

# Effective Teaching of Citizenship Education in Primary Schools in

## Ghana

Francis Hull Adams<sup>1\*</sup>Sophia Andoh<sup>2</sup>Ama Mbeaba Quarshie<sup>3</sup>

1. Department of Social Sciences, Holy Child College of Education, Box 245, Takoradi, Ghana
2. Department of Social Sciences, Holy Child College of Education, Box 245, Takoradi, Ghana( sophiahandoh@yahoo.com)
3. Department of Social Sciences, Holy Child College of Education, Box 245, Takoradi, Ghana ( amambeaba)

\*Email of corresponding author: hullaf@yahoo.com

### Abstract

This paper discusses the effective ways of teaching Citizenship education in Ghanaian primary schools. The paper indicates that effective teaching of citizenship education requires extra commitment on the part of the teacher to go through a process of identifying the problem of the topic, formulating concept of the problem, and breaking up the concept into content frames bearing in mind the philosophy and the general objectives of the subject. A good citizenship education teacher must have a grasp of the citizenship education syllabus and be a master of the various topics therein. He/ she should be able to integrate the goals and the attributes of the subject in teaching.

**Key words:** Concept, content frame, methods, strategies, techniques.

### 1. Introduction

Citizenship Education is one of the subjects offered in the primary schools in Ghana which has undergone several changes of names since its introduction first as Social studies in the school curriculum. According to Wilson (1999) social studies has been taught at the primary and junior secondary levels in Ghana since 1972. In the primary school in particular, the subject has changed over the years from; ‘Civics’ to ‘Social studies’, to ‘Environmental studies’ and now ‘Citizenship education’.

At the lower primary now social studies has been merged with natural science. At the junior High and Senior High levels, it is still called Social studies, and so it is also at the University. But in the Colleges of Education in Ghana it has a long name ‘Environmental and Social Studies’. In the Colleges of Education it is a two- in -one subject which has a very comprehensive scope covering geographical, social, and environmental issues.

Irrespective of the various names given to Social studies at the various levels of education in Ghana, its nature has not been changed. The rationale for introducing the subject as part of the school curriculum remains unchanged. The general objectives of social studies are the same objectives applied to Citizenship education. It is therefore not surprising that the Anamuah Mensah Education Review Committee of 2002 came out with the name ‘Citizenship Education’ for upper primary. The committee integrated environmental studies with ‘Science’ and called it ‘Natural science’. It however maintained the name ‘Social Studies’ at the JHS and SHS levels.

### 2. What is citizenship education?

Many renowned protagonists of Social Studies consider ‘Citizenship education as the ultimate goal or prime objective of social studies. Barth (1983) states that, “Social studies is an integration of social science and the humanities for the purpose of instruction in citizenship education” (p.3). In his view, Martorella (1985) explains that “The basic purpose of the social studies is citizenship education” (p.42). What then is citizenship education? What are the goals of the subject in general? And what are the effective ways of teaching ‘Citizenship education in Ghanaian schools?

According to the Citizenship education syllabus for primary schools in 2007, “Citizenship education is a subject that aims at producing competent, reflective, concerned, and participatory citizens who will contribute to the development of the communities and the country in the spirit of patriotism and democracy”. Patrick (1986) also explains Citizenship education as the knowledge of the constitutions, the principles, values, history and application to contemporary life”.

On his part Aggarwal (1982) linked Citizenship education to the development of ideas, habits, behaviors and useful attitudes in the individual which enables him to be a useful member of the society.

From the definitions given above, it can be deduced that Citizenship education is a broad concept. However, it can be simplified as the type of education or instructions which equip the learner with relevant knowledge, right attitudes and requisite skills to enable him perform his role as a credible member of a society. Relevant knowledge is a type of knowledge which is useful in dealing with a particular problem at a period of time. Many people are knowledgeable in so many fields, but if the knowledge gained is not functional or put to use it becomes inert knowledge. In the same way right attitudes are very essential ingredients needed to ensure harmony and peaceful co-existence among people. The nation will do better in its bid for development if most of her citizens are skillful in one field or the other and also demonstrate positive attitudes at the work place. Skillful manpower is a pre-requisite for every nation that wishes to develop but a skillful manpower without positive attitudes to work is likely to result in counter production because vices like corruption, bribery, abuse of power, lateness to work absenteeism among others will pop their ugly heads.

Citizenship education as a discipline covers the child's role as an effective and participatory member of the democratic, political community. It emphasizes civic responsibilities and service rendering. The topics or issues to be studied by the child are therefore to build and prepare him/her to become a responsible citizen who will be willing and capable of contributing his/her quota meaningfully towards national development.

### 3. Goals of citizenship education

Writing on the goals of citizenship education, Barth (1993) postulated four main goals:

- To gain knowledge about the human conditions which include the past, and the future
- To acquire skills necessary to process information
- To develop the skills to examine values and beliefs
- To encourage the application of knowledge through active participation in society.

Aggarwal (1982) on his part identified 17 goals of citizenship education which no doubt aims at making the individual 'a complete person'. If the goals as proposed by Aggarwal are strictly adhered to by teachers of the subject and are made the general objectives of their teaching from which they derive their specific objectives, it will go a long way in solving some of our societal problems today as Ghanaians. The 17 goals of Aggarwal as outlined by Tamakloe, et al (1994, p.45) are:

- To understand the social economic and political forces that are shaping the face of the modern world
- To be tolerant and broad minded
- To think clearly and effectively without any kind of prejudice
- To make decisions independently
- To be a patriot in the true sense with a cosmopolitan outlook
- To be a good leader and a follower
- To be devoted to freedom
- To admit follies if any
- To understand his rights and responsibilities
- To earn his livelihood in an honest way
- To be firm against heavy odds
- To utilize his leisure profitably
- To act upon principles courageously
- To maintain intergroup understanding
- To have faith in democratic ideals of life
- To believe in the quality of man
- To have a goal to make further progress.

The 2007 Teaching syllabus for Citizenship education in Ghana at the primary school has the following general objectives:

1. To build attitudes and values needed to solve personal and societal problems
2. To develop critical thinking skills
3. To develop a sense of national consciousness, unity and development
4. To acquire desired characteristics of a Ghanaian patriot
5. To develop an appreciation for peace and always work towards it.

### 4. Rationale for the citizenship Education syllabus

The MOESS (2007) Citizenship education syllabus describes Citizenship education as a subject that aims at producing competent, reflective, concerned and participatory citizens who will contribute to the development of the communities and country in the spirit of patriotism and democracy. It focuses on problems/ challenges of

human survival in Ghana. The subject exposes pupils to the persistent contemporary issues hindering the development of the nation and the desired attitudes, values, and skills needed to solve these problems. The subject is introduced into the curriculum at the upper primary level ( P4-P6) to make children appreciate basic concepts and values that underlie a democratic political community and constitutional order to enable them uphold and defend the Constitution of Ghana at all times.

### 5. Scope of content

Citizenship education covers the child’s role as an effective and participatory member of the democratic political community. It emphasizes civic responsibility and service rendering. The issues selected are those that are necessary to promote the child’s active participation in the public life and community issues in an informed, committed and constructive manner, with a focus on the common good.

The subject integrates knowledge and information from many areas of study including Civics, Hygiene, Social studies, Life skills, and Religious and Moral Education. Issues such as the promotion of good Governance, Democracy, Sustainable Management of Environment, Peace and Human Rights have been emphasized.

The syllabus introduces the child to critical and reflective thinking, decision- making, positive attitudes and value building. It also focuses on personal and civic responsibility as well as the right that go with it.

**Table 1: Structure and organization of the Citizenship education syllabus for primary 4-6**

P4	P5	P6
SECTION1: THE INDIVIDUAL Unit 1: Knowing myself Unit 2: Relationship with each other	SECTION 1: THE INDIVIDUAL Unit 1: The individual, Education and work Unit 2: Peer Groups and Nation Building	SECTION 1: THE INDIVIDUAL Unit 1: Young people and Nation Building Unit 2: Preparing for life
SECTION 2: RESPONSIBILITY Unit 1: Values and responsibilities in our community Unit 2: Our National Symbols	SECTION 2: RESPONSIBILITY Unit 1: Safety in our Community Unit 2: One people, One Nation Unit 3: Attitudes and responsibilities for Nation Building	SECTION 2: RESPONSIBILITY Unit 1: Sustainable Management of the Environment Unit 2: Avoiding Waste at Home, School and Work Unit 3: Domestic Violence and Conflict in the family
SECTION 3: AUTHORITY Unit 1: My Community Unit 2: Skills for effective citizenship Unit 3: How my Community is Ruled Unit 4:How we are Governed	SECTION 3: AUTHORITY Unit 1: Governance in Ghana Unit 2: How to become a democratic citizen	SECTION 3: AUTHORITY Unit 1: Ghana and Her Neighbors
SECTION 4: JUSTICE Unit 1: basic Rights of Human Beings	SECTION 4: JUSTICE Unit 1: Gender Relations in the Community Unit 2: Ethnicity and National Development in Ghana	SECTION 4: JUSTICE Unit 1: Peace- building and Democratic living Unit 2: Social Auditing

(Source: MOESS (2007) Teaching syllabus for Citizenship Education (Basic 4-6)

### 6. Profile dimensions

The Concept of profile dimension is a central aspect of the syllabus which should be the basis for instruction and assessment. According to the MOESS (2007) the word ‘profile’ means a description of a state of a thing. A dimension however is a learning behavior which the teacher makes an effort to help the learners to acquire. Profile dimension therefore describes the underlying behaviours for teaching, learning and assessment. In teaching, we measure the behavioral changes that occur in learners. These changes are measured in terms of what the learner can do after going through the teaching learning process. Profile dimension is classified into three categories. These are: Knowledge and understanding, application of knowledge, attitudes and process skills (MOESS, 2007)

### 7. Knowledge and understanding

The MOESS (2007) Citizenship education teaching syllabus for primary 4-6 explains knowledge and

understanding as:

**Knowledge:** The ability to remember, recall, identify, define, describe, match, list, name, state principles, facts and concepts. Knowledge is the ability to remember or recall material already learned and this constitutes the lowest level of learning.

**Understanding:** The ability to explain, summarise, translate, rewrite, paraphrase, give examples, generalize, estimate or predict consequences based upon a trend. Understanding is generally the ability to grasp the meaning of some material that may be verbal, pictorial or symbolic

### 8. Application of knowledge

According to the MOESS (2007) syllabus, application of knowledge is also referred to as ‘use of knowledge’. Ability to use or apply knowledge as implied in the syllabus has a number of learning behavior levels. These levels include application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation. The syllabus further explained the learning behaviors as follows:

**Application:** The ability to apply rules, methods, principles, theories etc to concrete situations that are new and unfamiliar. It also involves the ability to produce, solve, plan, demonstrate, discover etc.

**Analysis:** The ability to break down material into its component parts; to differentiate, compare, distinguish, outline, separate, identify significant points etc, ability to recognize unstated assumptions and logical fallacies; ability to recognize inferences from facts etc.

**Synthesis:** The ability to put parts together to form a new whole. It involves the ability to combine, compile, compose, devise, plan, revise, organize, create, generate new ideas and solutions etc.

**Evaluation:** The ability to appraise, compare features of different things and make comments or judgment, compare, contrast, criticize, justify, support, discuss, conclude, make recommendations etc. Evaluation refers to the ability to judge the worth or value of some material based on some criteria.

### 9. Allocation of percentages for the profile dimensions

Knowledge and Understanding	30%
Application of knowledge	30%
Attitudes, values and process skills	40%

Each of the dimensions has been given a percentage weight that should be considered in teaching, learning and testing. The weights indicated on the right of the dimensions show the relative emphasis that the teacher should give in the teaching, learning and assessment processes.

Emphasizing the three dimensions in one’s teaching will ensure that Citizenship Education will not only be taught and studied at the cognitive level but will also lead pupils to the acquisition of positive attitudes and values that will enable them to deal effectively with life in general. At primary 4-6 the weighting is 30: 70 for theory and practice.

### 10. Attributes of Citizenship Education

The MOESS (2007) Citizenship education syllabus also outlined these as the attributes of the subject:

- Commitment: determination to contribute to national development
- Tolerance: willingness to respect the views of others
- Patriotism: readiness to defend the nation
- Flexibility in ideas: willingness to change opinion in the face of more plausible evidence
- Respect for evidence: willingness to collect and use data on one’s investigation, and also have respect for data collected by others
- Reflection: the habit of critically reviewing ways in which an investigation or observation has been carried out to see possible faults and other ways in which the investigation or observation can be improved upon
- Comportment: conforming to acceptable societal norms
- Co-operation: the ability to work effectively with others
- Responsibility: the ability to act independently and make decisions; morally accountable for one is action; capable of rational conduct
- Environmental awareness: being conscious of one’s physical and socio- economic surroundings
- Respect for the Rule of law: obeying the rules and regulations of the land

A good citizenship education teacher at the basic school needs to be knowledgeable about the structure and composition of the syllabus. He/she must be at breast with the various topics in the syllabus and also be well

informed about the goals and attributes of the syllabus. Knowing all these will inform the teacher in teaching to the attainment of the goals of the subject.

### **11. Effective ways of teaching citizenship education**

Every professional teacher knows that effective teaching is a two way affair between the teacher and the learner. Effective teaching according to Brown and Atkins (1994) is a complex, intellectually demanding and challenging task. They further suggest that effective teaching is essentially made of a 'set of skills that can be acquired, improved and extended'. In his view, Avoke (1999) wrote that ' basically, every teacher worth his/her salt ought to aim at being effective in the classroom. It is only when teachers are effective that learning experiences become meaningful'

To enable the teacher achieve his/ her objectives for the day, there is the need for preparation. The teacher is required to have a good grasp of the knowledge to be imparted and the methods and techniques to be used in imparting the knowledge. Preparing to teach therefore requires the acquisition of the needed knowledge and how it can be imparted. With this one then needs to prepare the lesson note and get the requisite resources or materials.

Though the teaching of citizenship education also requires these, it needs more than these in our preparation. Every social studies teacher needs to have a clear conception of what the subject is and its objectives since these greatly influence the selection of the content. From the general objectives outlined earlier, it can be said that the subject ultimately aims at producing competent, reflective, concerned and participatory citizens. To teach to reflect these the citizenship education teacher must ensure the pupils:

- a) Acquire the requisite knowledge
- b) Are able to process information
- c) Develop the right attitudes, values and skills
- d) Can utilize the right attitudes, values and skills in solving problems

In teaching social studies, now citizenship education, the teacher must ensure the learner is encouraged to identify and define the socio-civic problems, use multiple sources of information, lay out alternative solutions, make choices and justify these choices. In the course of teaching, the teacher should constantly bear in mind the nature of the subject and the general objectives.

The first thing that should come into mind of a citizenship education teacher when a topic is selected to be taught is in what way the topic constitutes a problem. In other words what societal problem does the topic suggest? Every citizenship education topic is problem-oriented. So it is up to the teacher to identify the problem. For example, the first topic in the syllabus is 'Knowing my self'. Even though the problem is not stated in the syllabus, it is obvious: Many Ghanaians hardly have time to identify their potentials. This could lead to low self image which will affect an individual's contribution to national development.

The second thing to do is to formulate generalized concept of the problem based on which the lesson will be taught. Concept is the main idea which should influence the selection of content. The topic 'Knowing my self' will have the concept to be: 'Every human being has some capability which can be developed through training'. Fortunately, the key concepts have been spelt out in the syllabus for all the topics. Teachers should not gloss over the concepts. They are very important. Most often teachers look at the topic and straight away, look at the objectives without bordering to master the concept. The concept serve as a key to better understanding of the objectives as stated in the syllabus.

Thirdly, after formulating the concept, the teacher needs to break the concept into content frames. The content frames are the various sub-topics the teacher can derive from the concept. Taking the concept for 'knowing my self' as example, the concept can easily be broken down into the following sub-topics:

- a) Identification of one's capabilities
- b) Developing one's capabilities
- c) Utilizing one's capabilities.

Finally, specific objectives can be derived based on the content frames outlined. The content frame should serve as a guide to setting objectives which will give the detailed content to cover.

### **12. Methods, techniques and strategies to use in teaching**

Any social studies teacher who desires to teach effectively especially at the basic level of education must be able to clearly explain the use of the terms; Methods, Techniques and Strategies in teaching social studies/citizenship education. Anim & Kwarteng (2006, p.91) provided very useful and practical meaning of the terms as used in social studies:

Method of Teaching: It is the teacher's overall approach to instruction on facts, concepts and generalizations.

There are two major types; Transmission method where teacher tells learners what they need to know and the problem solving method where learners examine, investigate and explore what they need to know. Examples of the transmission method include: lecture, lecturette, demonstration. It is mostly teacher centered, meaning it is the teacher who does almost everything in class. Examples of problem solving method include: debate, discussion, simulation, role play, dramatization, brainstorming among others.

Technique of teaching: it is the activity teachers ask learners to perform in the classroom to help achieve the method. If a teacher uses 'brainstorming' in teaching a topic like 'The national symbols and me', his/her technique of teaching is the use of the brainstorming. All the examples give above such as; simulation, discussion role play etc are techniques of teaching. Other examples are 'demonstration' and 'lecture' which come under transmission method of teaching.

Strategy of Teaching: it is simply the sequencing or ordering of the technique a teacher has selected to teach the lesson to achieve the method. In other words it is the combination of various techniques of teaching in a systematic manner during a teaching learning encounter. For example, a teacher may introduce a topic with role play, present with discussion, and conclude with question and answer technique. This is a perfect example of a strategy.

A good social studies teacher should be able to select the appropriate techniques and strategies to use in teaching a particular topic in class. This is because some topics are suitable for some techniques while others are not. For example, a topic like; 'Knowing my self' will not lend itself to the use of 'Lecture' or 'Debate'. Instead it will be more appropriate to use, 'Discussion', or even 'Story telling'.

Teaching social studies /Citizenship education in the primary school should not be mere impartation of bare facts. We will do a great disservice to our students and to our nation and thereby defeat the prime goal of the subject if we memorize what we will teach for the day and just pour them to the pupils and say we have taught. Make your teaching more practical, involve every student, let them have some fun in the process, take them out when necessary, let them collect data(information), guide them to write reports and do presentations. Do not give the pupils the impression that you are the single epitome of knowledge, give them more opportunities to talk and express their views, give them projects and assignments. In doing all these your focus should not shift from the philosophy of the subject and the general objectives which we must achieve.

### 13. Conclusion

It is significant to note that by teaching citizenship education, one needs to be abreast with the nature and philosophy of the subject. According to Cobbold (2010) "The nature and philosophy of social studies imply that the teacher who handles the subject at any level should adequately exemplify scholarly and professional competence. Given appropriate resources and adequate time, the teacher should be able to concoct a special mix of content and pedagogy to achieve desired objectives with learners possessing the requisite background knowledge, skills and experiences" (pp.67). It is recommended to headteachers of Basic schools in Ghana to ensure that only trained citizenship education/social studies teachers are made to teach the subject. This will offset the problem of putting square pegs in round holes.

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