

# **Citizenship Education for Students and Community in Kenya**

## **Abstract**

This presentation explores the implementation and impact of a local democracy program as a citizenship education framework in Kenya. By focusing on the pedagogical approach of “Transmission, Transactional, and Reflection,” it examines how secondary students engage with local democratic governance and societal issues through the creation and distribution of reports in their newsletters. The study highlights the benefits and challenges of integrating citizenship education into the curriculum, emphasizing the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application. It demonstrates that experiential learning activities, such as student-led reporting, significantly enhance students' understanding of democratic values and active citizenship, underscoring the necessity of bridging the theoretical-practical divide to effectively prepare students for their roles as engaged, empowered, and ethical citizens. These insights into pedagogical strategies can foster more inclusive and participatory citizenship education in Kenya and similar African contexts.

## **Introduction**

Human rights education (HRE) has been an international obligation since 1945, endorsed by various legal instruments. The United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training of 2011 outlines a holistic HRE framework, emphasizing comprehensive national strategies requiring detailed guidance and support at the international level. Integrating HRE into the curriculum is crucial for developing active citizenship with an understanding of human rights' value, promoting living with dignity in communities where rights and freedoms are protected.

Despite its benefits, integrating HRE into African curricula faces challenges such as a lack of teaching resources, training, and support from state officials. Educators often struggle to accommodate the diverse backgrounds of immigrant learners, hindering educational success. Building an inclusive education system that respects individual human rights and social justice is essential for fostering a democratic society through equity and equality.

HRE is often synonymous with democratic civic or citizenship education, considered a core component of moral order in African countries. The introduction of HRE in sub-Saharan Africa has led to educational reforms emphasizing equal rights and justice. Citizenship education must account for local contexts and promote youth engagement to effectively safeguard democracy.

## **Literature Review**

The global emergence of HRE initiatives is influenced by political climates, national linkages to the human rights movement, and the density of international organizations. The Global South faces unique challenges in HRE, such as the influence of powerful donor countries from the Global North, which can lead to the deconstruction of cultural values. The enduring influence of colonialism has resulted in Eurocentric education systems in Africa, undermining indigenous knowledge and cultural values.

Democratic citizenship education rooted in liberal education ideas can reverse Eurocentric philosophies, developing critical thinking necessary for political participation, justice, and political tolerance. Integrating global citizenship education with local African historical principles aims to create future citizens who can think locally, regionally, and internationally.

In South Africa, democratic citizenship education practices are not sufficiently implemented, indicating a need for teacher education to form part of moral revival efforts. Effective citizenship education requires participatory pedagogies and open classroom climates, but teachers often lack time and resources for effective civics teaching. Expanding citizenship education across curricula and elevating its stature is necessary for meaningful civic learning.

### **Kenyan Citizenship Education**

Kenya's citizenship education has focused on governance, democratic processes, and social issues. Post-independence, several education systems have been implemented, each focusing on moral and academic education. The introduction of Social Education and Ethics (SEE) aimed to address moral and ethical needs but was eventually removed from the curriculum. In 2017, Kenya introduced a competence-based curriculum focusing on developing critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills linked to real-life situations. This reform envisions an "empowered, engaged, and ethical" citizen, outlining a comprehensive framework for citizenship education.

### **Results**

#### *Transmission*

Teachers aimed to instill a foundational understanding of citizenship education, emphasizing practical knowledge over abstract theories. Students engaged in discussions on national history, governmental frameworks, and political dynamics, critically assessing societal structures and norms.

#### *Transaction*

Students created and shared newsletters, engaging with community members to report on local issues. Initial acceptance turned to frustration as students realized many community stories were didactic rather than experiential.

Critical inquiry led to resistance from adults, particularly on sensitive issues like the misallocation of funds for road repairs.

### *Reflection*

Students reflected on their learning process, recognizing the importance of critically analyzing and adapting theories to real-world contexts. They discovered the need for continuous learning and adaptation to become empowered citizens.

### **Discussion**

The citizenship education program promotes student engagement and democratic participation, developing critical thinking, communication, and collaboration skills. Comprehensive teacher training programs and community support are essential for effective implementation. Integrating multiple pedagogical frameworks can enhance students' understanding of democratic principles.

### **Conclusion**

The presentation highlights the vital role of citizenship education in fostering engaged, ethical, and empowered citizens. Experiential learning activities, such as newsletter creation and investigative reporting, significantly enhance students' understanding and application of citizenship principles. Future research should explore the impact of participatory pedagogies on civic engagement and political participation in socio-economically diverse contexts. Integrating experiential learning approaches can better prepare young citizens to engage with democratic and governance challenges, contributing to more inclusive and equitable societies.