needed in the promotion of democratic values. Promotion of democratic values takes place in multicultural societies. It takes an understanding of the interdependence of human beings coupled with respect and tolerance of various axiological ingredients. This scope sums-up the democratic values of justice, liberty and equality in society serve for the fact that they were not directly mentioned in it.

It is against these discussions that the researcher greatly regards empowerment of schools in the teaching of the democratic values, placing more weight on effective practice of democratic culture in all spheres of school systems. It is the desire of this paper that, as guided by Rogan and Grayson's (2003) theory of curriculum implementation, that conducive school environment be availed to ensure promotion of democratic values. As also guided the by reconstructionism theory (Conrad, 2016; Lynch, 2016), authorities in education should realise that democratic values are sensitive content as such need involvement of all stakeholders to create a friendly conducive environment for effective implementation of a democratic-values-related curriculum.

6. Conclusions

The findings confirmed that teachers were incapacitated on their role to promote democratic values in primary schools. The major deficiency in their practice is lack of empowerment and protection to enable them to teach democratic values effectively. The other major task noted was that of lack of separation of roles between the school and the community on democratic values related curriculum issues. Document analysis revealed that the Zimbabwean curriculum had democratic values, though not adequately covered. Teachers however appeared they still needed help in

understanding how to teach the democratic values. The findings showed that learners wanted a just environment. They wanted the practice of the democratic values of equality and justice by both fellow learners, and their teachers. They also wanted their liberty to prevail. Nevertheless, the recommendations given could go a long way towards improving the implementation of democratic values in Shamva district primary schools.

7. Recommendations

Teachers should be protected by legal instruments such as policies to enable them to freely teach 'sensitive' content. There is a need to stop community interference on teaching of the democratic values in schools. Parents need sensitisation programs to make them aware of this important curriculum task so that they do not interfere and avoid labelling teachers as representing certain political interests using the curriculum.

The challenge of knowledge gap requires that teachers have staff development and any other possible help to empower them to articulate democratic values effectively. This also calls for a clear-cut democratic values curriculum framework to assist teachers during their practice. Teachers need empowerment in syllabus interpretation on teaching of democratic values to be able to effectively promote the teaching of democratic values.

There is also a need for learner participation on processes, and application of issues that affect learners like rules formulation, adjudication of disciplinary issues as well the general learning practices.

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