The Conceptual Challenges in the Conceptualisation of Civic Education

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Abstract

Defining Civic Education is not something that is easy due to several meanings connected with the subject. This is due to the fact that those who have attempted to define Civic Education bring to the fore their own perspectives and orientations thereby making it difficult to have a universal definition (Muleya, 2015: 12). Evans (2009: 410-435) as cited by Muleya (2015) aptly puts it that, contemporary conceptions of Citizenship Education reflect a certain level of ambiguity due to various views that have come into play. Therefore, in this article I attempt to discuss the conceptual challenges or difficulties that scholars of Civic Education find themselves in when they are talking about Civic Education and the characterisation of Civic Education in the community. It is also important to note that in this article I will be using Civic Education, and/or Citizenship Education interchangeably because in most of the literature to do with the subject at hand, these concepts are interchangeably used or applied to mean one and the same thing though

this position is still in contention.

Key words: Civic Education; Citizenship; Citizenship Education; Civic Learning; Civic Engagement

Introduction

Over the past years, there has been a world-wide resurgence of interest in the field of Civic Education where all the players with interest in the subject of Civic Education have come on board to examine its nature and scope. This is because there is a strong argument that Civic Education has the potential to contribute to the formation and transformation of democratic citizens and societies. While this remains as the current thinking in many countries, it is worthy to note that the subject has many issues and topics to deal with and even its meaning remains unresolved. As such the article begins by describing various meanings attributed to Civic Education and/or Citizenship Education and the later part of the article will discuss the challenges that characterise the concept itself and then a summary will be given in closing the discussion on the conceptual challenges in the conceptualisation of Civic Education.

Different Meanings of Civic Education and or Citizenship Education

The meaning of Civic Education also known as Citizenship Education is dependent on the context and as such it is called differently in different countries. In trying to understand and appreciate the meaning of the concept which is ever evolving, I will attempt to put into

focus its brief origins. Vilakazi and Mathebula (2013: 177-200), argue that the beginning of Civic Education should be looked at from the point of view of citizenship whose definition and development is founded in the Greek city-state of Athens. This is because in the Athenian democracy, citizenship had three essential and complementary dimensions: the status which was seen in terms of the relationship of the individual to the state; the second was the feeling of a sense of belonging to a community of citizens and the third was that of a practice which was seen in the context of involvement. This involvement was supposed to be active in terms of participation in the community and in the life of the public.

Therefore in trying to link the above brief background to Civic Education, I agree with Vilakazi and Mathebula (2013) that the word 'civic' originates from the Latin word civicus which means belonging to citizens. This means that Civic Education as a field denotes a body of relevant knowledge which must be consumed by citizens so that they can play their roles in public life of society.

The question that needs to be answered in this article is: What is the meaning of Civic Education? As earlier mentioned, Civic Education is context based and depends on one's orientation whether; this orientation is educationally specific, country specific, morally specific, democratically specific, sociologically specific, politically specific, culturally specific, and technologically specific and so on and so forth.

Cohen (2013) in his doctoral thesis looked at conceptions of citizenship and Civic Education drawing lessons from three Israel civics classrooms and the

definition he gives about Civic Education is that offered by the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (Gibson & Levine, 2003 as cited by Cohen, 2013), that demonstrates the commonly accepted notion that Civic Education is in fact composed of three main factors: 1) the transmission of knowledge; (2) the instilling of values; and (3) the development of dispositions. This implies that Civic Education as a subject could be defined in terms of these factors that it is a subject that transmits knowledge, values and dispositions among the learners in schools.

Butts (1980) as cited by Cohen (2013) argued that citizenship education "embraces the fundamental values of the political community, a realistic and scholarly knowledge of the working of political institutions and processes, and the skills of political behaviour required for effective participation in a democracy". Clearly from this definition it is possible to argue that Civic Education has three key building blocks such as values, knowledge and skills that underpin educational processes in any given context where the subject is taught.

Waghid (2014) looks at the meaning of Civic Education through the lens of democratic education. It is understood by Benhabib (1996 as cited by Waghid, 2014) that it is 'free and unconstrained public deliberation' about matters in the public sphere. In other words, Civic Education is seen as democratic education which not only encourages free deliberation by people (say, teachers and students) in public institutions, but also unconstrained engagement by them as moral and political equals. For her, the basic idea of public deliberation as an instance of democratic education

is constituted by two aspects: firstly, participation is governed by the norms of equality and symmetry such that all participants have the same chances to initiate speech acts, to question, to interrogate, and to open debate; and secondly, all participants have the right to initiate reflexive arguments about the very rules of the discourse procedure and the way in which they are implemented. This kind of definition is characteristic of the earlier arguments given by Vilakazi and Mathebula (2013: 177-200), on the definition and development of the theories of Civic Education founded in Athenian democracy.

Butts (1988:180 as cited by Muleya, 2015), argued that the meaning of Civic Education entailed an effective democratic citizenship education programme which not only provided learners with the necessary knowledge but also with opportunities for the development of desirable traits of public and private character. Muleya (2015) notes that Civic Education is complex and contested in nature though is usually seen within the context of a diverse, pluralistic, democratic society. This entails that there are some serious conceptual difficulties that are inherent within the meaning of Civic Education. I will be addressing this aspect a little bit later in the article.

Biesta (2011) defines Civic Education in terms of civic learning as learning which occurs in and through the processes and practices that make up the everyday lives of children, young people and adults and which is closely connected to their actual condition of citizenship. Further to the argument is that we should not conceive of civic learning as a linear process moving from a situation of not-yet-being-a-citizen to a situation of fully-fledged

citizenship. Civic learning should rather be understood as non-linear, and also as recursive, and cumulative. Civic learning is a non-linear process because it is closely connected to ongoing positive and negative experiences with democracy and citizenship, and thus is likely to reflect fluctuations in these experiences. Also civic learning is not simply the result of everyday experiences with democracy and citizenship but also feeds back into these experiences, which is the reason for calling civic learning a recursive process. Although civic learning is not a linear process, it is important to note that it is cumulative because positive and negative experiences in the past cannot simply be eradicated and will influence future action and learning.

Indeed Biesta (2011) provides a consolidated argument when it comes to the meaning of Civic Education and this kind of approach renders the subject enriching when it comes to the aspect of conceptualisation. There is also another form of Civic Education which is brought out by Biesta (2014) in which he contends the meaning of the subject from two assumptions: socialisation conception of civic learning and the subjectification conception of civic learning. The two assumptions in my view are constitutive of Civic Education and therefore I am treating them purely as forms of Civic Education in theory and practice.

According to Biesta (2014) socialisation conception of civic learning is about the learning necessary to become part of an existing socio-political order, and a subjectification conception of civic learning, is about the learning that is involved in engagement in community matters or the life of the public. In other words,

Biesta's argument is that a socialisation conception of civic learning is about learning for future citizenship and the subjectification conception of civic learning is about learning from current citizenship, from current experiences with and engagement in the ongoing processes and structures of society. It is about taking a holistic approach which is what Civic Education is all about. It deals principally with the all issues that are found in the community and how such issues ought to be dealt with.

Himmelmann (2013:1-7) looks at Civic Education in terms of democracy where its meaning should come out as a daily routine. He argues that democracy as a practical and daily "living together" of citizens needs democratic habits and dispositions which are tolerance, courage, fairness, charity, compassion for others, civility and respect in dealing with others. These characteristics of behaviour constitute the moral of democratic citizenship and of democracy as a whole. As such, we could define Civic Education as a subject that teaches practical and daily living skills so that community habits and dispositions in citizens such as tolerance, courage, fairness, charity, compassion for others, civility and respect in dealing with others is built and enhanced. This definition is in line with Biesta's way of looking at Civic Education as a subject that touches on many issues and also that it is not only theoretical in nature but also brings out the aspect of practice.

The Council of Europe defines Civic Education as active citizenship to imply the power of people to exercise and defend their democratic rights and responsibilities in society, to value diversity and to play an active part in

democratic life (Van Deth, 2013: 8-21). This requires that these citizens should be empowered in all areas if they are to be relevant in this undertaking. No wonder, Nijlen et al., (2011: 84 as cited in Van Deth, 2013) argues that citizens cannot fulfil these ambitious tasks adequately without specific competences; that is, citizens need to have "… a combination of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values" at their disposal enabling them "… to become active citizens". It is in fact interesting to note that a number of extensive programmes for "citizen education" have been developed in order to promote these competencies in many countries Zambia inclusive in recent years.

Muleya (2016: 185-198) has defined Civic Education as a subject that involves active participation of the citizens in managing themselves in society and making sure that everyone is supported. Muleya's position regarding Civic Education appear to be anchored on the assumptions of Ubuntu where everyone in the community is concerned with one another and want to live communally and in the spirit of oneness. This is another dimension through which one could be looking at Civic Education thereby creating different meanings at the end of the day. This kind of approach raises a number of conceptual difficulties or challenges which I am attempting to discuss in the next section of this article.

Challenges Characterising Civic Education

While in the previous discussion the focus was dealing with different assumptions with regard to the meaning

of Civic Education, in this section I will attempt to discuss the conceptual challenges that characterise Civic Education. This is because as observed in the previous discussion, Civic Education is not linear but rather polysemous and cumulative in nature and this creates a lot of confusion in the field.

Cohen (2013) noted three ideal types of citizenship and civic education which were reflecting different conceptions: (1) disciplined civic education; (2) participatory civic education; and (3) critical civic education. This means that Civic Education has to be categorised in many forms that reflect the kind of learning skills that one may want to impart on the learners and depending on one's orientation it is possible that the aims and philosophical underpinnings that are meant to gear serious educational relevance through 'real' Civic Education could be missed out. This argument is very much supported by Cohen in his work where he was able to come up with two clear theoretical concepts to forefront the argument that indeed we can decipher Civic Education from a number of positions.

A follow-up to Cohen's argument is where he has contended that those who teach Civic Education in schools could frame their lessons based on the conception of abandonment. By abandonment Cohen meant a form of Civic Education where the learners were apathetic to issues of public concern and therefore one could easily apply or promote disciplined model of citizenship and Civic Education in order to reconstruct their belief in national institutions and political processes. In situations where there was abandonment and activity, the teacher could employ participatory conception of

Civic Education in order to persuade the learners to become fully active and engaged members of the public who are abreast with what is happening around them and within society. In situations where learners already have the ability to decipher issues of their communities, then the teacher can easily employ activity as a lens in promoting the critical conception of Civic Education that attempts to frame their future civic actions and experiences whether positive or negative. Clearly from this kind of approach one is able to see the difficulties that are presented by the subject. Unless one is very familiar with the different assumptions that are found within Civic Education, it remains problematic to those who maybe unfamiliar with its aims and philosophies and as such I argue that it has some serious conceptual challenges which at times is very embarrassing even to the practitioners in the field.

Van Deth (2013) contends that in general, empirical research on citizenship orientations and political participation among citizens in advanced democratic societies show that not many people meet the ambiguous ideal of being an "active citizen." In its attempts to promote "active citizenship" the Council of Europe strongly stressed the need to develop "Education for democratic citizenship." Whether this need is based on the rather limited support for "active citizenship" among citizens in many countries as documented in many sources, it still goes to show that appreciating Civic Education requires a deep approach and this deep approach might also not be a straightforward one thereby rendering the concept problematic.

For instance the Council of Europe as noted by Van

Deth suggested that Civic Education could be better understood if it were to be re-crafted or reframed to imply: "Education for democratic citizenship," and to include among other things… education, training, awareness-raising, information, practices and activities which aim, by equipping learners with knowledge, skills and understanding and developing their attitudes and behaviour, to empower them to exercise and defend their democratic rights and responsibilities in society, to value diversity and to play an active part in democratic life, with a view to the promotion and protection of democracy and the rule of law. Though very informative and educative, one is still able to note that what the definition aspires to is too broad and can still create conceptual difficulties when compared with others where the focus maybe slightly different.

Vasiljevic (2009) has also identified a number of assumptions with regard to the meaning of Civic Education which I believe to have many conceptual challenges as will be observed in the following paragraphs:

In the first place he aptly argues that Civic Education is a term used to describe various educational programs, with different names, such as: Citizenship Education and Ethics, Civic Culture, Civic, legal and social education (Kuhn 2006:4, 5 as cited by Vasiljevic, 2009), Civic engagement (United Nations Development Program 2004:5 as cited by Vasiljevic, 2009), Education for Democratic Citizenship (Smith, Fountain, McLean 2002: 16 as cited by Vasiljevic, 2009). Clearly from these citations it comes out plainly that there is a conceptual difficulty in trying to understand what Civic Education

is or what it ought to be. Can we say that it is Citizenship Education and Ethics, Civic Culture, Legal and Socio-education or Civic Engagement and Education for Democratic Citizenship? All these assumptions are meant to underscore the fact that Civic Education has no universal definition (See in the figure below how it could be viewed without having to elaborate further):
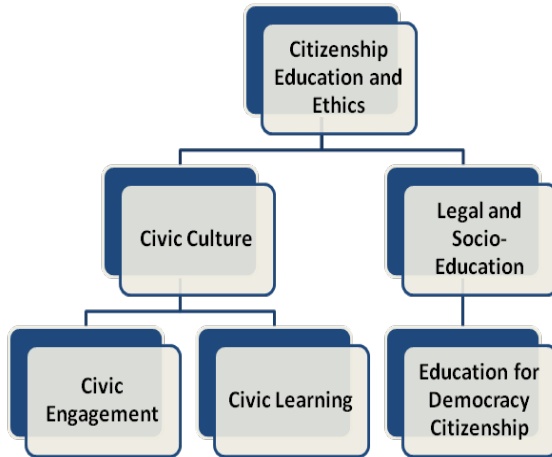

Fig: 1.

One international study which was done from 1999 (Kerr 1999) on comparison of Civic Education in 16 countries showed great variability not only in their organization and implementation, but also in their names (Vasiljevic, 2009). For example Vasiljevic (2009) observed that in Australia it was referred as "Human society and environment", in Canada: "Social studies",

in Hungary: "People and society" etc.

Civic Education is sometimes studied as a separate subject in elementary and secondary schools, and sometimes it is a distinct subject area, integrated in several subjects (Kuhn 2006:8 as cited by Vasiljevic, 2009). As Vasiljevic noted there is even no international consent on the content of curricula of Civic Education and its goals, so it is not easy to define it. This is actually the main argument that I bring out in this article that there are in fact as many assumptions as possible with regard to what constitutes Civic Education.

However, the broadest possible description of Civic Education would be that it is aimed to "make good citizens", equipped with appropriate knowledge, skills and traits of character (Galston 2001: 217 as cited by Vasiljevic, 2009). Democratic societies require democratic citizens, whose specific knowledge and competences cannot suit or fit into other regimes. The situation of defining Civic Education is even more complex if we consider that there are multiple conceptions of democracy, which are a matter of considerable debate (Galston, 2001 as cited by Vasiljevic, 2009).

Malone (1968: 110 as cited by Vasiljevic, 2009), states that in fact Civic Education was first implemented in the educational system of the United States of America in the beginning of the 20th century. It was character oriented toward producing "model" citizens properly indoctrinated with religious and spiritual thinking and it was also referred to as citizenship education. Interest in Civic Education grew in the second half of the last century, characterized by a growing interest in the place of man in our society and was seen as an essential purpose

of education (Branson 2003: 2 as cited by Vasiljevic, 2009).

In the International Encyclopedia of Education, Civic Education is defined as a "development of citizenship or civic competence through conveying the unique meaning, obligation, and virtue of citizenship in a particular society or the acquisition of values, dispositions and skills appropriate to the society" (International Encyclopedia cited in Finkel et al. 2000: 1852 as also cited by Vasiljevic, 2009). Since Civic Education originated and developed in countries with a democratic political system, it would appear that always it is tightly associated with democratic values and notions that are to be adopted by its citizens.

The UN has equally come up some definition of Civic Education and they define it as a way of learning for effective participation in democratic and development processes, and it is an important way for capacity development in the society by empowering people for effective civic engagement (UNDP 2004: 5 as cited by Vasiljevic, 2009).

 In these definitions one thing is clear that we may not find the solution to the problem of defining Civic Education for now but we may be in a position to appreciate what we need to do when confronted with such multiplicity of conceptions about Civic Education.

Vasiljevic (2009) has also gone further in trying to demonstrate the conceptual difficulties that lie in Civic Education by way of attempting to discuss the aims, objectives and content found within Civic Education. According to him, it is hard to find a unique, shared goal of Civic Education, as there is such a variety of

programs and theories, but it can be said that they are all directed to the formation of some "imaginary citizen" in a (preferably) democratic society. This argument is consistent with what has already been discussed especially on the different meanings attributed to Civic Education.

Oesterreich (2003: 1 as cited by Vasiljevic, 2009) argues that Civic Education's aim can be understood, in a more narrow sense, as an acquisition of knowledge about a constitution and the basic democratic institutions and regulations; while in a broader understanding the focus is more on the acquisition of competences that enables participation and democratic action, and it includes social learning and political socialization. Kuhn (2006: 9 as cited by Vasiljevic, 2009) also contends that many Civic Education programmes stress the aspects of "about and through" assumption which tends to describe Civic Education as teaching about democracy and training for democratic citizenship through democracy.

Finkel (2003: 138 cited by Vasiljevic, 2009) observed that Civic Education was sometimes referred to as education for democratic citizenship because it was democratically oriented and that it had three key components such as civic competence which included among others political knowledge, civic skills and perceptions of one's own political influence that support democratic participation.

Secondly, Civic Education has adherence to democratic values and norms which include tolerance, meaning the extent to which citizens are willing to extend procedural democratic liberties to individuals and groups with whom they may disagree; institutional

trust, meaning the willingness to critically support basic social and political institutions; and support for democracy as a form of government preferable to other political systems.

Thirdly, democratic participation is seen as a final outcome of the programme in the area of participation. This also means with democratic participation those exposed to Civic Education are trained on how to participate and express their views freely in all matters that affect them positive or negative.

The above arguments are also in line with what Himmelmann (2013: 1-7) has observed that Civic Education is not to be looked at as the accumulation and testing of mere knowledge and understanding but rather should stress equal efforts on (1) democratic knowledge and understanding, (2) democratic values, attitudes and common awareness and that these efforts should be further accompanied by (3) practical skills like problem solving, conflict solution, service learning, entrepreneurial or project learning and civic engagement. In all these issues Himmelmann (2013) notes that there are a number of competences coming out as can be shown in the figure below:

Cognitive social and affective competencies

knowledge, skills and understanding

Awareness

knowledge, skills and attitudes

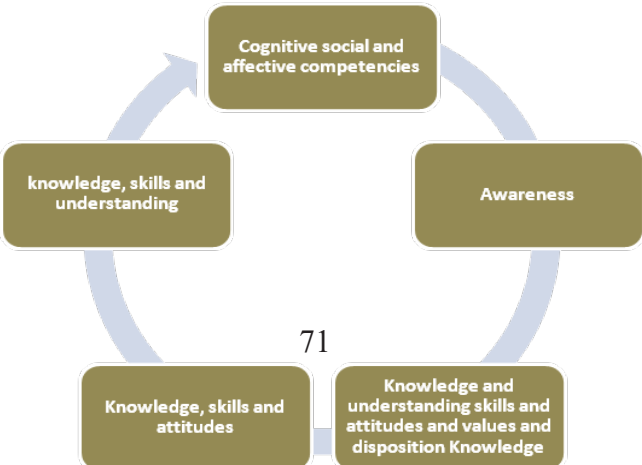Knowledge and understanding skills and attitudes and values and disposition Knowledge

Fig: 2. Civic Education Competences

Indeed in dealing with Civic Education I argue that issues are considered complex, hard to predict and insecure and thereby consolidating the argument that Civic Education has indeed some conceptual difficulties. No wonder some scholars are criticising Civic Education that it has got some ideological overtones.

I also tend to believe that the conceptual difficulties facing Civic Education could have some historical background especially when viewed and argued from the different periods in which the subject has evolved. This is clearly highlighted by Taylor (2007: 1-12) regarding ancient Greece where the subject of Civic Education was meant for a small minority although wholly democratic, ancient had an exclusionary policy position because some members of the community such as women and slaves were not allowed to get engaged in the life of the public. In the arguments of Aristotle, to take part in governing the community in this democratic context was to be either a beast or a god. Therefore to be fully human was by definition to be a citizen and obligations to the polis took precedence over everything else. It has also been argued that there was in fact no question of private morality in ancient Greece as everything was vested in the polis (Jordan, 1989 as cited by Taylor, 2007).

Faulks (2000 as cited by Taylor, 2007) notes that regarding the Roman concepts of citizenship, by

contrast, were both more inclusive but also more centralist and authoritarian in nature. Citizenship was seen in some ways as an agency of social control and became detached from any notions of participation and democracy; increasingly, citizenship was seen as a legalistic construct to undermine and control sources of discontent. Within a relatively short period, therefore, citizenship came to be seen as one of the devices for maintaining, through the legal system the power of the ruling class in Roman society.

With the rise of mediaeval Christianity in Europe, the importance of the concept of citizenship in society declined as Christianity now emphasised obedience and salvation and these replaced notions of civic virtue and other related competencies of Civic Education. The Church, rather than the political community, became the moral reference point. Moreover, although the structure and ideology of the Roman Catholic Church and its parallels in the Eastern Orthodox tradition were extremely hierarchical and authoritarian, theologically Christianity was based very much upon the relationship of the individual with the church and, through the priesthood, to God (Taylor, 2007).

However, Anderson (1974b as cited by Taylor, 2007) contends that the stranglehold of the Roman Catholic Church upon political life continued virtually unbroken until the French defeated the Papacy in the fifteenth century, which resulted, amongst other things, in the development of the Northern Italian city states, leading to the Italian Renaissance. The Renaissance was driven by an intense desire to move away from the Philistinism and 'darkness' of the Middle Ages. Italian city states,

such as Florence and Venice, attempted 'the deliberate revival and imitation' of the civic and cultural life of classical civilisation.

Taylor (2007) on one hand reports that the position was very different in Britain because in the Seventeenth century, Thomas Hobbes had a rather different approach to the subject of Civic Education. As an authoritarian political philosopher with a highly pessimistic view of human nature and the potential for progress of human society, he argued that it was only through a strong legal framework and a powerful and centralised state that the natural, inevitable tendencies of human beings to behave selfishly, greedily and, by conventional standards, immorally, could be curbed and controlled and civilised society be protected.

For Hobbes this meant that the individual had no rights, with the important exceptions of self-defence and self preservation, and should be subject to the will of the state, as expressed through a strong sovereign. For Taylor (2007) Hobbes was somewhat seen as something of a half-way house between John Locke's subsequent social contract system, based upon rights and law-based theories of citizenship, and the thraldom (or another person's power) of the religious system of earlier centuries. Hobbes did believe in a contract, albeit one-sided, between the individual and the state; and he did believe in the equality of 'ordinary men' so that, despite individual differences of character and ability, he maintained that these differences were in reality, remarkably small in relative terms.

On the other hand, Taylor (2007) reports that Locke built a rights, law-based theory of citizenship involving a social and legal contract between the State and the individual citizen, which became the legitimation of the bourgeois liberal conception of the capitalist state and the infrastructure which underpinned it thereafter. Locke's importance in the development of the British legal and parliamentary constitutional system can hardly be exaggerated.

For Locke, economic freedom, construed effectively as facilitating the development of bourgeois society and its accompanying economy, was combined with a real concern for rights and justice. Locke thus articulated the appropriate ideological structure for the rapid development of bourgeois society, which in turn led to the creation of the world's first industrial economy and society. As such definitions evolving around Civic Education and citizenship conceptually were a central part of this whole edifice. The restrictive definition of who was eligible for citizenship within this system was a matter of political contention for the next two hundred years, and until the twentieth century was based upon Lockean notions of property ownership and the argument that such ownership was linked indissolubly to enfranchisement

During the French Revolution of 1789, Taylor (2007) argues that there were some radical conceptualisations of the concept of Civic Education. Faulks (2000 as cited by Taylor, 2007) contends further that the conceptions were mainly subordinate to market principles and the intentions of the political and economic elite'. However, it would be quite erroneous to see citizenship and Civic

Education issues entirely in terms of the hegemonic subordination of the lower classes to the ideas and values of the dominant class, even though this may be the essential foundation of concepts of citizenship in industrial and post-industrial societies.

As Marx and others have pointed out, modern societies are characterised by contradiction, tension and conflict between various social and economic interests as represented through social class structures (Faulks, 2000 as cited by Taylor, 2007). Ideological formulations reflect these fundamental differences. Thus liberalism's ideology, particularly as articulated by John Stuart Mill in the later part of the nineteenth century, had a strong egalitarian element, albeit within the confines of an assumed free-market capitalist structure. Mill laid particular emphasis upon the importance in a civilised, democratic society of the rights of minorities and the primacy issues of free expression and free belief within a state system which should be only minimally constrictive (Mill 1859 as cited in Taylor, 2007).

The contested nature of liberalism in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is a good example of the tensions within the rapidly developing capitalist system. On the one hand, liberal ideology articulated the necessary free market economics and liberalised state structures, which were essential for capitalist investment and development. At the same time it gave expression, through Mill and others, to the desire to create a more humane and radical liberalism and a democratic society where all people could feel as full citizens of a radically transformed social order.

The forces of Labour, which grew increasingly strong through the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, also had a major impact on the development of citizenship ideology. The pressure of trade unions to secure workers' rights, as well as increased security of employment and better material conditions, co-existed uneasily with the ruling class' need to incorporate consensually the working class and its organisations into the economic and socio-political system. At one level, the social and economic history of the twentieth century can be seen as a series of conflicts and subsequent resolutions between class forces over the control of capitalism and its resources and power structure. The place of workers and all 'ordinary' people in the new, fully enfranchised social and political system has been a continuing matter of debate.

As Faulks notes 'there is a contradiction … at the heart of the modernist project: the tension between the State as an exclusionary community and citizenship as a universal status' (Faulks 2000, 30 cited by Taylor, 2007). It would appear that with such issues as presented above it is clear that the conceptual understanding of Civic Education is far from being resolved and cannot be resolved for now. It would require another discussion to continue from where this article ends. However, we need also to agree with what Nussbaum (1997 as cited by Taylor, 2007) has argued that the prospects for the maintenance and enhancement of democratic conceptions and practices of citizenship appear to be somewhat gloomy. This is because, there seems little alternative other than to support Habermasian, liberal prescriptions, at least for the time being. How, in

practical terms, do we redefine the theory and practice of citizenship education in this context?

The work of Martha Nussbaum is instructive in this respect. Nussbaum is a strong advocate of a rearticulated classical liberal humanism, which is, she argues, inherently pluralistic. She rejects post-modernist romanticism and insists that all particular forms of humanity are underpinned by a common core, which in itself can be discovered through dialogue and analysis. Her position is that cultural traditions are not monolithic and unitary, but are subject to internal as well as external rational criticism. This is exactly the challenge that Civic Education poses in terms of conceptualisation because it is coming from the background of many shifting positions in the history of its development as has been demonstrated already in some sections of this article.

Turning to Nussbaum again she raises fundamental issues with regard to Civic Education and it is worthwhile that such issues are looked at. She supports both the Enlightenment view – that ethical enquiry requires encouraging a critical attitude to habits and conventions, rather than an unqualified acceptance of authority   and the assertion that the recognition of the virtuous life in all cultures is discernible. Rather than advocating programmes of multi-cultural education, which can often degenerate into uncritical recognition or celebration of difference, as if all cultural practices were morally neutral or legitimate, Nussbaum prefers the term 'interculturalism' to fully understand the concept of Civic Education. Such a position in her view would be appropriate for common human needs across cultures and of dissonance in critical dialogue within

cultures. Such inter-culturalist programmes should embrace a number of principles an argument which has been touched upon already in the discussion.

She has also argued that in almost all developed societies, such programmes are difficult to construct and to implement and do not yet receive the high priority which they deserve. Similarly, in developing societies such as Zambia Civic Education as a field is difficult both to construct and implement because not much priority has been assigned to it the way it should be.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I want to stress that what I have attempted to discuss is one of the many issues that confront the practitioners in the field of Civic Education and I might not even have touched on many other issues that are equally important and maybe that could be reserved for another paper. Nonetheless in this article I have tried to demonstrate that there are different dimensions of Civic Education in terms of the meaning, processes and practices. It is important that as we look at Civic Education we need to conceptualise it in its broadest sense and not necessarily from a linear point of view. This is because in doing so will be doing a disservice to the many conceptions that scholars in the field make. We may also miss its very nature as a subject of many assumptions with many conceptual challenges. As such we should not confine it to simple aggregation of preferences whether positive or negative but we should understand it as a subject with many preferences.

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