THE NORMALISATION OF LEARNER PARTICIPATION IN ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION TEACHING AND LEARNING ACTIVITIES – A BOTSWANA PRIMARY SCHOOL CASE

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ABSTRACT

This paper seeks to illustrate how the concept of participation of learners in environmental education has been normalised in teaching and learning processes in Botswana primary schools. The study is based on one primary school, where the study investigated how learner participation was perceived by both teachers and learners in environmental education, specifically waste management activities. A case study approach was used to generate data from a group of ten learners and three teachers who were purposefully selected. Focus group discussions were used to draw data from the learners and interviews were used to get information from teachers. Content analysis and the abductive mode of inference were used to analyse data in the case study. Findings from the study reveal that participation of learners in waste management activities was largely teacher-directed. Due to culturally and historically formed views of environmental education, the study reveals that teachers have normalised litter pick-ups as learner participation in environmental education activities, as this was their primary waste management concern. While learners on the other hand, identified sanitation management in the school toilets as their primary waste management concern. Teachers had not considered this an environmental education concern. This illustrated the normalisation of learner participation in environmental education processes in teaching and learning in Botswana primary school education.

Keywords: Normalization, Learner Participation, Waste Management, Environmental Education.

1. INTRODUCTION

In Botswana, participation became key in environmental education processes as a result of an ever increasing pressure of environmental challenges in the country. It was first influenced by the country's 1990 National Conservation Strategy (NCS) that identified pollution, largely due to general poor waste management, as one of the main environmental problems and challenges that faced the country (Kgathi & Bolaane, 2001, Ketlogetswe & Mothudi, 2005; Silo, 2017; Ajiboye & Silo, 2009). The strategy paved the way for the development of the 1994 Revised National Policy on Education (RNPE) of Botswana that recommended the introduction of environmental education in schools (Botswana Government, 1994). Later, the urgency to respond to the country's environmental challenges was driven by the country's long-term National Vision for Botswana's action plan which is aligned to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGS) UNESCO, 2017) of ensuring environmental sustainability, in which the government states that the country should take pride in their clean, healthy and unlittered surroundings through participation by all sectors of society to achieve this goal (Botswana Government, 2016). The main goal of environmental education outlined in the strategy was to increase public awareness and understanding of the environment and related issues in order to support sustainable development and respond to the

environmental challenges facing Botswana through public participation (Ketlhoilwe, 2007a, 2007b). Through this emphasis in all these policies, participation became a key focus of developing a citizenry that will take full responsibility for its environment.

2. CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND

Research done on waste management in Botswana has repeatedly called on a comprehensive environmental education programs that should address waste generation at source that is geared towards reduction, recycling, and re-use of solid waste (Kgathi & Bolaane, 2001, Ketlogetswe & Mothudi, 2005; Somarelang Tikologo, 2004).). At best, current practices of waste management in schools in Botswana seem to involve routine activities that are tailored towards meeting these requirements through routine normalized activities (Ketlhoilwe, 2007a, 2007b) which include cleaning classrooms and school grounds, community litter campaigns, as well as collection of cans and bottles for recycling. In all these initiatives, participation by learners is supposed to be central if the country is to have citizenry that can contribute towards solving its environmental challenges by 2016 (Botswana Government/UNDP; 2016).

Waste management is generally a problem prevailing in African educational institutions (Wambeye, et al. (2022; Telu & Telu, 2018), to which the response to the problem are routine activities that are used. These routine activities are all seen as part of a comprehensive environmental education programme that addresses waste management issues in schools. However, Grodzinska-Jurczak (2003) argues that it is important to establish whether these waste management campaigns are supported by theoretical knowledge or whether they only focus on developing specific behaviours, without thorough understanding of their sense and purpose. It has been noted that children who undertake these cleaning activities on a regular basis often show considerably low pro-environmental agency (Jensen, 2002; Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2002), and analysing the question of their motives for their participation in such campaigns seems to be necessary. Ajiboye & Silo, (2009) in a study on Botswana primary schools, indicated that primary school children knew what recycling was, because they did it during class, but either they did not know the importance and purpose of recycling neither did this recycling reflect knowledge that had direct local relevance to the children's learning. However, Grodzinska-Jurczak (2003) contends that for pro-environmental actions (Jensen, 2002) to be undertaken by learners in their everyday life, in addition to knowledge, other components must be present. It is important for such campaigns to be combined with detailed discussion of the topic that covers the activity in their syllabus, providing pupils with the foundation for understanding which should motivate learners to develop such action later in life (Grodzinska-Jurczak, 2003; Glažar, et.al, 1998).

It seems an important task to develop in learners a sense of responsibility for the environment by engaging them in any potential ways that affect their daily lives and their future. Teaching skills essential for successful functioning in society is also necessary so that their optimistic attitudes as they participate in these activities will not degenerate into a sense of helplessness (Tilbury, 1995; Oscarsson, 1996) when they face real problems beyond their formal schooling. To be able to achieve this task and to respond to the socio-ecological challenges that learners face, there is a need for a context based educational approach that looks at the mediating factors in the learners' participation that will remove barriers which disregard their role as potentially full stakeholders in their learning (Barratt Hacking, Barratt & Scott, 2007; Barratt & Barratt Hacking, 2008). Botswana has made attempts to meet this need through education reform policies which are supposed to be

learner centred to develop human capacity that will enable and nurture learners by moving them from being mere actors or participants to learners who are reflexive and co-engaging contributing stakeholders. This is one aspect I focussed on in this study.

The Revised National Policy on Education (Botswana Government, 1994) was the blueprint document that drove educational reforms and was the first policy to recommend infusion of Environmental Education into existing subjects in the school curriculum. This policy was developed against the background that there had been a considerable change in the socio-economic and socio-ecological context in the nation of Botswana. The policy was designed to meet the challenge of preparing learners for new socio-economic and ecological challenges (UNESCO, 2000; Tabulawa, 2009). Therefore it was necessary to develop an education which would be realigned with the country's goals and aspirations, and to refocus it to new priorities which included the socio-ecological challenges children faced. According to Tabulawa (2009), the policy was meant to provide a framework for curriculum reforms that would produce what he terms a 'self-programmable learner' (p. 90). The self-programmable learner, he submits is

> a new kind of learner, worker or citizen. The education system is expected to develop in learners attributes such as creativity, versatility, innovativeness, critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and a positive disposition towards teamwork – attributes deemed essential in today's changed work environment (p. 87).

Such a learner should possess qualities of communication skills, interpersonal skills, work activity skills, creativity, innovativeness and flexibility in order to respond to the challenges of the new socio-economic and socio-ecological order (ibid.). Tabulawa (2003) has commented on the gap between policy and practice: the learner-centred goals of learner-centred education as envisaged in the educational philosophy are proving far harder to achieve in practice than in policy. He comments that policy intentions which have simply not been matched by implementation are related to "the ascendancy of neo-liberalism as a development paradigm in the 1980s and the 1990s elevated political democratisation as a prerequisite for economic development" (ibid.). This he argues became the driver for learner-centred pedagogy. He argues that this is because pedagogy is simply "an ideological outlook, a worldview intended to develop a preferred kind of society and people representing a process of westernisation disguised as quality and effective teaching" (2003, p. 7). As he sees it, this neoliberal discourse could have had more influence on the reform agenda of the RNPE than the actual socio-ecological needs of the nation. This is especially against the backdrop of the RNPE policy reform agenda. This is the aspect that this research sought to examine by looking at how environmental education practices are mediated in schools.

NOMARLIZATION AS A CONCEPT IN ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

Normalization is defined by Foucault, (1991) as a process of psychological dominance imposed by an authority's penal code in modern societies. The goal is to influence human groups; to control them socially, mentally and physically to achieve a state of behavioural discipline, where people have one pattern of thought, behaviour and responses (Foucault, 1991). Ketlhoilwe (2007a) explored power relations within interpretation and implementation of infusion of environmental education as recommended by the policy, which was meant to be learner-centred. He focussed

more deeply on influences in historical context and on the broader power effects of the policy, and found that learner-centred education expects learners to become creative, independent thinkers, and problem-solvers in pedagogical practices. The role of the teachers is to use the syllabus to guide pedagogy. The author argues that the teacher is given the latitude to operate innovatively with the learner-centred approach. The teacher should not be seen as an authoritarian dispenser of knowledge.

Ketlhoilwe (2007a) found that the dominant discourses in some global environmental education documents had influenced the national policy documents to be all declarative "claiming indisputable truths about discipline knowledge and processes. The documents are official, authoritarian and informative inviting collaboration and compliance to ensure accomplishment of programme goals" (p. 226). He however noted that the RNPE infusion policy's recommendations and emerging curricula documents in Botswana accommodated old content and orientations (representing older discourses with an environmental preservation and management focus) while also introducing new concepts and processes such as sustainability and learner-centred education (which draw from new discourses of sustainable education to address emerging socio-ecological issues). He observed that;

> The wording of the aims generally constitute teachers as capable of assisting individual learners to regulate themselves through the development of desired characteristics and behaviors. This form of governmentality implies that through these subjects learners would be aware, knowledgeable, understand and be able to problematize their relationship with the environment, and respond with applied ethics, which imply the ability to monitor and regulate various aspects of their behaviour through disciplinary power (p. 226).

The policy, in its formulation, went through multiple discourse networks which operate as nodes or cites of power in which this power is exercised through administrative procedures, rules and regulations (Foucault, 1991). Though the policy focus now seems to have moved from the early ecological and issue resolution goals of environmental education to sustainable development discourses (UNESCO, 2017), implementation revealed that normalising strategies were applied by teachers in their policy interpretations (Ketlhoilwe, 2007a). Drawing from Foucault (1979), Ketlhoilwe (2007b) noted further that within each site of policy formulation, implementation and interpretation, a microanalysis of power indicated that there was disciplinary power exercised by individuals which subsequently framed the everyday lives of learners "placing under surveillance their everyday behaviour, identity, their activities and gestures" (p. 91). These behaviours, identities, gestures and the learners' activities become norms. These norms are inscribed through attendant forms of knowledge and governmental technologies as determined by the dominant discourses that influenced the policy as they become embedded in concrete practices and how teachers govern themselves in relation to environmental education policy implementation in schools. Hence in these Botswana schools, normalization became the procedures and processes through which these norms were brought into play and informed the practices that it sought to regulate, that is, how the policy was represented and implemented. It is the diverse programs, procedures, and techniques by which schools took these norms "as the reference for measuring and perhaps problematizing the adequacy, correctness or desirability of the ways they are doing things" (Triantafillou, 2004, p. 496). It is against this perspectives that this study sought to

investigate how learner participation in environmental education activities is conceived by both teachers and learners.

3. METHODOLOGY

A singular case study approach was used in this study. The study focussed on a case analysis of one primary school across in Botswana. Case studies are studies of singularities or bounded systems which are in essence an enquiry of real-life context (Yin, 2017). The name of the school has been concealed for ethical reasons arising from some sensitive issues raised by learners in the research. Merriam (2001) argues that case study research has no specific data collection methods; hence all methods of data collection can be used. Focus group interviews were used because the researcher believes that "children are likely to feel most comfortable when they are in a familiar environment" (Hennessy & Heary, 2006, p. 236). They were complemented by semi-structured **i**nterviews with teachers.

4. DATA ANALYSIS

The analysis relied largely on content and abductive approaches to analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Content analysis is an approach that makes valid inferences from data by taking texts and analyses, reducing and interrogating them into summary form through the use of both pre-existing categories and emergent themes (Cohen et al., 2018). The meanings attached to the inferences may emerge from "specific contexts, discourses, and purposes, and, hence the meanings have to be drawn in context (ibid). The abductive approach to analysis interprets and re-contextualizes data within pre-determined or pre-existing conceptual frameworks in order to understand the data in a new way by observing and interpreting within the new context (Miles & Huberman, 1994). It allows themes to emerge from data through contextualising the data in context. Like inductive analysis, meanings are located within contexts and discourses within the purpose of the research (ibid.). Data analysis initially started with content analysis (Cohen et al., 2018) which was used to analyse focus group interviews and interview data.

5. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

The study revealed that the main purpose of the school environmental education agenda regarding waste management was to maintain a clean school. To achieve this purpose the school activities included litter pick-ups, classroom cleaning, weeding of the school grounds and toilet cleaning. The school cleaners generally kept the school clean by regularly sweeping offices, classrooms and toilets. They also swept and weeded grass in the surroundings, particularly around classrooms and the office block. The children were mainly involved in litter pick-ups and senior learners sometimes cleaned their own classrooms. Litter was managed through a rota where different classes were allocated days for picking up litter. For classroom cleaning each class teacher designed a class sweeping rota. But the rota was not regularly adhered to as some teachers forgot to take their learners for their litter duty or did not supervise the litter pick-ups or cleaning. This appeared to be linked to the fact that the cleaners were largely responsible for the general cleanliness of the school. There seemed to be resistance from some teachers to involve children in the cleaning and litter activities as evidenced in the next quote from the teachers.

Learners on litter pick-ups

> L1: Teachers don't remind us to pick up litter
> L2: Yes! They are supposed to remind us because we forget (BFL1.1).

Teacher 1 on litter pick-ups

T1: The committee. It's the responsibility of the committee. And they should also inspect that papers have been picked. Usually we hear Mrs X complaining at assembly that "You Std 7s, you have not picked you're your litter because this morning I went around and I found that you haven't picked up behind the special education block. At times it's the fault of teachers who also forget their duties. While we know cleaning is the duty of cleaners, children also have to do something. But I think some teachers feel children should not do it. So we have to deal with both teachers and children

The general motivation and interest of learners towards the school's waste management activities was very low. The bulk of the cleaning duties was done by cleaners. While the teachers saw litter as the main challenge for maintaining a clean school, learners felt the main issues of concern were dirty toilets which had no facilities for the girls' sanitary needs and leaking taps. Some learners used the bushes around the school for their sanitary needs. This different focus is illustrated in the following extracts from the teachers. One of the teachers regarded the children's use of outside areas for their sanitary needs as insubordination.

Teacher 2 and 3 on litter as a focus for waste management

T2: Like I said we came up with this project after discussing it at length and said with this problem of litter should do something as committee for children to learn that it is not good to live in surroundings and that when we said let us make a cleaning rota and this cleaning rota divides classes and each class having a day allocated to them for picking litter and how they do it as well as cleaning the portion allocated to them, so that every child should participate. No child is left out. The cleaning rota, I draw it and give it to them and I display it in the office

T3: Firstly, I would say that after establishing that there is a lot of litter in the school we then established this environmental health club. We made a litter picking rota and then each day there will be picking of litter...
But we also have naughty children here Ma Silo. They mess up their toilets and the next thing they go outside and want to mess up the environment too

Learners on dirty toilets as their concern

L2: We are not living in a healthy environment in the school.
R:You are not living in a healthy environment in the school. What is not healthy about your environment?
L2:The toilets. Because our classes are near the toilets and we breathe the dirty air from the toilets.
R: What's wrong with the toilets?
L1: The toilets? They are dirty… the children urinate everywhere. So people end up not using them but outside in the grass.
L6: Especially these young ones. And there are snakes in that grass.
R: Why don't they use toilets?

L4: Because they are not well cleaned and they are not cleaned everyday and then they urinate wherever they want and even outside in the grass.
L1: The ladies who clean do not clean them because they are afraid that the toilets are dirty. That's why they don't clean them

Upon given the opportunity to come up with their self-initiated and directed actions to respond to waste in the school, learners developed a number of solutions to the litter problems some of which were successful while others met with a number of barriers. In spite of the fact that litter management did not seem to be the learners' main object of concern in the school nor was it their top priority thematic problem, it became a significant focus for learners' direct actions. It was ironic that learners still prioritised litter picking in their activities in spite of the fact that in their theme selection it was not a priority. They, for example, mobilised a litter pick-up exercise themselves, dug an extra litter pit and even appointed what they called Environmental Education monitors in each class to supervise their own classes for cleanliness. On set days the participants and some volunteer senior learners oversaw the general cleaning of the school by classes according to the rota they had designed and which was supervised by EE monitors in each class. They even took responsibility for cleaning areas outside of the school in the village. For example, they requested garbage bags from the clinic for picking up litter from the nearby bus stop. What is important however is that they had re-contextualised the litter exercise to make it more relevant to their context and meaningful in their participation. They still sought to achieve a common object of a 'clean school' in which litter pick-ups had become a normalised activity in the school's previous environmental education pedagogical discourses. Related to this aspect Jensen and Schnack (2006) in their analysis of the meaning of action competence remind us that

> A school does not become 'green' by conserving energy, collecting batteries or sorting waste. The crucial factor must be what the students learn from participating in such activities, or from deciding something else (Jensen and Schnack, p. 473).

What emerges from this statement is that, though the focus was still litter, and in spite of the fact that it wasn't a major issue in the school, this time it was done according to the learners' terms and rules within re-allocated roles and they felt directly responsible and accountable.

While it was important that learners were involved in ensuring that their school environment is clean, key to their involvement should have been what they were learning in these activities. It is not necessarily the task of learners to improve the cleanliness of the school but the educational value that comes out of these activities that should make "future citizens capable of acting on a societal as well as a personal level" (Jensen & Schnack, 2006, p. 472). A school which genuinely involves its learners in this way in its waste management activities is more likely to respond adequately to future challenges than if it had a solution imposed upon them (Jensen & Schnack, 2006).

6. DISCUSSION

From this study, it was revealed that teachers tended to view waste management in a very limited and narrow way. Most waste management activities were simply clean-up tasks such as picking up litter and cleaning the classroom. There is little connection made between how these tasks improve the waste problems at these schools, or why they are being undertaken in the first place. In some cases children consequently saw these tasks as hard labour, and not as a learning activity. This use of children in this way has its foundations in a culture where children must be submissive to their elders and where it is deemed unnecessary to explain one's motives to children. This is part of a broader problem too, where environmental education processes are reduced to involving children in technical activities such as clean-ups, without the necessary learning support to understand *why* such activities are worth undertaking (Jensen & Schnack. 2006). In this way, children may have been instrumentalised in these activities and used to promote an agenda which they do not fully understand or support. Even though the curriculum has promoted the importance and relevance of participation of learners by the infusion of environmental education to respond to the country's needs (Botswana Government, 1994), teachers have come to see it as part of the education's provision of theoretical skills which do not necessarily have any relation to the reality around them (Jensen & Schnack. 2006; Silo, 2017; Ketlhoilwe, 2007).

By prescribing rules and ascribing roles to learners in these activities, it is clear that the focus and resultant outcome is learner behaviour modification and clean schools here and now. This is opposed to developing critical, reflective participation through which learners could develop into adults that will cope with current socio-ecological issues like waste pollution, and future environmental problems (Jensen, 2004; Mogensen & Schnack, 2010; Simovska, 2008). This approach must be seen in connection with whether it is developing learners' will and ability to be involved in waste management issues in a democratic way, by forming their own criteria for decision making and action choices.

7. CHALLENGING THE EMPHASIS ON NORMALISED APPROACHES TO PARTICIPATION

One feature that emerged from the findings is the persistent and heightened contemporary concern with technical and physical aspects of participation; in this case this could be seen in the teachers' emphasis on clean schools and the mis-conceptions of learner participation in environmental education, a view that even children held to some extent. By mediating learner participation through prescribing rules and ascribing roles to learners in these activities, it was clear that the focus and resultant outcome was a new governmentality (Faucult, 1991). This emerged through the normalisation of the modification of learner behaviour and clean schools in the present as opposed to developing critical, reflective participation through which learners could develop into adults that will cope with future environmental problems (Breiting & Mogensen, 1999). This became an approach that led to action-paralysis around environmental issues as it derived from the status that scientific viewpoints had been given in the school cultures and ways of thought (Jensen, 2004, p. 406).

Assessment of this approach was seen in connection with whether it had developed learners' will and ability to be involved in waste management issues in a democratic way,

by forming their own criteria for decision making and choice action. Action must in this sense be seen in a future perspective, where direction is not given beforehand (Breiting & Mogensen, 1999, p. 351).

Ketlhoilwe (2007a; 2007b), in his findings from a study on construction and interpretation of the RNPE environmental education infusion policy in Botswana, corroborates the findings of this study and Kgathi and Bolaane (2001) and Silo's (2017) observations of the schools' apparent focus on environmental management approaches to deal with waste management. He argues that there is a fundamental flaw with the policy of infusion of environmental education in the way it is currently being used in schools. His research reveals that there has been a normalization of environmental education into existing school culture through cleaning and sometimes recycling activities by learners based on instructions of teachers to keep the school environment clean, and through introduction of an association between 'clean schools' and environmental education. Normalization according to Ketlhoilwe (2007a) includes 'invoking, requiring, setting, or conforming to a standard – defining the normal' (p.93). Darier (1999, p. 221) defines 'normalisation' as "the process by which individuals are induced to internalize a given set of norms, world-view and expected conduct".

This state of normalisation, according to Ketlhoilwe, arises from the way global, regional and national environmental dominant discourses, have produced and influenced teachers' interpretations of what learner-centeredness in environmental education is or ought to be. Ketlhoilwe (2007a) argued that, like most countries around the world, Botswana has been influenced by global and regional responses to environmental crises to govern unsustainable actions. Increased environmental degradation and education has been used "as an instrument to address concerns and promote care for the environment and ultimately to provide a tool for enhanced governance in response to socio-ecological concerns and unsustainable development patterns" (p. 309), a process in which he, drawing on Foucault (1979), describes as governmentality (Foucault, 1991). Ketlhoilwe, (2007a) found that a factor that led to the normalisation of environmental education, was that the guideline documents were written in an imperative and directive style which does not provide adequate or consistent guidance to teachers "as to what should be done in implementing environmental education" (p. 340), resulting in this (mis)intepretation. He argues that this interpretation by teachers has impacted on the epistemological and pedagogical discourses, as teachers then deployed some normalization strategies to continue exercising their disciplinary power through teaching and equating environmental education and environmental management activities through school cleaning activities emphasising conservation-protection discourses in environmental education over "the sustainability discourse which is rapidly becoming a dominant discourse shaping the field" (p. 281). This influenced and impacted on teachers' practices and actions in schools, and in the classroom in particular, as this

> hybrid discourse consisting of conservation/preservation discourse and sustainable use discourse resulted, which had power over teachers who, through normalizing strategies and other strategies of self-governance, translated this discourse into environmental management

and Science discourses. This created new technologies of power in schools, influencing teachers and learners' knowledge construction and behaviours (p. 316).

However, Ketlhoilwe found that in spite of this, teachers were also reflexive of these normalising strategies and were able to identify the challenges and constraints that confront them as they implemented these strategies (Ketlhoilwe, 2007b, p. 183). Teachers identified various structural and contextual challenges which included limited training, inadequate material resources, funding and transport for outdoor learning, as well as lack of or inadequate support from supervisors and colleagues' attitudes, all of which constrained their teaching practices and capacity to implement the policy objectives (ibid.). Through normalization teachers internalized norms and rules that ensured consistency in their behaviour as a result of local power-knowledge relationships in the policy development and implementation that influenced their interpretations of the policy and some contextual constraints. This resulted in them choosing "to do something that is related to the environment, most notably environmental management activities" in the school (Ketlhoilwe, 2007b). Ketlhoilwe specifically identified waste management activities in schools such as involvement of learners in structured cleaning of schools as a prominent normalizing strategy which was equated with environmental education. He noted that teachers "mentioned school *cleaning* or *cleanliness* as one of the activities showing that environmental education is given some status in their schools" (p. 174).

> The status of environmental education is also measured by schedules of cleaning and litter collection activities. These activities are common across all the research sites and are allocated a particular day during the week, usually Wednesday afternoons. They include everyday sweeping, litter collection… and collection of other waste materials for recycling (p.175).

These cleaning activities were all done under the supervision of the teachers who exercised their power to regulate learners and their activities. Normalization became **"**lived through every day practices that were perceived as self-evident and natural" (Lorey, 2009, p. 193). Additionally, as Lorey sees it, "the normal was naturalized with the effect of actuality of authenticity" (ibid.). This normalizing self-governing was based on an imagined coherence, uniformity and wholeness, which can be traced back to the construction of learner-centred pedagogy in the interpretation and representation of the policy as observed by Ketlhoilwe (2007a).

Related to Ketlhoilwe (2007a)'s observation, Ajiboye & Silo, (2009) also conducted an intervention study in ten primary schools in Botswana in which School Civic Clubs were set up to improve children's environmental knowledge, attitudes and practices. (The underlying assumption in using this informal approach was based on the premise that the school timetable was already overcrowded and that the infusion approach as was currently adopted in the country had not produced the desired results. Hence, the Civic Clubs were introduced into the Primary schools. Using this informal approach, the children were given requisite training in civic and environmental issues, and they engaged in various activities for a period of six weeks. The clubs' activities included among others clean-up campaigns and recycling projects.

The basic premise of the Civic Clubs is that the citizenship consciousness attained will hopefully equip members with the knowledge and skills needed to engage them as active environmental citizens and that this will be transmitted through ripple effect to others in the school, in homes, the neighbourhood and finally across the community. Through the involvement of club members, awareness campaigns on citizenship and environmental issues will hopefully be used as an effective mode in bringing change and improvement in their own environment and communities now and in the future (p. 108).

The findings revealed that pupils who were members of the clubs demonstrated improved knowledge and skills and a more positive attitude towards most of the salient environmental issues discussed than non-club members in the project after intervention (ibid.). Some researchers have argued that it is unrealistic to expect children to suddenly become responsible citizens in their communities by engaging them in activities such as the ones they undertook in these clubs (cleaning campaigns, recycling practices etc.) without prior exposure to the appropriate skills and responsibilities which expand their capacities or foster action competence (Jensen & Schnack, 2006). These researchers see shared decision making in issues that affect children's lives as an important dimension of meaningful or genuine participation which is also seen to be their democratic right. This was another aspect that motivated me to undertake this study and it was what I focussed on in this research project.

8. CONCLUSION

This study revealed that educational approaches which go beyond the effect-level to include causes and actions, as Jensen suggests, need to be used. While physical involvement was a necessary condition for learning amongst children, and was highly desirable for them in the management of waste practices in the schools, it is not sufficient. The more important aspect is the idea that learner activities should engage and develop learners' minds, social aspects, as well as their lived concerns and problems that they encounter in their schools and community at large. Not all practical experiences are necessarily educative and beneficial (Breiting & Mogensen, 1999). For these experiences to be beneficial, learners as participants need to be allowed to think as they act and this can be realised if they are given the opportunity, space and capacity to do so, as shown in this study. Critical questions, resources for action and knowledge are important along with dialogue (Silo, 2017). While hands-on activities are important for children to develop life skills, they must also be provided with something to think about parallel to their physical experiences. The children should have a chance to incorporate what they are doing into a larger social picture instead of placing the focus on completing the task. This appears to them to be just one more of the requirements of school in which they don't seem to see the purpose of their participation in the activity as revealed in this study. Much as these hands-on and practical activities might enhance their practical skills, this is not likely to be beneficial if there is no opportunity for them to alter the task to fit the meaning-making and purpose to their needs (Jensen, & Schnack, 2006; Breiting & Mogensen, 1999). Research that sheds light on children's participation in such processes is needed, particularly in Botswana context where situations are engaging within developing democracies.

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