
Civics and Ethical Education: Student Textbooks (9th to 12th grades)

By Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, Ministry of Education

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Introduction

The Ethiopian Constitution (1995), the Education and Training Policy (1994), UN conventions such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and other policy documents of the Ethiopian Government clearly indicate that peace, democratic and peaceful society, and human rights and peace education are highly important for the development of Ethiopia. Peace is often defined as the prevalence of harmony and tranquility, concord, serenity, state of justice, cooperation and mutual understanding, and respect for each other (Fountain, 1999; Habtamu 2008 & 2016). It is also the absence of conflicts, violence or war. Others define it as the eradication of poverty, economic wellbeing, absence of violence and war, prevalence of law and order, prevalence of social harmony, health and social justice (De Rivera, 2004).

A number of studies (e.g., Abebe, 2015; Alagaw, 2012; Habtamu, 1998, 2002, 2005, 2006, 2008 & 2016; IPSS, 2012/13/14) and casual observations indicate that there are various conflicts and violence in

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the Ethiopian society at interpersonal, family, inter-group and the society at large levels. Respect of some rights at interpersonal and inter-group levels are low or lacking, some amount of ethnocentrism exists, lack of negotiation skills are widely reflected, etc. among the youth and the community at large.

Most countries in the world, including Ethiopia offer “Civics and ethical education”, “Peace education”, “Human rights education”, “Values education”, “Life skills education”, “Global citizenship education”, “Multicultural education”, or “Citizenship/Civic Education” to their students (KG to Universities) (Fountains, 1999; UNESCO, 2015).

Often, Civics or Peace education (the latter is preferred term by the author) refers to the process of imparting the knowledge, values, skills, and attitudes necessary for enhancing peace, prevention of conflicts and violence, resolution of conflicts peacefully, tolerance, gender equality and respect for human rights. The development of peaceful relationships, cooperation, empathy, and appreciation of diversity (in language, religion, skin color, or gender) on children and youth are very important for the development of a culture of peace in the country. Promoting the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values of peace and nonviolence are critical for the development of a peaceful, cohesive, democratic and stable Ethiopia. Making students aware of the destruction, sufferings and wastage of wars, ethnic and religious conflicts and violence, family violence, and violence in interpersonal relationships are highly important. The need and understanding to live and work together, for clear communication, negotiation skills, problem solving and critical thinking skills, and the respect for human dignity and rights are to be inculcated using learner centered approaches of instruction/facilitation.

For several years, the Ethiopian Federal Ministry of Education and the regions have been offering “Civics and ethical education” course to primary, secondary and tertiary level students. Though I do not have solid empirical evidence, I think the contributions of the Civics and

ethical education (CEE) course at various levels would be vast. We note that some of the key elements of peace education, such as democracy, rule of law, equality and justice are presented in the text books (our focus is on 9th to 12 grades' textbooks). For the benefit of readers who are not familiar with the textbooks of the four grades, I would like to highlight the contents of the books.

Topics Covered in the Textbooks

Each textbook has an average of 155 pages. The following are the topics covered in the Civics and Ethical Education textbooks (MoE, 2002 E.C.) of grades 9th to 12th:

1. Building a democratic system (Democracy, rights, obligations, tolerance of diversity, systems of government in Ethiopia, limits of power, and Ethiopia's foreign relations);
2. Rule of law (Constitution, rule of law, power of government, and combating corruption);
3. Equality (Equality of nations and nationalities, equality of citizens, gender equality, and equality within diversity);
4. Justice (Justice and equity, justice in social services, struggle against injustice, the justice system and justice in taxation);
5. Patriotism (Citizenship and patriotism, objectivity in Ethiopian history, duties of a patriot, patriotism and the fight against corruption, and voluntarism);
6. Responsibility (What is responsibility? Personal, social and constitutional responsibilities, natural resources and cultural heritage, responsibility to combat HIV/AIDS);
7. Industriousness (Working hard and being on time, importance of work, economic systems and work ethics);
8. Self reliance (What is self reliance? Dependency, and decision making);
9. Saving (Saving and extravagance, planning and saving, money as a source of wealth);

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10. Active community participation (Meaning of community participation, roles of civic societies in community participation);
 11. The pursuit of wisdom (Basis of knowledge and wisdom, information and data, reading and studying, and pursuit of truth).

The main topics in the 10th grade textbook are the same as the 9th grade ones, but with minor changes in the subtopics. The sub-topics added in the 10th grade textbook are: the state in Ethiopia and federalism in Ethiopia, breakdown of rule of law, organization and functions of the judiciary, patriotism and poverty reduction, and choosing a career.

The main topics for the 11th grade are the same as the 9th and 10th grades. However, some subtopics are added or rephrased. These include: Basic principles of the Ethiopian Constitution though was under “Rule of law” in the 9th grade, socially discriminated groups, fairness and analysis of equitability, issues of development, responsibility to protect the environment, and institutions of saving.

The main topics for the 12th grade are the same as the 9th, 10th and 11th grades’ textbooks. The subtopics added or rephrased include: federalism, the individual and public interest, and respecting moral and legal obligations (though were addressed in earlier grades too).

Key Elements of Peace Education (PE)

As indicated earlier, feelings of calm, mutual respect and accommodation of differences among people, and the prevalence of love and friendship are some of the signs of peace. It is the absence of negative conditions such as violence and hatred and the presence of positive conditions such as harmony, social cohesion, satisfaction and respect for each other among people (Habtamu, 2008; Reardon, 2001; Danish, 2011). We can generalize that peace is a condition in which individuals, families, groups, communities, and/or nations experience

low levels of violence and engage in mutually harmonious relationships.

There is a need for teaching for and about human rights, gender equality, tolerance, democracy, social and economic justice, non-violence, international understanding, tolerance, multiculturalism and care for the environment.

The following are the key elements that tend to be addressed in peace education books in many countries (UN, 1995; UNESCO, 1995, 2001&2015; Reardon, 2001; Danish, 2011; De Rivera, 2004 & 2009; Fountains, 1999; Navarro-Castro & Nario-Galace, 2008):

1. Meaning, expressions and relevance of peace;
2. Concepts, principles and sets of human and democratic rights;
3. Preventing conflicts and promoting non-violence
4. Resolving and transforming conflicts;
5. Challenging prejudice and building tolerance;
6. Caring for and sharing the earth's resources;
7. Characteristics and principles of democracy;
8. Equality and solidarity;
9. Communication, dialogue and negotiation skills;
10. Healthy expression of feelings/emotions;
11. Cooperation, empathy and respect;
12. Valuing diversity and multiculturalism;
13. Ethnocentrism, stereotypes and discrimination;
14. Peaceful characteristics and responsibilities of citizens;
15. Formation of peaceful values and behaviors, etc.

Competencies Expected and Conclusions

Competencies are knowledge, skills, abilities, attitudes, and attributes that are demonstrated by individuals in various settings. They are the integration of ones' knowledge, skills and attitudes in order to perform effectively in job, roles, duties, relationships or social circumstances (by knowing, doing, being and living together as Leo, 2010 would say). They are usually observable and measurable behaviors, motivations, and skills. For instance, "Intercultural competencies" would include tolerance for differences and ambiguities, empathy, behavioral flexibility, sociability, open mindedness, personal stability, ability to work with divers groups, and sharing cultural differences. Learning outcomes are statements of what students are expected to know, understand, be able to do, and the values they are expected to develop as a result of the program/course/training.

Taxonomy of learning includes knowledge (define, list, identify, etc.), comprehension (recognize, report, explain, discuss), application (demonstrate, relate, calculate, etc.), analysis (compare, investigate, examine, separate), synthesis (provide, design, formulate, modify) and evaluation (judge, assess, argue, validate, etc.) (Bloom's classification in Armstrong, 2016). Of course we can classify the learning outcomes in to the broader domains of Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes. For instance awareness of cultural heritage, understanding nature of peace and conflict, analysis of conflict and recognition of prejudice are knowledge domains where as critical thinking, communicating, dealing with emotions or prejudices are skills. Self respect, tolerance, respect for rights, respect for differences, sense of justice, social responsibility and empathy can fall into the domain of attitudes (Fountains, 1999).

I am going through all these, because I would like to relate them to the learning outcomes listed for the Civic and Ethical Education courses (in the Ethiopian context).

Curriculum is an intended packaging of competencies that learners should acquire through organized learning experiences. Good curriculum plays an important role in forging life-long learning competencies, as well as social attitudes and skills, such as tolerance and respect, constructive management of diversity, peaceful conflict management, promotion and respect for human rights, gender equality, justice and inclusiveness (UNESCO, 2015).

The following are a sample list of learning outcomes that UNESCO (2015) and others mention for PE:

1. Defining what peace, conflict, negotiation, etc mean;
2. Providing/Listing some reasons for conflicts at various levels;
3. Discussing some concepts and principles of human rights;
4. Demonstrating active listening skills (e.g., by paraphrasing);
5. Doing conflict analysis;
6. Outlining steps to take to deal with prejudice and stereotypes;
7. Reflecting the awareness of being biased and tolerant of others;
8. Generating alternative solutions to problems;
9. Demonstrating values of peace in every day behavior;
10. Role playing how conflicts can arise between individuals and can be solved;
11. Arguing for the need for non-violent responses to provocations;
12. Modifying personal behaviors towards peaceful responses, etc.

As could be observed from the list above, the competencies (standards internationally practiced) include knowledge, skills and attitudes domains.

The “minimum competencies” listed for the students of Civics and Ethical Education in Ethiopia in the 9th to 12th grade are about 56 in number for each grade. Unfortunately the overwhelming majority of the competencies are in the domain of knowledge: Being able to define/describe alone is about 39% in the 9th grade, explaining is about

36% in the 10th grade, explaining/elaborating is 39% in 11th grade, and evaluating is 34% and explaining/elaborating is 27% in the 12th grade. The second and the third most common competencies are also in the knowledge domain. Competencies listed in the domains of skills and attitudes/values are less than 10% each for all the four grades. But, peace and non-violence tend to revolve more around emotions, attitudes, values and skills than just the knowledge. It would be very difficult to assume that the objectives of the course are well achieved.

I wonder how much boring it would be to the teachers and the students to talk about (teach-learn, discuss) the same 11 topics or values with minor differences four times. For instance the first topic in all the four textbooks and syllabi is “Building a Democratic System” with 14 periods in each grade, and the “Rule of Law” topic/value allotted 9 periods per grade, etc.

I think that the text books and the Syllabi can accommodate many peace and human rights education topics which would contribute towards building a culture of peace in Ethiopia. The topics indicated above (from international experiences and recommended by credible authorities such as UNESCO) and relevant others are worth considering, keeping the Ethiopian situation in mind. I would like to reiterate that the prevalence of conflicts and violence in interpersonal, family, and inter-group relationships, lack or problems in communication/dialogue, lack or low accommodation of differences (ethnic, religious, etc.), lack or low awareness about the environment and health issues, reluctance to follow rules and regulations need to be addressed and inculcated in our children and youth.

I am not convinced that the current CEE is trying to develop important competencies such as communication abilities (listening, negotiation, proper use of words and phrases), critical thinking abilities (analyzing, predicting, comparing, evaluating), conflict diagnosing abilities (root causes, fairness, focusing on interests, thinking of alternatives, and effects), and emotional abilities (managing anger and fear, reason

governing behaviors). I hope the curriculum under revision by MoE and the new textbooks and syllabi envisaged would address these nationally significant issues.

Hence, my overall assessments of the gaps (as a way of recommendations) are the following:

1. The redundancies in the CEE textbooks should be greatly reduced;
2. New topics, focusing on peace education be included and perhaps the name of the course be changed to PE;
3. The learning outcomes (competencies) should try to address the three domains of learning;
4. In addition to the textbooks and Teacher Guide Books, additional teaching-learning materials (books) be prepared;
5. References should be provided in each textbook (there is none in the current ones).
6. As I have not assessed the situation of teachers in terms of qualification, areas of specialization, methodological/pedagogical competence and personal attributes, I would not comment on it. However, this is also a very serious issue worth considering and taking the necessary measures if the PE is going to be effective and contribute towards the development of a culture of peace in Ethiopia.

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