

## **The Teaching and Learning of Cultural Studies at Lower Primary School Level in Botswana**

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### **Abstract**

The study examined the theoretical and practical understandings of Cultural Studies at the lower primary school level in Botswana. The education system in Botswana intends to produce learners who are reflective, adaptive and who can easily fit in every academic and social environment. Cultural Studies was introduced in 2002 as an integral part of the lower primary school curriculum (Standard 1-4) thus replacing Social Studies and Religious Education at this level. Aspects of the new subject would imbue learners with an understanding of cultural citizenship so that they become living and practicing citizens, in their ever-changing global community. The qualitative and quantitative approaches were employed in collecting data. This was done through interviews, observations and questionnaires which were administered to teachers and students in primary schools country-wide. In addition, an officer from the Department of Curriculum and Evaluation of the Ministry of Education responsible for Cultural Studies was interviewed. The simple random sampling was employed in the selection of participants. It emerged from the findings that there are still gaps in the teaching and learning of Cultural Studies that need urgent attention. These include the training of teachers, review of the syllabus, and the provision of adequate and quality resource materials.

### **Introduction**

The introduction of new subjects into the school's curricula across the world always poses serious challenges to educators due to unforeseeable factors that normally crop up at the implementation stage. More often than not, these problems revolve around the availability of qualified personnel to take up the responsibility of the implementation process. In some cases, there arise problems of shortage of resource materials. The introduction of Cultural Studies as a subject at the lower primary school level in Botswana in 2002 has not escaped such challenges. The training and orientation of teachers have not been seriously taken into account because of the assumption that qualified Social Studies and Religious Education (RE) teachers would effectively teach Cultural Studies. In trying to address issues relating to the implementation of Cultural Studies in Botswana, the study has been structured as follows: Firstly, is the abstract which provides an overview of the study. This is followed by the introduction and the background information which highlight how Cultural Studies as a school subject emerged at the primary level in Botswana. Following the background information is the presentation of the research problem which is considered the most critical area of the study as it focuses the reader's attention to specific issues that motivated the study. Related to the research problem is the purpose of the study from which the objectives have been drawn. The review of literature in particular explores the origins of Cultural Studies in the developed world such as the United States of America (USA) and how the subject was later popularized in other parts of the world such as Britain. The conceptualization of Cultural Studies within the Botswana context and aspects of teacher training are also explored in the review of literature including the importance of understanding the children we interact with as we teach them Cultural Studies. The methodologies used in collecting data such as oral interviews, structured questionnaires and class observations are outlined. Lastly, the study highlights the major findings from which the conclusions were drawn to base the recommendations.

### **Background**

Post independent Botswana society beginning from independence in 1966 to date, has considered the importance of cultural preservation as an issue of major concern not only to the government but the education system in particular. This emanated from the fact that the British colonial administration had not taken much care to develop the country's education system and its indigenous culture (Tlou and Campbell, 1984). For instance, cultural practices such as the initiation ceremonies and polygamy were denounced by the colonial administration as archaic and primitive. This sentiment was echoed by the first President of the Republic of Botswana, Sir Seretse Khama, in his speech at the graduation ceremony held in Swaziland in 1970 that during the colonial period,

“we were taught, sometimes in a very positive way, to despise

ourselves and our ways of life. We were made to believe that we had no past to speak of, no history to boast of. The past, so far as we were concerned, was just a blank and nothing more. Only the present mattered and we had very little control over it..." (Department of Curriculum Development and Evaluation, 1990; p.6).

As noted, this was indicative of the fact that the education system of the time lacked a futuristic and a culturally grounded orientation. In other words, the education system was not genuinely designed to address the cultural aspirations and needs of Botswana. In the schools for instance, subjects such as History, Geography and Religious Education (RE) were primarily designed to promote and enhance western practices and values.

It was upon this background that a decade after independence, there was a need to seriously revise the school's curricula to ensure that issues of culture, equity, quality, and relevance were effectively addressed. This resulted in the appointment of the first National Commission on Education in 1975 whose mandate was to formulate a philosophy of education that included the cultural recognition of every ethnic group in the country for the promotion of national unity, harmony and prosperity (Report of the National Commission on Education, 1977). The commission gave birth to the 1977 first National Policy on Education popularly known as "Education for *Kagisano*" (which translates into education for social justice) framed around the four cardinal principles of democracy, development, self-reliance and unity. The commission cited qualitative and quantitative improvements as the major priorities in Botswana's education. Following the 1977 commission, subjects such as Social Studies, Religious Education (RE) were amongst those that were thought critical to the realization of the qualitative goals of a dynamic education system. Social Studies in particular was introduced at the primary school level in 1982 and in 1986 at the Junior Certificate level and subsequently extended to the Senior Secondary schools in 2004. The thinking was that Social Studies would enable learners acquire knowledge and skills about their societies and become more culturally literate. In fact, both the new RE and Social Studies syllabi recognized that there is no society without culture and that the duty of every education system is to transmit cultural values from one generation to the next (Curriculum Development Division, 1996). RE and Social Studies as implemented in schools also recognized the fact that social systems include the economic, cultural and political communications, rationality, beliefs, moral, aesthetic and spiritual dimensions (Gower, 1990).

In 1992, another commission on education was re-appointed to further review the education system and advise on how best it could respond to the needs and aspirations of the people of Botswana. This commission resulted in the 1994 Revised National Policy on Education which sought "to review the...education system and its relevance; and identify problems and strategies for its further development in the context of Botswana's changing and complex economy" (Government Paper No 2 of 1994; p.1). The Commission also considered issues such as restructuring and diversifying the school curricula to meet the needs of learners and requirements of the country. From this commission, quality education was understood to embrace the following: foundational, vocational and academic skills (Curriculum Development and Evaluation, 2002). In this context, the education system would provide a variety of skills applicable to work situations such as decision-making, including a number of practical and general subjects to develop student's appreciation of technology and important values within and outside of their communities respectively. It was then a result of the 1994 commission that Cultural Studies was introduced as a school subject in 2002. The goals of Cultural Studies were to develop a sense of cultural identity in students in accordance with the National Philosophy of *Kagisano*, promote a sense of citizenship participation, social responsibility, democratic pluralism and empathy towards others. It further envisages that learners would focus on human interaction within their physical, social, economic and political environments. Learners would also acquire knowledge and an understanding of their society through appreciation and practice of culture and a sense of good citizenship. In general, the Cultural Studies syllabus had its goal as to adequately meet the broad educational aims of the Ten Year Basic Education programme (Curriculum Development Division, 2002).

### **Research Problem**

Since the introduction of Cultural Studies in 2002, there have been mixed conceptions as to its overarching purposes and mission. This is because it tended to duplicate Social Studies content thus leaving the primary school teachers unclear as to its actual goals and assumptions. Furthermore, since the implementation of the subject, the training of teachers has not been taken into account. In other words, Cultural Studies is not offered in the Colleges of Education and the University of Botswana as a component of the diploma or degree programmes. The assumption has been that qualified primary school teachers as generalists, can

teach all the subjects offered in the schools competently even if they have not been trained at tertiary level to handle such areas. However, through interaction with the teachers, it has emerged that most of them may not have the requisite knowledge and skills to effectively teach Cultural Studies. This lack of content knowledge is thought by researchers to impact negatively on the teacher's instructional planning and the subsequent acquisition of knowledge, skills and values by the learners. The problem of content knowledge is further compounded by the general lack of resources such as textbooks and other relevant reference materials.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The primary purpose of this study was to investigate the effective teaching and learning of Cultural Studies as taught in primary schools in Botswana to achieve the national goals of producing a well rounded citizen who has problem solving, decision-making, adaptability, individual initiative and interpersonal skills for further learning and vocational preparation (Curriculum Development and Evaluation Department, 2002). The study also intended to find out whether the primary school teachers in Botswana have the requisite knowledge and skills to teach Cultural Studies and whether the resources are available to fully implement the curriculum.

### **Objectives of the Studies**

The objectives of the study were to:

1. establish the effectiveness of teaching and learning of Cultural Studies at the primary school level.
2. find out the teachers' perceptions and possession of knowledge of the Cultural Studies syllabus in the primary schools.
3. find out the quality, adequacy and availability of resources to effectively implement the Cultural Studies syllabus.

### **Review of Literature**

#### ***What is Cultural Studies?***

Cultural Studies is a new subject in Botswana's evolving curriculum. The subject was originally developed and popularized in the United States of America (USA) and Britain in the 1930s and 1940s respectively (Giroux, 2005) and later spread to other parts of the world. As a new subject in the primary schools, its conceptualization has remained problematic in that it focuses on issues of ideology and theory. Some Cultural Studies theorists (Turner cited in Stevenson, 2001; Katz, 2005; Giroux, 2005) believe that the subject doesn't as yet have a secure definition that can shape its content and methods because of the conflicting ideological and theoretical underpinnings. Katz (2005) says its definitions adopt some of the rhetoric and the founding assumptions of the social sciences. Katz (2005) further observes that Cultural Studies as a school subject seeks to explore the inter-relationships between some fundamental elements of society upon which certain behaviors are built. Other proponents or advocates of this subject apply their minds more to issues of citizenship, gender, identity, mass or popular culture, etc. (Stevenson, 2001). However, the subject mainly combines sociology and anthropology but also draws its content from other disciplines such as history and language (Katz, 2005; Goldberg and Greenberg, 2004; Wolff, 1999).

The concept "culture" from which the field of Cultural Studies is drawn comes from the Latin root "*colere*" to inhabit, to cultivate, or to honour (<http://www.wikipedia.org>). Ryan cited in Katz (2005) agrees that:

Culture is generally applied to everything that falls on the social and historical side of materiality, and it can also be a name for everything on the rhetorical and representational side of reason...as well as the domains of lived experience, of institutions and of life patterns. (p12)

This means that culture is concerned with the study of social interactions and the holistic study of humanity including all material and non-material aspects. Ziauddin Sardar identifies some main characteristics of Cultural Studies as cultural practices and their relation to power; understandings of culture in all its complex forms and the social and political context in which it manifests itself; the division of knowledge to overcome the split between tacit (cultural knowledge) and objective (universal) forms of knowledge and a commitment to issues of morality (<http://www.wikipedia.org>).

George and Shoos (1992) further maintain that Cultural Studies takes as its subject of investigation the learner's immediate world of experience and as such remember what they are currently experiencing and what they discover through research and observation (p. 200). The emphasis here is more on finding the true knowledge as learners interact with their environment. On this point Giroux (2005) writes:

educators will not be able to ignore the hard questions that schools will have to face regarding issues of multiculturalism, race, identity, power, knowledge, ethics, and work. These issues will play a major role in defining the meaning and purpose of schooling, the relationship between teachers and students, and the critical content of their exchange in terms of how to live in a world that will be vastly more globalized, high tech, and racially diverse than at any other time in history" (p. 4)

At this juncture, it should be noted that Cultural Studies offers enormous possibilities for educators to rethink the nature of educational theory and practice as well as what it means to educate future citizens for the twenty-first century. It therefore implies that understanding other people's culture becomes a crucial object of study because this is how the concept of global perspectives can be understood and promoted. Understanding of other people's culture leads to co-operation, interpersonal relations, unity and humility, all which are effective ingredients of social harmony. In this sense the researchers also agree that as we are living in a highly globalized world, we can not avoid educating our children to develop knowledge and skills to cope up with new developments that are both social, cultural and economic in nature.

However, Katz (2005) observes that Cultural Studies in the advanced capitalist countries such as Britain and the United States of America (USA) has transformed the object of "studies" in schools. To this end, pressure has been placed on the removal of disciplinary boundaries and the introduction of appropriate methods of content delivery and modes of articulation. In the USA and in many other western countries, different versions of Cultural Studies emerged as an interdisciplinary approach to studying culture. These versions examined the tensions that exist within the multifaceted and multicultural mix of life. They explored specific issues such as race and religion, gender and sexuality, and youth. The American version of Cultural Studies in particular concerned itself more with understanding of mass culture (Campbell and Kean, 1997) while the British version on the other hand concentrates on the production of meaning. In general, Cultural Studies in the Western countries is based on the belief that societies have entered an era in which knowledge can no longer be compartmentalized (Giroux, 2005). The researcher's also share the view that knowledge alone is not enough especially when it is presented in bits and pieces. We believe that knowledge should transcend the subject boundaries and address issues relevant to an individual's daily life experiences, needs and aspirations.

Shepperson (1996) says that in the apartheid South Africa, Cultural Studies was developed to examine different kinds of cultural expressions which were studied in relation to the wider trends in education, the economy, and values which provided ways of dealing with the outside world. However, research in the old South Africa shows that the conditions dealt with were rooted in a much more violent history of dispossession and exploitation (Shepperson, 1996). This is what Stuart Hall cited in Goldberg and Greenberg (2004) refers to as "the workings of power", which most often solidify their dominance, as the natural order of things, or the ideology of common sense. If Cultural Studies is to accomplish its goal of raising cultural awareness among the learners, it must be accorded due attention in the school curriculum so as to contribute in its own unique ways to nation building and citizenship.

### ***Cultural Studies in Botswana***

In the Botswana's educational context, the concept of culture is studied mainly in subjects such as Social Studies and RE. Though these subjects emphasize the importance of culture in varying degrees (Barr, Barth and Shermis, 1977; NCSS, 1988; Lamb and Sherbock, 1999; Whitehead, 1996), RE in particular, has its aim as to enable possession of a better knowledge of religions and cultural issues while "culture" in Social Studies "is studied in order to promote "citizenship" education among the young learners (NSSC, Ellis, 1998; Parker 2001; Stevens; 2001). Social Studies therefore emphasises what is known as a culturally responsive instruction in view of Botswana's cultural diversity. Given these conceptions, Cultural Studies, then, is conceptualized as a response to addressing the various and diverse aspects of culture in these changing times. It means that in teaching this subject, culture is considered as the ground on which critical and professional analysis proceeds. This in part explains why some advocates of Cultural Studies are

increasingly interested in "how and where knowledge needs to surface and emerge" in order to be relevant (Katz, 2005; Wolff, 1999; Greenberg and Goldberg, 2004). As Cultural Studies is taught in Botswana, the researchers observed that the subject derives most of its content and methodologies from the social science subjects such as sociology, anthropology, psychology, philosophy, political science and others. As such, the syllabus deals with the interaction of human beings with their physical, social, economic and political environments. The syllabus categorically seeks to develop positive attitudes within learners that will promote protection, preservation and sustainable use of the environment. It is also concerned with each individual learner's socio-cultural and physical environment before proceeding to the broader areas of concern falling outside the immediate environment of the learner. In other words, the Cultural Studies syllabus in Botswana emphasises the concentric approach, starting from the learner's experiences spiralling out to new experiences. Methods such as enquiry and active participatory and experiential approaches to learning are emphasized.

The Cultural Studies syllabus is thus divided into five thematic modules or strands that address human relationships, rights and responsibilities, authority structures, culture and the physical environment and its resources. These areas therefore cut across all the standards that is standards 1- 4. In essence, the syllabus "deals with the interaction of human beings with their physical, social, economic and political environment" (Curriculum Development and Evaluation Department, 2002: p. 29). However, the syllabus is designed in such a way that each successive standard raises the knowledge, skills and competency levels on a staircase format. This outlook recognises the developmental stages of the child in line with the learning theories and the strategies of implementing Basic Education. The design is also consistent with the contention that children can be successful within their own limits. Concepts on emerging issues such as HIV/AIDS and Environmental Education have been infused throughout the modules where relevant. As such, it is envisaged that the syllabus will help learners acquire knowledge and understanding of their society through appreciation and practice of their culture and a sense of good citizenship, thus promoting the all round development of an individual. The subject also helps learners develop a sense of identity and a positive self-concept and further inculcates problem solving, decision-making, adaptability, individual initiative and interpersonal skills for further learning and vocational preparation. The shift to Cultural Studies in Botswana, as in other countries is perceived as a continuation of existing tendencies such as gender, race, sexuality, and others (Curriculum Development and Evaluation Department, 2002; Katz, 2005; Kellner, 2005).

### ***Cultural Studies and Teacher Training in Botswana***

The introduction of any subject into the mainstream curriculum has always had some practical implications for teachers and teacher educators. According to Stuart Hall in Giroux (2005) Cultural Studies is one of the subjects that poses some challenges for educators it pushes for new questions, new models, and new ways of thinking and reasoning that test the fine lines between intellectual rigor and social relevance in its effort to address the central, urgent, and disturbing questions of society and its culture in the most intellectual manner. What the subject offers educators therefore,

is a theoretical framework for addressing the shifting attitudes, representations, and desires of this new generation of youth being produced within the current historical, economic, and cultural juncture... (providing) elements for rethinking the relationship between...knowledge and authority, learning and experience, and the role of teachers as public intellectuals (Giroux, 2005; p. 17)

In line with the aims of Botswana's Ten Year Basic Education, the learner centred approach is highly essential in the teaching of Cultural Studies. This approach involves training teachers in the use of teaching skills such as problem solving, inquiry and experiential learning. Learners are therefore expected to actively participate in the learning process. The approach is meant to improve learner performance including those with special needs and different abilities. In addition, the teachers are expected to use a variety of practical action –results oriented teaching methods such as co-operative learning, team work, drawing, drama, emulation, class presentation and many others which enhance the acquisition of foundation skills among learners (Curriculum Development and Evaluation Department, 2002). However, experiential learning depends on thorough lesson preparation to be successful. The teacher is required to carefully plan the lessons and put in place all the requisite resources. In the teaching/learning process the teacher becomes a guide and the learners learn from interaction with the learning environment. It is suggested that teachers should start with examples and resources from the child's home, then draw examples from the school environment and then the rest of the community within which the school is situated. In essence, the teachers should start from the experiences of the children. However, the fact that Cultural Studies is a new subject at

primary school level in Botswana, the teachers have not been trained to teach it. In other words, the teacher training colleges in Botswana do not offer Cultural Studies to the trainees. At the University of Botswana also, Cultural Studies is not offered but rather Religious and Moral Education as well as Social Studies. The assumption has been that once teachers have been trained to teach Religious and Moral Education and Social Studies they can competently teach Cultural Studies. On this point, Giroux (2005) expresses his concern with respect to teacher training that:

educators and cultural critics need to address the effects of emerging post-modern conditions on a current generation of young people who appear hostage to the vicissitudes of a changing economic order with its legacy of diminished hopes on the one hand, and a world of schizoid images, proliferating public spaces and an increasing fragmentation, uncertainty, and randomness that structures post-modern daily life on the other” (p.16).

In this respect, Giroux doubts if educators are seriously concerned about youth problems in the age of modern technology although Turner cited in Stevenson (2001) argues that “while Giroux provides us with a way of linking citizenship with the cultural politics of education...he nevertheless remains uncertain to what exactly a radical conception of citizenship and pedagogy would involve” (p.210). Nevertheless, Giroux sees popular culture as a radical challenge to existing ideologies of critical pedagogy (Kapol, 1998) and advises that “teachers be educated to be cultural producers to treat culture as an activity, unfinished, and incomplete” (Giroux 2005 p. 20). This means that educators whose work is shaped by Cultural Studies should regard teachers and students as active participants in its construction.

### ***Understanding the Children we Teach***

Teachers in general have a profound role to play in ensuring that the children they teach develop reflective and critical thinking skills that will enable them effectively cope with today’s challenges. These analytical skills are central to pedagogical goals based on the student’s intellectual, personal development and the educational context upon which learning takes place. According to the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) Board of Directors (1988), the children we teach should be considered from both a social and civic perspective. Socially, the focus is on relationships between people and their environments. The assumption is that young children need to understand both their own uniqueness and their relationship to the world. Social knowledge is constructed as students attempt to build coherent systems for thinking about and explaining their immediate environment and the elements that make up the larger world environment. Their social judgments are not random responses; rather, they are the result of the application of analysis and reason in the social world and are influenced by such factors as peer groups, adults, social and educational environments, experiences, and the institutions to which they are exposed. Social judgements also involve more than the child’s “getting along” in the home or school environment. Furthermore, social judgements involve the child’s ability to make decisions about such issues as race and ethnicity, citizen concerns of law and justice, and social welfare and economics, many of which make competing claims in a rapidly changing world. Furthermore, children are ready to deal with and already have ideas about civic understanding both covertly and overtly ((NCSS, 1988). By the time they enter primary school they have already developed some sense of political feelings, evaluations, and attachments requisite to democratic citizenship. Education today demands that “democracies must have citizens who are both knowledgeable and active” (Zarrillo, 2000, p. 21). In this sense, Cultural Studies sees these arguments as vitally valid for the development of the “good citizen” (Parker, 2001). One of the most important conclusions to be drawn from the available literature is the critical importance of the elementary years in laying the foundation for later and increasingly mature understanding (NCSS, 1988). There is reason to believe that teachers who miss these crucial opportunities to build interest, to introduce concepts from the social sciences, and to develop social perspectives and civic understanding may make it more difficult for today’s youth to cope with the future.

### **Methodology**

The researchers used both the qualitative and quantitative approaches in carrying out the study. It was important for the researchers to use both paradigms as they effectively complement one another. In other words, observations and oral interviews (formal and informal) were used as sources of data collection because observations provide a vivid picture about what is happening on the ground while interviews gives the researcher a face to face interaction and a chance to probe for further clarification. In addition, questionnaires were also used that comprised both open-ended questions and close ended questions. These were administered to teachers in order to solicit their views and perceptions about the teaching and

learning of the subject in their schools. These were analysed statistically using frequencies and percentages. Data were also descriptively analysed as was done in the case of qualitative analysis.

Other sources of data included, subject syllabus, students completed class exercises and home work. The qualitative approach was considered most suitable because of its connection to the nature of the study. As Weber (1977) cited in Frankiel and Wallen (1996), observed, it is through emphatic understanding and direct experience of the social world that researchers can gain insight into a given social phenomenon. As the study sought to find out the teachers beliefs and actions in the teaching of Cultural Studies, it was therefore of necessity to adopt this methodology in order to take into account the existential experience of the teachers and pupils or participants themselves. This approach also entails what the teachers thought about Cultural Studies or their feelings and perceptions towards the subject. In specific terms, the type of qualitative approach used in the study was an ethnographic field study which in fact, was also used in a related study by Frankiel and Wallen (1996) entitled; *Becoming an Elementary Social Studies Teacher: A Study of Perspectives* in which Fraekiel and Wallen (1996) sought the teacher's conceptions of Social Studies. Blumer (1969) cited in Frankiel and Wallen (1996) adds that "this methodology permits the researcher to meet all of the basic requirements of an empirical science; to confront the social world being studied; to raise abstract questions about this world; to discover relations between categories of data" etc (p470). Expressed differently, the method enables researchers obtain the information about the attitudes, concerns and practices of the people. It also enables the researchers get the subjective and often emotional meaning to the idea.

### **Sample size and selection**

A total of 80 qualified teachers were randomly selected from 27 primary schools country wide. Of these teachers, 41 were females and 39 were males all aged above 30 years. It should be noted that the primary school teachers in Botswana are not specialists in their subject areas. They are described as generalists because they teach all the subjects offered in their respective grades. In other terms, they are required to teach a total of nine (9) subjects including Cultural Studies which they have not been trained to teach. In terms of gender discrepancy, the researchers felt that a difference of 2 was not of any statistical significance. The schools were however selected on the basis of geographical locality. In this respect, 15 of these schools were in rural Botswana while 12 were in the urban centres. The 36 (16 boys and 20 girls) students randomly selected were all aged below 12 years. A female officer from the Department of Curriculum and Evaluation responsible for Cultural Studies was included in the study because of her knowledge and understanding of the goals of the subject.

### **Procedure**

Scheduled observations were conducted during lessons with each class. Each Cultural Studies teacher was interviewed for about 15 minutes after each class session. Students were also interviewed after Cultural Studies lessons for close to ten minutes. The researchers also observed Cultural Studies lessons in progress. As Fraekel and Wallen (1996) point out, the purpose of observations in the field is to discover what actually happens, the kind of interpersonal dynamics that exist, how students and teachers interact and what activities occur in each setting (p.470). It should be noted that oral interviews were not organized into pre-determined questions but revolved around issues of concern. For instance why certain topics in Cultural Studies were taught and what they (students) feel about those topics. After gathering the information from the students, it was also cross-checked with the information from other students not included in the sample. The purpose of cross-checking was to reconcile the data in order to come up with accurate results. The same procedures of cross-checking the information were extended to the data that were collected from the teachers. This procedure was adopted from Fraekiel and Wallen (1996). As pointed out earlier on, the researchers also examined the students work in the form of written exercises and also analysed the syllabus module by module. For the purposes of data analysis, the questionnaire items revolved around five main thematic strands namely (1) Cultural Studies as Civic Competence, (2) Cultural Studies as Ethnic pluralism, (3) Cultural Studies as Gender Equity (4) Cultural Studies as Critical Pedagogy and (5) Cultural Studies as Reflective Reasoning.

### **Data Analysis and findings**

#### **(1) Cultural Studies as Civic Competence**

This strand tested the teacher's and student's content knowledge of Cultural Studies in terms of how it directly relates to public life. All (100%) of the teachers and students pointed to the fact that indeed Cultural Studies provides adequate content knowledge on economic, political and environmental issues. This

observation was noted due to the nature of the topics covered in the syllabus as confirmed below. Both teachers and students further posited that Cultural Studies centrally focuses on the people's ways of life and human interaction namely their beliefs, personal and moral choices including religion. Closely, related to this view was that Cultural Studies emphasizes the historical heritage of Botswana. Viewed in this sense, the subject enables children to analyze the past and anticipate the future in a meaningful way hence helping learners generate meaningful solutions to life problems. Both teachers and students observed that the syllabus covers important issues such as exploring human relationships, myself, my family, interrelationships within my family as well as their roles and responsibilities in communities. Other important aspects of the syllabus mentioned included the study of contemporary issues in our society such as children's rights, child abuse, authority structures, environmental awareness, sustainable use of resources, human life and behaviour, self understanding, good citizenship and social harmony. An officer from the Department of Curriculum and Evaluation also emphasized that issues of citizenship, roles and responsibilities were central to the learning of Cultural Studies in Botswana because the country was a young democracy whose society needs such kind citizenship education. In her words she words "our young children are living in a fast changing world and they need a lot of guidance and proper education that will make them responsible citizens of their country". However, regarding the extent to which the syllabus achieves such civic competencies, a total of 24 teachers (30%) agreed that the syllabus is indeed very effected in promoting civic competencies while 48 teachers (60%) disagreed. Those who disagreed maintained that in the teaching of Cultural Studies, learners are rarely given the opportunity to go into the communities to acquire real experiences. They further said that Cultural Studies was taught as school subject because of the methods which were purely classroom based. The remaining 8 teachers (10%) were undecided. From the students class work, the researchers were also able to note that teaching and learning in Cultural Studies classes in Botswana rarely afforded learners the opportunity to interact directly with the communities.

The methods used by teachers only promoted memorization of the content so that learners could pass the examinations. In other words, the exercises given to the learners were purely of recall type hence learners could not effectively acquire the expected civic competencies. A total of 8 learners (22%) agreed that indeed Cultural Studies was very effective in achieving civic competencies. They cited important topics such as child abuse, acceptable behaviour and human rights in terms of their relevance to public life. The remaining 28 students which is 88% were undecided on the extent to which civic competence was achieved. This was probably due to the fact that these teachers' understanding of civic competence was limited, as most of them were neither Social Studies nor Cultural Studies specialists.

### ***(2) Cultural Studies as Ethnic pluralism***

This strand examined the extent to which the syllabus promotes ethnic pluralism or content integration. Content integration was defined as "the extent to which teachers use examples and content from a variety of cultures and groups" (Banks & Banks (2004). The teachers and students also had conflicting perceptions on the cultural inclusiveness of the syllabus. Although 12 teachers (15%) felt that the syllabus content is neutral, 64 teachers (80%) maintained that more often than not, the cultural values, norms and beliefs of other groups particularly the minority are rarely incorporated into the teaching of Cultural Studies. They observed that most of the examples given are those of the mainstream culture. There was also a tendency that was observed among teachers whereby examples of subject matter drew much from examples of those ethnic groups the teachers were more familiar with. As a result of such practices, most of the learners especially from the minority groups rarely hear of themselves as active participants in community life. In some occasions it was also observed that the teacher could neither deny nor confirm the answers that the children gave especially about their own ethnic groups. In terms of religion, more examples from Christianity are always provided at the expense of other religions. The other bone of contention was on the degree to which teaching and learning in Cultural Studies promotes acceptance of respect for all ethnic groups. A total of 28 students (78%) pointed out that more often than not the teachers used examples that ridiculed some students especially those from the disadvantaged backgrounds although the officer from the Department of Curriculum and Evaluation insisted that teachers were expected to ensure that the spirit of cultural pluralism permeated the classroom and whole school environment.

### ***(3) Cultural Studies as Gender Equity***

This strand examined the degree to which teaching and learning in Cultural Studies is gender sensitive. The officer from the department of Curriculum and Evaluation maintained that the goal of Cultural Studies was to eliminate all forms of cultural stereotypes. Although 48 (60%) of the teachers believed that their teaching styles and practices are gender neutral and sensitive, 32 teachers (40%) believed that there are classroom practices which still portray girls as inferior to boys. Those who maintained that there are gender imbalances

mentioned examples such as the appointment of monitors and other class representatives, pictures in the pupils readers or books which portray females and males playing different gender roles in society. However, some teachers indicated that most classroom practices which amounted to gender bias occurred outside of their conscious awareness. Other areas of gender insensitivity were more apparent in the consistent use of generic words such as 'man', 'men' and 'he' sometimes in reference to females. However, the researchers observed that in essence the syllabus was generally gender neutral. The problem regarding the issue of gender insensitivity was the direct influence of the socialization processes the teachers went through. A total of 25 students (69%) concurred that more often than not boys were more favoured than girls. In fact the majority of the female teachers acknowledged using words such as men, men or he in referring to women as well.

#### ***(4) Cultural Studies as Reflective Reasoning***

This strand was in line with the Botswana's educational goal of producing learners who are reflective, adaptive and who can easily fit in every academic and social environment. Reflective reasoning included critical thinking, problem solving, scientific inquiry and rational decision-making (Woolever & Scott (1988). A total of 14 teachers (17%) agreed that Cultural Studies is very effective in developing the reflective thinking skills. A total of 65 teachers (81%) felt that the subject did not contribute much to the development of the learner's critical thinking skills while 1 teacher (1%) was undecided. These teachers repeated that the syllabus was just too congested and indicated that they did not have enough time to engage in activities that promoted reflective reasoning. The fact that they were also required to teach about 9 subjects a day in addition to engaging in extra curricular activities made it impossible to create class activities that would foster reflective reasoning. Some teachers also indicated that reflective reasoning was hampered by their limited knowledge of the Cultural Studies subject matter. As pointed earlier on, the congested nature of the syllabus also made compelled teachers to rush through the syllabus to ensure that learners were well prepared for the examinations. The officer from the Department of Curriculum and Evaluation differed on the issue that the curriculum was congested. She maintained that the teachers failed to use their time profitably to ensure that the syllabus was well taught.

#### ***(5) Cultural Studies as Critical Pedagogy***

As Critical Pedagogy, Cultural Studies applied itself to the methods and assessment procedures used by teachers in Cultural Studies classes. This strand examined whether such methods suited all the learners in class. There was a general consensus by teachers that lack of resource materials and professional training hampered the degree to which equality was achieved in Cultural Studies in Botswana. The teachers noted that they had not received any training to teach Cultural Studies and as such they were not very familiar with issues of prejudice reduction in their classes as well as aspects of content integration. The issue of local language was also cited as a major problem faced by those teachers who were posted to communities whose languages were different from theirs. The language policy as the teachers pointed out requires only the use of Setswana and English as official languages. Since Botswana is a multilingual country, it is therefore still another area that needs research as to how the issue of second and third language speakers can be effectively addressed in this country. In view of this situation, students whose mother tongue is not of a Setswana dialect may find it very difficult to effectively learn Cultural Studies content.

### **Conclusion**

A number of conclusions were therefore drawn from the findings of the study. One such conclusion is that although the lower primary school teachers in Botswana possess satisfactory content knowledge of Cultural Studies as may have been derived from other subject such as social Studies and RE, they still lack some basic skills on how to effectively integrate the aforementioned thematic strands (civic competencies, ethnic pluralism, gender sensitivity, reflective reasoning and some aspects of critical pedagogy) in their teaching. Content integration is defined as the teacher's ability to effectively use examples from a wide variety of cultures particularly from Botswana and elsewhere to clarify key principles and generalizations. Content integration is highly essential if Cultural Studies teachers are to make their teaching more meaningful and value based. For example important aspects such as beliefs, personal and moral choices, human relationships, roles and responsibilities, authority structures, environmental awareness, good citizenship and social harmony require teachers who are very knowledgeable and capable of relating them in an effective to learner's real life experiences so that such learners can become more civic minded, tolerant, respectful, appreciative and trust worthy as they interact with their peers within and outside of the school. As already pointed out, the teacher's lack of skills on content integration continuously makes it virtually impossible to effectively achieve the envisaged thematic strands in the Cultural Studies syllabus.

Similarly, it is evident that the goal of promoting cultural pluralism in Cultural Studies classes in Botswana remains a very serious challenge to the country's education system. This conclusion emanates from the nature of pupil to pupil interaction within and outside of the classrooms. Some learners looked down upon their peers on the basis of ethnic orientation which they inherit from the society. Others did not want to be associated with certain ethnic groups simply because such groups are considered as minor in terms of social classification. Interpersonal trust was also very minimal. In other words, most learners did not trust their classmates. Furthermore, some of the Cultural Studies teachers did not want the so-called minority languages taught in the education system arguing that such languages are a waste of time and financial resources. In fact, this became evident during the interview when some of these teachers expressed their personal dislike for the minority languages and their cultural practices. Paradoxically, the goal of promoting cultural pluralism in the Cultural Studies classes is still far from being achieved.

On the aspect of Cultural Studies as gender sensitivity, the study concludes that even though the teachers are aware of gender issues in their daily teaching of Cultural Studies, many of them continue to down play its importance. As indicated, the consistent use of generic words such as 'men,' 'man,' and 'he' even in reference to women is indicative of lack of sensitivity to issues of gender balance and equity. In most classes for instance, boys are appointed as monitors or class leaders. Girls tend to be somewhat invisible during such appointments. In fact, issues of gender appear largely embedded in the Tswana traditional socialization processes.

In terms of Cultural Studies as Critical Pedagogy, it is evident that although teachers try as much as possible to vary their approaches to meet the learning styles and expectations of each learner, a lot needs to be done in terms of the methods, strategies and techniques employed during teaching. As noted in the literature reviewed, Cultural Studies as a subject should produce learners who are reflective, adaptive and who can easily fit in every academic and social environment. Expressed differently, learners in Cultural Studies classes should be able to acquire reflective reasoning skills such as critical thinking, problem solving, scientific inquiry and rational decision-making. However, there appears a serious gap between the methods applied and the skills to be mastered. Basing on students class exercises and assignments, the learners are given work that require simple regurgitation of the content despite the recommended teaching methods in the syllabus such as cooperative learning, team work, drama and emulation. The reasons cited by teachers for not adhering to the development of learners' critical thinking skills are mainly due to the congested nature of the syllabus. In this way, lack of professional training for teachers especially on aspects of Cultural Studies as critical pedagogy will continue to hamper learner performance.

The quality and availability of resource materials will continue to hamper learner performance in every subject including Cultural Studies. In the first place, the Cultural Studies syllabus as the main resource material at the primary school level gives teachers serious problems of interpretation. This regards the language used, which most teachers maintain that it is just too complex for their comprehension. Secondly, the schools in general do not have sufficient textbooks, videos, television sets and many other relevant materials. The schools also experience problems of organizing educational trips to cultural sites as such trips tend to be too costly. In this way, the shortage of resources and financial constraints render the effective teaching of Cultural Studies at the lower primary school level in Botswana a nightmare.

### **Recommendations**

In view of the findings, the following recommendations were reached. The first recommendation regards the training of teachers. The study recommends that primary school teachers should be trained in Cultural Studies education to diploma and degree levels at both the Colleges of Education and University. This recommendation emanates from the fact that the content knowledge of Cultural Studies as a subject is very complex and cannot be effectively handled by a teacher who is not well grounded on such issues as critical pedagogy, cultural pluralism and reflective reasoning. Undoubtedly, a trained teacher of Cultural Studies will understand the complex nature of culture as being visible and invisible and how each of the two dimensions of culture influences learner performance and human relationships in society. It also goes without saying that a trained teacher of Cultural Studies will effectively understand the degree to which cultural pluralism has permeated the classroom environment and whether the classroom environment he or she teaches in reflects the acceptance and respect for ethnic differences, divergent behaviours, values and attitudes that support ethnic pluralism.

The study also recommends a thorough review of the Cultural Studies syllabus. As pointed out in the findings, some teachers and students had difficulties articulating the subject matter owing to the difficulties of understanding the language used in each module. In view of this problem, the review can take into consideration language issues to ensure that the problems of ambiguity do not recur. Also, if the language is

simplified the teachers will be able to interpret it and give students accurate information. Simplified language will also guarantee standardization during assessment. In short, if simplified, the quality of delivery of the subject matter by teachers will improve.

In view of the limitations surrounding critical pedagogy, the study also recommends a reconsideration of the methods used in the Cultural Studies classes. It has emerged that although the syllabus emphasizes the use of practical action methods such as cooperative learning, team work, drawing, drama, emulation and class presentations, the teachers have remained yoked to methods that promote regurgitation. In view of this limitation, Cultural Studies classes should emphasize the use of field trips and excursions to cultural sites so that the pupils are afforded the opportunity to experience those cultural aspects. Also, the teaching of Cultural studies can be powerful if the teachers use the community as a cultural resource to further enhance the pupils understanding and appreciation of their cultures and the cultures of people different from themselves. Equally important is the creation of cultural sites and the celebration of cultural activities within the schools to further help learners appreciate the importance of culture in their daily lives. In short, if the methods are varied and examples drawn from a wide spectrum of cultures, students can be in a better position to appreciate the cultural diversities that exist within their societies such as language and gender.

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