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INTEGRATIVE CURRICULUM APPROACHES

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Abstract: The purpose of this collaborative social research also called action research action was to explore the perception of college professors from more than a dozen universities from different regions of post-conflict Somalia, their perception and openly teaching international electoral policy and practice (EPP), in the post-conflict Somalia's classroom or in the public sphere. In addition, this action research study sought to develop understanding, meaning and root-cause analysis process in human performance in uncontrolled variations as the university lecturers displayed reluctance of teaching democracy related content for fear of public backlash due to the ideological divide. Methodologically, the author utilized Emerson, Fretz & Shaw (1995) observation protocol to gather data for analysis to reveal the perception of the 19 educators from 19 universities, and most importantly, on making informed decision on what the next step would be. The setting where the research took place was a training seminar on international electoral policy and practice (EPP), designed to teach the university lecturers from post-conflict Somalia. How the Somali educators can overcome the methodological, cultural and religious challenges when incorporating democracy related materials into the curricula in Somalia to boost the educational campaign on elections in Somalia which did not go to polls to freely elect a leader since 1967 elections. The author proposed The Culturally Competent Integrative Curriculum Approach to overcome the methodological dilemma.

Keywords: Integrative curriculum approaches, post-conflict Somalia, ideology and curriculum, culturally competent integrative curriculum approaches.

I. INTRODUCTION

Besides educator perception, the central question addressed by this collaborative social research was; what potentials pedagogical approaches are available to teach alien content? Additionally, this article examined the perception of 19 university professors on teaching electoral policy and practice (EPP) as mechanism of representative democracy. Thus, the ultimate goal of the course aim was that university lecturers will disseminate what they learned in the seminar post-conflict Somalia which did not have elections since 1967. However, there was reluctance by the lecturers due to fear of public retribution due to the current public ideological divide. The author reviewed a treasure trove of literature available on the topic to enhance the analysis seeking understanding of

meaning and actions to identify pedagogical strategies to integrate unfamiliar concepts such as democracy and international electoral policy and practice (EPP) into the curriculum in post-conflict Somalia without being accused of the heinous offence of promoting Western values.

The professors were then asked to find ways to incorporate what they learned in the seminar in their own classes and to identify actions that can lead to a solution in Somalia's electoral dilemma. Thus, this inquiry of promoting alien content similar to democracy in the Somali schools and in the public sphere is informed by the theoretical ideas about conflict as a prerequisite for democracy (Schell-Faucon, S. 2019).

THE ISSUE

The seminar was conducted by Creative Partners International and it was sponsored and funded by USAID as part of the capacity building efforts to prepare post-conflict Somalia for a one-person- one-vote (OPOV) electoral process to systematically undo the unfair and backward 4.5 power sharing discriminatory model currently employed in Somalia which further divided the nation. However, the seminar drew 19 professors representing 19 different higher education institutions in Somalia. The objective of the seminar sponsored by the international community was to train the Somali educators on electoral policy and practice as post-conflict Somalia prepares for the employment of an arcane governance and electoral process called one-man-one-vote after three decades of costly civil war.

The moral dilemma discovered that first day of the seminar was; when Professor Jeffrey Fischer, the distinguished professor of International Electoral Policy and Practice at highly esteemed academic institutions such as Princeton University in New Jersey, USA, and George Mason University who is also the former UN envoy in the 2014 elections in Afghanistan. In a nicely decorated five start hotel conference room, he asked the trainee professors if they had any action plans to pass on and teach what they have learned in this seminar to their students and communities which was the ultimate program objective set by donor. As responses poured in, the level of reluctance displayed by the professors was an unexpected and overwhelming. It was evident in the responses that there was a methodological dilemma that necessitated the employment of the power of pedagogical techniques to teach the course.

After the author dived into a treasure trove of literature on pedagogical strategies and curriculum approaches in education, rapidly, the qualitative pattern analysis revealed



that there was a methodological gap related to how professors can incorporate extra-terrestrial or alien material into their curricula by using integrative curriculum approaches such as “The Culturally Responsive Integrative Curriculum Approach (Aden, A. S. 2019).” Thus, the integrative curriculum approaches was recommended by the author for adoption by the educators.

Majority of the professors were obviously reluctant to teach electoral practices or democratic principles in their universities, mainly, due to the ideological war in Somalia. Therefore, this proposed integrative curriculum approach drawn from the relevant body of knowledge is proposed by the author for culturally competent instructional design purposes.

The root cause of the fear was the existence of ideological tendencies that some locals may accuse them of teaching democracy, Western culture and values in their universities. Analytically, the study’s dependent variable was determined by a yes or no response to the two following central research questions addressed in this collaborative social research;

- (1) In your tenure, have you felt comfortable to incorporate content designed to promote toward co-existence and democratic principals in your courses?
- (2) Are you aware of any potential pedagogical approaches available to teach alien or sensitive content in your courses?

After years of debate on election processes, Somalia has chosen the Proportional Representation electoral model used by many other countries around the world to replace the medieval 4.5 model which was termed as discriminatory toward many minorities groups.

As a result of this magnificent shift in policy, Somalia needs effective and efficient educational campaign on how to effectively manage elections since Somalis did not go to the polls freely since 1967 to elect a leader, and to educate the public effectively we need to teach civic duties, not only to the politicians and civil society but to teach civic duties in our schools at an early age.

II. BACKGROUND

This collaborative social research sought pedagogical strategies to overcome the methodological, cultural and religious challenges when incorporating democracy related materials into the curricula in post-conflict Somalia to boost the educational campaign on electoral practices in post-conflict Somalia which did not go to polls to freely elect a leader since 1967 elections.

Somalia was embroiled in protracted civil war for almost three long and painful decades, destroying not only it’s institutions but as a result, missing out on the practice of universal suffrage and the global development in the past three decades. Recently, Somalia’s Lower House passed an election law in which they introduced proportional representation (PR) voting system for 2020/21 elections for parliamentarians and President to replace the medieval 4.5 system, a system which

further divided the country and disenfranchised many of its citizens particularly minorities and women.

The proportional model chosen by Somalia has been proven as an effective election tool in post-conflict countries where there is a social divide due to prolonged civil war over resources. The model will also help Somalia’s political process to shift from clan-based 4.5 to possibly full democratic electoral process with full citizen participation, where folks support each other and work together on political party basis rather than clan affiliation. Sadly, due to political quagmire, and unnecessary manmade delays, the one-person-one-vote is held as a prisoner against the will of the public.

Ideology and Curriculum

Educators in post-conflict societies need to be thoughtful in teaching sensitive contents such as teaching International Electoral Policy and Practice (EPP) which proved to be a sensitive content in post-conflict Somalia’s context. As a result, this legitimizes the lecturer reluctance or fear as it is based on idea that schools are becoming a battlefield, in a time of competing worldviews or ideologies in post-conflict Somalia (Apple, M. 1979).

Michael Apple one of the leading scholars in the topic of curriculum and ideology in his book “Curriculum and Ideology” published in 1979, Apple connects the structures of power, the content and the content delivery (Apple, M. 1979). Decades before Apple’s groundbreaking book, Kelly, 1925 cited by Apple, M. 1979 identified major influences on the curriculum. Kelly, 1925 posited “Curriculum can be seen as the battlefield of many competing influences and ideologies” (P.149).

Methodologically, for Somali educators to discover effective pedagogical strategies and integrative approaches, we ought to explore the existing methodologies, approaches and contemporary pedagogical approaches. Therefore, basically researching the existing educational content delivery approaches that will allow Somali educators to effectively integrate democratic themes such as voting, civic duties, citizenship, individual freedoms etc; integrative approaches facilitate the integration of socially foreign and arcane content into the Somali curricula rather than using partisan approaches. (Schell-Faucon, 2019).

What Experts Tell US

Empirically, in relation to integrative approach, both democracy and conflict resolution skills can be taught in a variety of ways as suggested by (Schell-Faucon, S. 2019); “Intercultural, feminist and historical/political education; community work and trauma work – have developed concepts of constructive conflict management. They all aim to foster the knowledge, practical skills and attitudes that empower young people to exercise critical judgment and participate with confidence in society (Schell- Faucon, S. 2019).” Thus, both peace education and democracy are tricky values, to be embedded into a curriculum. In comparison, peace



education may prove to be easier content to openly promote especially in a Muslim country than democracy and democratic values. Therefore, the specific challenge for educators is when faced with specific challenges we need to develop a more reflective and responsive approach to the educational environment with cultural competence in mind (Murrell, P.).

From methodological perspective, democracy may fit well in a hidden curriculum as it may be viewed as a Western value and a foreign prescription if openly promoted in a Somali curriculum for the time being. Hence, Faucon, S. (2019), claimed that peace education is incompatible with cultural dominance and prescription. Although the practice of drawing on local cultural resources in the management of conflicts and violent memories is gaining acceptance, cultural traditions are arbitrary historical constructs and highly inconsistent. Post-colonial countries also tend to have hybrid cultures (Dawes & Honwana 1997). In addition to that, democracy continues to be a controversial topic to teach in schools in Muslim countries such as Somalia. This controversial nature of democracy may be a legitimate cause for teachers to be reluctant to make efforts to teach democratic principles in schools.

However, the success of efforts to make curricula more inclusive and diverse depends to a large degree on faculty willingness to incorporate these materials into the curricula and integration of democracy into the curricula is not an exception. The curriculum control is fully in the hands of faculty. Furthermore, various validated research findings suggest, not only the faculty, but the backlash is likely expected to come mainly from the students, teachers, parents and religious groups in terms of teaching democracy in Somali classes (Faucon, S. 2019; Aden, A. S. 2017).

In terms of the role of faculty's worldviews or philosophical positions on the promotion of social justice and democratic citizenship, in this study of a faculty of institutions in post-conflict Somalia found that the majority of faculty endorsed teaching International Electoral Policy and Practice (EPP), seeing it as helping students achieve the goals of a college education and civic duties, but the majority of this group also

overwhelmingly reported making no changes in their classroom practices.

Integrative Curriculum Approaches

Historically, educators such as John Dewey, Howard Gardener, and Benjamin Bloom have all emphasized the value of contextual learning, beginning with these meaningful associations, an integrated curriculum requires teachers and curriculum makers to ask pupils what their concerns are and use these themes to identify subjects and pedagogical strategies to answer these concerns (Beane, 1997). In a wide ranging review of 14 case studies where educational change processes have emphasized the promotion of social justice and democratic citizenship, Wrigley, Lingard, and Thomson (2012, p.197) emphasized, in the instructional delivery, the crucial importance of focusing on concerns rather than simply students' interests to enhance learning and community engagement.

The Culturally Responsive Integrative Curriculum Approach

There are two types of integrative curriculum approaches that are applicable to the integration of democracy-related material into the post-conflict Somali curricula; trans-disciplinary integration approach and project-based approach. However, the author modified the existing curriculum approaches to meet a higher standard of cultural competency and respect for our culture and our religion. Further, suggesting that Somali educators employ "The Culturally Responsive Integrative Curriculum Approach (Aden, A. S.2019). As a result, the proposed integrative curriculum with culturally competent strand will approach will allow the instructors to systematically integrate material into the curricula without social backlash (Aden, S. 2019).

On a further note, this modified integrative curriculum approach involves omission of controversial topics in democracy and focusing on concepts that are useful to the recovery process in post-conflict Somalia's national electoral policy and practice.

Culturally Responsive Integrative Curriculum Approach

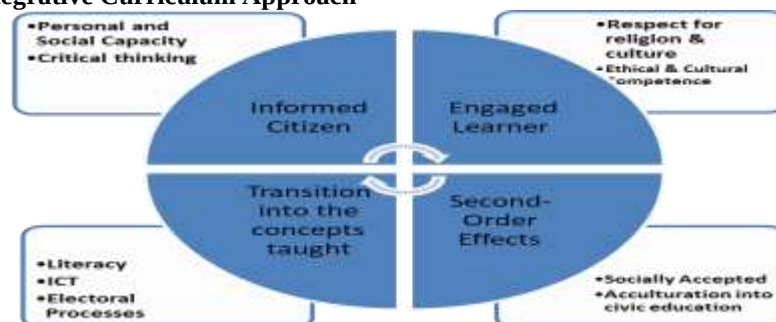


FIGURE 1: (ADEN, S. A. 2021).



Theoretical studies have identified various pedagogical approaches that educators in crisis and conflict regions can try to apply to local conditions. Nevertheless, little is known about the impact of these initiatives. A comprehensive and systematic analysis is required to identify the optimal conditions for the various methodologies, as well as their likely outcomes (Schell- Faucon, S. 2019).

Transdisciplinary Integration Approach

In the trans-disciplinary approach to integration, teachers organize curriculum around student questions and concerns. Students develop life skills as they apply interdisciplinary and disciplinary skills in a real-life context. Furthermore, two routes lead to trans-disciplinary integration: project-based learning and negotiating the curriculum as the revealed pedagogical strategy for adoption for integration of alien contents into a curriculum.

Project-Based Learning

In project-based learning, students tackle a local problem. Some schools call this problem-based learning or place-based learning. This approach can be employed by educators in facilitating the learning experience for an alien material during the instructional delivery process and to defuse difficult social discussions, and promote critical thinking.

However, John Dewey, the late great American educational theorist and philosopher was known to be one of the early proponents of Project-Based learning, thus, promoted project-based learning as learning by doing.

Philosophically, Dewey pointed out that "Education is preparation for life, education is life itself". Dewey was opposed to teachers being transmitters and students silenced recipients. Rather, Project-based learning (PBL), which helps students make a sense of the social problem and learn how to solve or discuss real world problems rather than learning from past textbooks.

Furthermore, other great early scholars; Aristotle and Confucius who John Dewey espoused many of their educational philosophies were also proponents of learning by doing, whereas, Socrates modeled the concept of Project-Based Learning as learning through questioning, critical thinking and inquiry. The names of these heavy weight scholars sounds arcane and ancient but these scholars own some of most brilliant educational theories, and their theories are relevant more than ever in the 21st Century including project- based learning widely utilized in modern classrooms globally.

The Project-Based Approach to Teaching and Learning

From instructional and curriculum design perspective, according to Chard (2016), planning project-based curriculum involves three steps:

- Teachers and students select a topic of study based on student interests, curriculum standards, and local resources.

- The teacher finds out what the students already know and helps them generate questions to explore, thus, the teachers also provides resources for students and opportunities to work in the field.
- Activities include that students share their work with others in a culminating activity. Students openly discuss and display the results of their exploration (Chard, S. 2016).

However, Projects usually are interactively revealed through questions as students think critically about real-life issues. "Projects emerge from the questions children raise and develop according to their particular interests (Para. 2).

III. METHODOLOGY

In addition to educator perceptions, this action research study sought to develop understanding, meaning and root cause analysis in human performance in uncontrolled variations. The author reviewed a treasure trove of literature available on the topic to enhance the analysis seeking understanding of meaning and actions to identify pedagogical strategies. The author utilized (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 1995) observation protocol to gather data for analysis to reveal the perception of the 19 educators from 19 universities, and most importantly, on making informed decision on what the next step would be. During the participant observations, the author jotted field notes accurately and consistently to capture the primary data accurately (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 1995). Later, after careful transcription, the researcher organized, and coded the data employing Atlas.ti (Data Management Software) in order to identify the patterns in the statements (Creswell, 2014).

Furthermore, this action research employed qualitative data collection tools and qualitative data analysis approaches to expose participant perception and in addition pave the way for informed actions that can lead to a solution (Creswell, 2018). Action research can facilitate design of an integrative approach that can be employed by the Somali educators to teach international electoral policy and practice (EPP) course without risking the heinous accusation of promoting Western values.

Nevertheless, experts in various empirical validated studies of posited that; if addressed strategically, education could act as a catalyst for an effective and sustainable post-war recovery. Further suggesting that, education can take a crucial role in peace-building, state-building, and of course, securitization and overall recovery of post-conflict countries. (Milton, S. & Barakat, S. 2016; Lee, C. et al, 1994; Aden, S. 2017).

Qualitative Analytical Tools

In analytical practices in collaborative social research for this project included the following;

- Noting reflections
- Isolation of patterns
- Identifying commonalities and differences.
- Developing generalizations and while confronting unfounded generalizations by paying significant attention



to limitations and scope, time, general methodology etc. (Miles & Huberman (1994: pp.8-9).

Furthermore, Miles & Huberman, 1994, suggested the following qualitative approaches;

- Interpretivism mainly sees human activity as a collection of symbols showing different meaning and to gain insight and further understanding of meanings and actions.
- Social anthropology mainly focuses on art facts, language, relationships and rituals and these regularities are expressed as patterns.
- Collaborative social research also known as action research outlines a field experiment in a social setting to collect data so informed decisions can be made before taking action (Miles & Huberman, 1995).

IV. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The observation data analysis yielded several core ideas and analytic categories. Categorically, the authors organized the results by domain (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 1995). The transcript was coded to reveal the patterns in the answers of the professors before starting the analysis of the data collected. The quotes, which are actual words of the participants, highlight the emic perspective of the participants on to what extent democracy is promoted in schools in post-conflict Somalia (Creswell, 2018). The quotes in this research were utilized to personalize the data. Confidentially, pseudonyms have been given to each participant to protect the privacy of the participants (Miles & Huberman, 1995; Creswell, 2018). Below is the summary of the study findings;

- The study found that 19 out of 19 (100%) of the educators in the seminar believe democracy as a good governance system.
- The study participant observation findings showed that 19 out of 19 (100%) of the respondents stated that democracy is a controversial topic to teach in an Islamic post-conflict Somalia schools.

The respondents confirmed that there is a bias against democracy being thought in schools or by society in the public sphere. There was a fear somewhat evident in the answers given by the respondents when it came to discussing gender and other sensitive social issues. Thus, as indicated by the respondents' statement patterns, the cultural and religious resistance factors exist. In addition to that, there are several potential controversial topics to cover such as gender; questioning or opposing these topics can be interpreted as a violation of fundamental Islamic laws. For instance, Gender is a delicate issue to discuss academically as the Quran says men and women are not equal. Another important Islamic rule is related to voting and candidacy is that women cannot run for presidential office.

The Culturally Responsive Model developed by Aden, S. A. (2019) of Metropolitan University-Somalia's School of Education, Metro Education Lab proposed respect for cultural

and religious differences of the learners and the communities we serve. Therefore, for the sake of cultural competency, don't underestimate the power of culture. Leadership guru Peter Druker once said, in his famous quote; "Culture Eats Strategy for Breakfast". In Somalia's case, without any doubt, the proper teacher dispositions and cultural competency have the potential to socio-culturally to hold the philosophical position; if it is against the religion, it's not going in the curriculum or in the national provincial constitution.

Proposed Pedagogical Solutions

The author proposes that educators in ideologically sensitive setting carefully follow the above culturally competent gradual integrative approach. This approach allows the instructors to integrate unfamiliar content systematically into the curricula without social backlash.

As a result, the culturally responsive competent integration approach allows the educators to obey Islamic laws and at the same time to teach democracy, peace education, tolerance and civic duties in a respectful way that does not violate Islamic laws which are the law of the land. Thus, the educators should show good educator dispositions when integrating democracy related material into the curriculum to avoid any setbacks on their efforts or the learning experience. Most importantly, civic education learning experiences (courses) similar to international electoral policy and practice courses to be offered as an elective course at universities and integrated into K-12 curriculum as civic education content.

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