

Domesticating Democracy? Civic and Ethical Education Textbooks in Secondary Schools in the Democratization Period of Ethiopia

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In Ethiopia, which consists of diverse ethnic and cultural groups, the maintenance of unity as a country is an issue of serious concern. Civic and Ethical Education (CEE) is considered as an important means to ensure the rule of a fragile-based government, which emerged after a long period of monarchy and dictatorship in the multiethnic society. This paper disentangles the logics of democracy in Ethiopia by analyzing the secondary school CEE textbooks.

The process of developing the new school curriculum and the subject of civic education had been introduced even before the official inauguration of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE). By analyzing the CEE textbooks throughout democratization period, I will shed light on the government's conceptions of democracy and the logic behind them. Such governmental conceptions of citizenship are closely related to the social and political contexts of the time. The paper will demonstrate how the concepts of democracy can be molded to fit to the political needs of the rulers and how, in the process, the textbook is designed as an educational medium. Government intentions are particularly clear in CEE because the Ministry of Education retains full authorship of textbooks in this subject, even when textbooks in other subjects are contracted out to private companies overseas. A series of governmental interventions to reform Civic and Ethical Education have coincided with national elections (2000, 2005, and 2010), which indicates the significance attached by the FDRE government to this subject, likely for its role in maintaining social order and political stability.

The concepts taught in the CEE curriculum are seemingly universal. However, tracing the development of the curriculum and textbooks will provide insights into how democracy, human rights, and other related concepts are modified to fit Ethiopian national perspectives, its political agenda, and social issues. In the Ethiopian CEE textbooks, the concept of democracy is explained in close relationship with the control of power and tolerance. Such a translation of democracy is uniquely rooted in Ethiopian diversity in culture, history, social life, and the memories of past regimes. To develop patriotic citizenship is desirable, while patriotism to ethnies is to be strictly discouraged. An analysis of the Ethiopian CEE curriculum and textbooks will highlight the sensitive balance on which the FDRE government stands, between various international powers, diverse ethnic and political groups, and individuals within and outside of government. The government is struggling to link and contrast the abominable past of autocracy and suppression with a bright future of Ethiopia as a productive, tolerant, and competent member state in global society.

Resilient Traditional Socio-economic Practices and the Politics of Pseudo-modernity in Post-colonial Africa

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Post-colonial African states have suffered from one crisis to another, ranging from chronic poverty, famine, lack of infrastructure, unsustainable indebtedness to political instability. These social ills have afflicted various other societies in the world at one point. However, African states generally seem to have failed to learn from time-tested experiences of their own societies. Rather, African states appear to copy from elsewhere, even then, copy imperfectly, sometimes, wrongly in the guise of modernity. Pseudo-modernism appears to have led African states to provide wrong prescriptions to the problems of their societies. In the search for solutions of social challenges in Africa, society and the state appear to be at variance, misunderstanding each other. While society appears to know the weather patterns, their health seeking solutions and food supply chains, to the contrary, the state in Africa appears inclined to importation of such solutions. The paradox is that the state not only appears alienated but also appears irrelevant.

The failure of the state in Africa and the crisis of modernism originates from the unexplained tendency to neglect local solutions for local problems. This essay will capture the experience of *bulungibwansi* (citizens' voluntary contribution to public works in pre-colonial Buganda kingdom in Uganda). The word *bulungibwansi* itself means "for the good of my nation." This was citizens' concern for their environment, infrastructure, food production, cleanliness, and social concerns. The king, his chiefs and community leaders would mobilise the citizens on particular days for these voluntary activities. All adult persons (male and female) would divide themselves into groups for specific activities. Men worked on roads, bridges, clearing bushes, controlling crop pests, vultures, rodents, and predators. On their part, women also worked in groups to open up land for new crops, planting, weeding, gathering materials for baskets and other household crafts, making pots for home ware, decorating homes, tending flowers, orchards, and herbal medicine plants. In return, the community leader or chief would collect food, prepare a collective meal and drinks to crown the end of the *bulungibwansiday*. Hence, there was festivity, recollection, music, dance and in some cases, settlement of disputes. Errant and uncooperative individuals were judged by the community, asked to repent or to work in isolation on such community projects. These voluntary activities sustained society, increased a sense of community belongingness, enhanced horizontal citizenship as well as gender sensitivity.

Our assertion is that the post-colonial state in Africa has lost the idea of tapping into local knowledge to enable it govern efficaciously. For instance, when the British colonial rulers came to Uganda, they adopted the *bulungibwansi* system they found in Buganda kingdom and spread it to the whole of

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Uganda, albeit with a stint of some force. In other words, the colonial masters distorted the *bulungibwansi* idea. However, even then, the system helped the colonial administration to reduce the cost of infrastructure and ensured hygiene and food security of their subjects. Through *bulungibwansi* system, the colonial masters ensured there were collective food stores in each village where all households contributed dry foods. The food was kept by the Local Government, and contributing homesteads would withdraw food portions in case of famine. A key question to think through is: why has the post-colonial in Africa abandoned time-tested governance practices that have a potential to engineer good governance and social development and promote horizontal citizenship?

UBUNTU: The Sustainable Approach to Youth Empowerment in Select Communities in Uganda and Rwanda

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As we shift from the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) the current debate questions how the development paradigm shift will influence the youth to “generate” development. This paper draws on the Ubuntu paradigm whose central tenets emphasize mutuality and indigenous development to argue that this “indigenous” strategy (read paradigm) is resulting into better livelihoods among the youth in two select villages in East Africa. The paper further examines how sustainable this Ubuntu driven strategy is. Site visits to two Millennium Villages Promise projects (MVP) villages one in post genocide Rwanda’s Mayange region and Uganda’s Ruhira MVP in October, 2016 has demonstrated that the youth through a shared vision, shared workload and minimal supervision are making significant strides in improving their livelihoods. While the MVP projects in Rwanda and Uganda were not necessarily indigenous, their acclaimed “bottom up approach” and inclusive nature seem to be providing a good recipe for rural development. The select projects discussed in this paper are youth engineered with the support of seed money but with evidence of success owing to the youth determination to harness their social capital for their improvement. Through continued hand-holding of each other, the youth are slowly supporting themselves in a way that we could argue is bound to get them out of rural poverty into better livelihoods. The paper will argue that conclusions drawn by many critiques of the MVP (of whom two will be selected in this paper)* that it is a failed experiment is contestable after these site visits. While both authors point to the need to remove structural factors such as government policies that perpetrate exploitation, underdevelopment and rampant poverty to allow for development to take place, the paper acknowledges that these structural factors are deeply entrenched and may in fact be impossible to remove. The paper concludes that, failure to remove structural causes of underdevelopment should not deter youth development. Instead, youths’ social capital should be harnessed by governments to encourage growth and development with a view to partly address inequality.

*The two critiques of the MDG projects referenced here are William Easterly and Walden Bello. While the former disagrees with the nature of “bottom-up” claim made by MDGs as clearly “top-down”, the latter argues that “...simply adding new goals such as peace, security and human rights to the 2015 MDG agenda is not enough...”. See W. Easterly (2009) “How the Millennium Development Goals are Unfair to Africa” *World Development*, Vol 37 (1) : 26-35 and Walden Bello (2015) “Development Assessment Proposed Goal’ in *Development*, Vol 56 (1): 93-102.