

Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights in Junior High Schools in Ghana

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Abstract

In a country that democracy and human rights have been accepted as a way of life and governance, education is considered the vehicle through which citizens are trained to acquire the needed knowledge, skills, and values so as to effectively participate. It is, more so, thought that young people who are in basic schools such as Junior High School (JHS) in Ghana should be trained in schools to have the attributes for democratic life. This study, therefore, examined how education at the JHS level in Ghana prepares students for democratic citizenship and human rights life. Employing exploratory study design, sixty four persons consisting of head teachers, Social Studies teachers and students in JHS in the Central Region were engaged in the study. Interview, focused-group discussion, and observation were employed to gather data. The study revealed that there are structural provision for education for democratic citizenship and human rights in Junior High School in Ghana, but in practical terms, education in JHS is not achieving this. This the author contends is due to a cultural orientation where children are considered immature, and incapable of participating in the affairs of society. It was therefore, recommended that teachers in JHS should be given refresher courses to enable them conduct affairs in their school in a manner that will train learners for democratic citizenship and human rights life.

Keywords

Democratic, Citizenship Education, Human Rights, Participation, Junior High School

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1. Introduction

Democracy has been considered as the means to increasing citizens' participation in governance. The world, especially in the Eastern Europe, Central America, South East Asia and sub-Saharan Africa noticed an increase in democratic states in the 1990s [1]. The adoption of democracy called for measures towards developing the needed democratic values and practices in citizens. Education was identified as the appropriate means to achieving this desire. As a result, new democratic states brought in forms of citizenship education in schools. The purpose of this form of education in schools in the words of Osler and Starkey was to "promote and inculcate the values and principles of democratic citizenship

in students" [2].

Generally, education for democratic citizenship is seen as any form of training, information, and practices that equip learners with the relevant knowledge and skills as well as attitudes to exercise and defend democratic rights and responsibilities in society. Democratic citizenship deals with participation in the political realm, during which the participants constitute "political space" [3]. Hunt on his part, describes democratic citizenship as a process of producing persons who are informed about issues that affect them; and participate with others to resolve issues in the society [4]. Democratic citizenship, therefore, involves training people to

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be tolerant, critical thinkers, have respect for the human rights of others, and to participate in the affairs of the society.

Different countries have different reasons for democratic citizenship and human rights education. Some have it to counter perceived democratic deficits and others to consolidate multiparty democracy [5], [6]. Some other countries offer it to produce a common set of values [7], and to promote tolerance and peace in especially countries emerging from conflicts [8]. But it is argued that the best way to learn to become a democratic citizen is to engage in democratic practices [9]. Bradshaw and Hinde contend that for children to contribute to the democracies in which they live, they must be given the freedom to participate in school affairs and decisions [10], [11]. Sen argues that democracy is directly proportional to development because when citizens are given their fundamental freedoms and rights, it frees their capability to achieve [12].

Ghana is a democratic state which requires democratic actors or citizens. Education in every society is expected to produce the needed caliber of human beings for that society. Education in Ghana must, therefore, produce people with the needed qualities to function effectively in our multiparty democracy which we have chosen for ourselves and have operated over the years. Significantly, Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1998 to which Ghana is a signatory, has provided that children have the right to say what they think should happen and have their opinions to be taken into account in decisions that affect them. However, there is a dearth of knowledge of studies on education for democratic citizenship and human rights in Ghana. This study was, therefore, undertaken to explore how Junior High Schools in Ghana provide foundation for children in their developmental ages to be trained to acquire the needed knowledge, attitudes, values and skills to function as democratic citizens.

The study was guided by the following research questions: (1) What was students in Junior High Schools understanding of the concept of democratic citizenship?; (2) How were the voices of students in Junior High Schools on issues concerning them allowed and treated in schools?; (3) How were students in Junior High Schools involved in schools governance processes?; and (4) Was the teaching and learning of subjects in Junior High Schools contributing to the development of democratic citizenship in students?

2. Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

This section deals with the theoretical foundation and review of literature on the subject matter of the study.

2.1. Theoretical Framework

Student participation in school is very key to democratic citizenship and human rights training. It has been acknowledged that participation is an effective tool to be used to develop critical citizens and cultivate compliant citizens in society [13, 1, 6, 15]. Davies for example, opines that critical and reflective participation are crucial instrumentals in upholding democracy [1].

Flutter and Rudduck provide a distinction between student participation and consultation. To them, student participation is a process where students have active and direct involvement in school matters, while student consultation is where students are invited at a time to contribute because they are deemed to have information that may be worthwhile in improving a practice. The two concepts (participation and consultation) provide opportunities for the voices of students to be heard in schools [16]. However, students' voices should be mediated through guidance and supervision with techniques that delimit what can be said [17].

Students' voices do not only include the spoken voice, but the many ways in which students express their feelings about any aspect of their school experience. [18] Students' voices according to Turner, have two dimensions. These include what he calls 'citizenship from above' where students are requested to participate in school affairs, and 'citizenship from below' where students take the resourcefulness to claim their own space and have their voices heard without waiting for invitation from teachers [19].

Westheimer and Kahne came up with a model that can be used to scrutinize school practices in the education for democratic citizenship. They postulate that decisions about citizenship education are not arbitrary, but are ideological and political. Schools employ different practices to produce their desired 'good citizen'. Practices that occur in schools, therefore, have the potential to socialize students to become personally responsible, participatory or justice-oriented citizens. Personally responsible citizens have such good attributes for democracy such as good character, honesty, responsible and law abiding. These kind of persons act responsibly to solve social problems towards the improvement of society. In their view and rightly so, good character is good for community living but is not sufficient for the preservation of democracy. The other types of their citizens are therefore called to need. Participatory citizens plan and participate in organized efforts to care for people in need. Justice-oriented citizens, on the other hand, engage in informed analysis and discussion regarding social, economic and political issues and structures in the society. They focus on bring about social justice. They work together in dealing with root causes of problems and

demand fairness. Justice-oriented citizens are instrumental in perpetuating democracy due to their willingness to accept new development [15].

2.2. The Concept of Citizenship

Citizenship is very much associated with modern and contemporary civilization [20]. The concept of citizenship originates from ancient Greece where it was adopted as both a legal and social status term [21]. The concept has traditionally mainly referred to the legal status of the citizen and the connection between the state and its citizens. Marshall, however, provides a classical definition of citizenship as “a status bestowed on those who are full members of a community”. This status provides the individual with civil, political, and social rights and obligations. Yuval-Davis adds that citizenship also “applies to people’s membership to a variety of communities – local, ethnic, national and transnational” [23].

Citizenship applies to identity, the subjective feeling of belonging, and implies internalized, context-specific values and civic virtues. [24] To Engle and Ochoa the concept of citizenship is a recognition that is conferred on the individual by the state for legal identification [25]. By this viewpoint, individuals have to be affiliated to socio-political-religious institutions. Citizens, therefore, are people who are furnished with the knowledge of public affairs, instilled with attitudes of civic virtue, and equipped with the skills to participate in the public arena [21]. These needed attributes for effective citizenship are acquired through lifelong learning from both formal and non-formal institutions. The citizen in simple terms is, someone who identifies with, and conforms to the values and norms, and as well participates in the activities of a defined society. The participation of the citizen in any activity is geared ultimately towards the betterment of that society but not just the personal interest of that individual.

The concept of citizenship, therefore, denotes multiplicity of meanings cutting through legal status to relationship between an individual and society, and to rights and responsibilities. The concept is about relationship between individuals and individuals and the state [25]. Similarly, Fioto’o opines citizenship as involving relationship, membership, participation, and decision making in a way that affects others [26]. The legal aspect of citizenship to refer to the rights and responsibilities the state grants to the individuals as a result of their membership [25]. But the concept has a social perspective which refers to the participation of people in activities in their communities. Citizenship education, therefore, includes learning about the rights and duties of citizens, respect for democratic values and human rights, and the importance of solidarity, tolerance and participation in a

democratic society [27].

2.3. Democratic Citizenship

Democratic citizenship carries the connotation of citizens’ duties and active participation in society. To be able to be effective democratic citizen, the actors have to be familiar with, and respect, the institutions and principles of democracy such as the electoral system, freedom of speech, information, association and the rights of their fellow citizens in their society. Citizens require democratic citizenship education so as to be able to act freely for the public good. Democratic citizenship demands citizens becoming aware or informed about issues that affect them and working with other persons in the society to resolve the issues [28].

Democratic citizenship manifests in a political democracy. Democratic membership is not only limited a town, city or nation-state but extends include supranational order. For persons to be effective democratic citizens, they have to be trained to have a good appreciation of the dynamics. Democratic citizenship reflects in the society it occurs willingness, rights and liberties, obligations, tolerance etc. Because people live their lives in a democratic jurisdiction, citizenship is a life course experience over time.

2.4. Education for Democracy and Human Rights

Education has a significant role in creating a political culture which has values and behaviours that are more supportive of democratic political institutions in an ever increasing global democratization [28]. While democratic education could be described in many ways, in democratic education, the learners as a group have the power to make some, most, or even all of the key decisions, since power is shared and not appropriated in advance by a minority of one or more. This form of educational practice he observed is not common even in many democratic countries [29].

Democracy as a system of government and a way of life, continues to spread throughout the world and this calls for education policy framers to promote democracy in schools. From this view, democratic education can be said to be primarily about preparing students for their roles as future citizens. A nation is democratic to the extent that its citizens participate in decision-making at the community level [30]. For children to have the needed competence to partake in the expected democratic life, they must be provided the opportunity to practice in schools. Harber argues that democratic values are learned behaviour and as such, formal education must play a role in their development [31]. On his part, Alderson further argues that babies learn to talk by being spoken to as if they already understand; children

become members of democratic societies through practical involvement and experience [32].

Research evidence abounds which suggests that learners' behaviour is influenced by the kind of training and learning experiences they go through. [31, 33, 29]. Harber for example opines that:

Citizens of a living democracy are not born. We learn the acts of democracy just as we learn sports, history or reading. We learn by experience and by training [31].

This imposes a responsibility on schools should promote democracy for children will acquire the needed knowledge, skills, and attitudes and use them in their societies. Davies suggests that:

If the aims of the school are to turn out active citizens who will participate in the local and state political process, then we know enough about the learning process to state that pupils will learn democracy best by doing it. Lessons on the 'political system' will not have as much effect on actual behaviour as participating in the micro-political system of the school [1].

Davies hits the nail right on its head. The main challenge especially in Ghana is the apparent lack of policies on education focused on attaining democratic citizens. The other part is the practical difficulties teachers have as they are required to basically prepare students for examinations. Most parents and guardians in Ghana required teachers in Junior High Schools to teach students and prepare them to pass the national examinations to qualify them enter into Senior High Schools and this limits the school in training the students to develop the skills and attitudes for democracy.

Schweisfurth on his party contends that schooling has a potentially powerful role to play in the development of democratic citizenship [3]. Apart from a greater emphasis on education for democracy within the curriculum, a key element will be learning through experience of democracy in the general running of the school. Democracy is beyond a set of abstract ideas, citizens of democracy are involved in activities of strong feelings about how to share actions, resources and power fairly or unfairly, through bodies and relationships by playing and labouring together, creating and celebrating, fighting or negotiating, campaigning, organizing elections and struggling towards resolutions within intricate emotional encounters [32]. The process of democratization requires the learning of new roles and skills for all concerned. For example, all would need to learn the skills and courtesies of debating matters openly and frankly with mutual respect, to learn proper time keeping in meetings and to judge when discussion of a relatively unimportant matter became a waste of time [34].

2.5. Overview of the Education System in Ghana

Ghana's education history dates back to 1592 starting with the main goals of spreading the Gospel to creating an elite group to run the colony. The formal education system in Ghana was established and modelled along the British's system. Since Ghana gained her independence in 1957, the education system has undergone a series of reforms. In 1980s the reform was geared shifting the education system away from the purely academic nature to one that would provide the needed manpower for the nation's development drive. The present structure of education, which starts at the age of 4 years, consists of: 2 years kindergarten (pre-school), 6 years primary, and 3 years Junior High School, 3 years of Senior High School and 4 years University or courses at other tertiary institutions. From the Kindergarten through to the Junior High School levels form the basic education and are free and compulsory [35]. On the average, the students at the Junior High School level are within the ages of 13 and 15.

Ghana wants to through its education system achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Ministry of Education (MoE) affirmed this through their mission statement:

As one of the key sectors contributing to national development, the mission of the Ministry of Education is to provide relevant education to all Ghanaians at all levels irrespective of gender, ethnic, religious and political affiliations [35].

This statement indicates that the MoE has a mandate of ensuring the fulfilment of the right of every citizen to education. The 1992 Republican Constitution of Ghana in Article 38 requires government to provide access to Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE). Similar is expected at Senior High, Technical and Tertiary education levels depending on the availability of resources.

When one considers the goals for the education sector in Ghana, one would notice that democracy and human rights are not specifically highlighted, but I think most of the aims and values expressed are underpinned by the basic fundamental principles of democracy and human rights. Democracy and human rights are used without necessarily making clear links to education for democracy and human rights. As indicated by the values of the MoE, equity, accountability and transparency are all significant elements of democracy and human rights. For example, one would appreciate that in order to manage available resources effectively and efficiently, there is the need for the people to exercise their inherent human right to produce democratic leaders who will involve people in decision-making for greater participation and transparency.

3. Methodology

The study was a qualitative research which used the exploratory research design. This was to allow for detail or in-depth information to be gathered from the participants in the study schools on the topic. Six Junior High Schools were selected purposively. The schools had three distinct characteristics namely public schools, private schools and mission school with some overlapping. The schools included Winneba Local Assembly JHS, University Practice North JHS, Uncle Rich JHS, St. Paul JHS, Don Bosco JHS, and Zion JHS. Four of these schools were publicly administered and two were privately administered. Three of the six schools were faith-based schools and the other three were not faith-based schools. This approach enabled the researcher to focus on democratic practices taking place in schools of different categories [36, 37].

A sample consisting of: six head teachers, six Social Studies teachers, twelve school prefects, and sixty JHS3 students from the study schools were involved in the study. The six head teachers, six Social Studies teachers, and the Senior Boys and Girls Prefects of the study schools were purposively selected for the study. Sixty students consisting of ten JHS3 from the six schools were conveniently selected for the study. Of the sixty students, thirty five were girls and twenty five were boys. This was due to the fact that the population of boys was a little more than girls in the study schools. Permission from the schools were sought in writing to the head teachers responded favorably to me. Audio recordings of procedures were taken with an audio recorder and a phone which were later transcribed and sorted.

Interview, focus-group discussion, and observation were employed to gather data. Interviews were conducted with

head teachers, Social Studies teachers and school prefects and focus-group discussions with the sampled JHS3 students in the schools. The interviews and focus-group discussion were to find out practices in the schools and how they contributed to democratic citizenship and human rights training. In addition, direct observation of everyday school practices was made and records were kept in a reflective journal. The observations focused on student involvement in committees and other school affairs to validate data collected from other sources.

Data was analyzed using emergent themes and discussed using thick description and direct quotes from participants [38]. The study involved students who are minors, hence, it had to undergo a rigorous process of ethical review on research conduct and governance.

4. Discussion and Findings

This section presents discussion of data gathered through the administration of research instruments and the findings. This is presented under various themes derived from the research questions that guided the study.

4.1. Students' Understanding of the Concept of Democratic Citizenship

The first research question sought to find out students in Junior High School understanding of the concept of democratic citizenship. The responses from the students clearly indicated that, the students had a fair conception and understanding of democratic citizenship. The responses are categorized and presented below.

Students' responses on their understanding of democratic citizenship

- 1 People with positive attitudes and values
- 2 People capable and willing to contribute to the development of the nation.
- 3 Tolerant citizens.
- 4 Participating citizens (Public life).
- 5 Enlightened, free, positive minded, concerned, and willing persons.
- 6 People with rights and liberties as well as responsibilities for national development, progress and advancement.
- 7 Persons with a capacity to meaningfully participate in public decision making processes.
- 8 Persons who understand and contribute to the effective working of their societies.
- 9 Informed, analytical, and committed citizens.
- 10 Recognizing and respecting the rules of democracy.
- 11 Active involvement in contributing to the development of the country.

It is clear from the views expressed by the students that they have a fair understanding of democratic citizenship. From the

responses, a common idea of 'participation' can be identified. This means that students sees democratic citizens to have a responsibility in participating in the affairs of the state or society. In a democracy, it is not just enough to have democratic knowledge. What is much expected is the willingness of the citizens to engage or participate actively in activities in the societies to bring about betterment for all.

The views of the students as expressed above also reveal the point that citizens have to be trained or prepared for democratic citizenship life. This is because such life requires some relevant knowledge, skills, and attitudes which have to be learnt. This therefor imposes responsibility on schools especially at the basic level to develop and operationalize relevant curriculum that will imbibe in the learners this requisite attributes for democratic life. This ties with the contention that the goal of Social Studies as part of the school curriculum is democratic citizenship training [39]. Such an education endeavor for the development of democratic citizens equips the learners with knowledge, attitudes, values, and skills which they will apply in living as democratic citizens so as to achieve social harmony, progress and betterment. This results in the assertion by that democratic citizens recognize the principles and rules of democracy [40].

Again, the views of the students on democratic citizenship fits with the liberal traditional model of citizenship which opines that citizenship is a formal status which grants an individual with a set rights. In the view of Porter, democratic citizens are entitled to three categories of rights namely personal, political and economic [20]. Certainly, the enjoyment of fundamental human rights is important for the well-being of persons. A significant question is how does the Junior High School system in Ghana helps to prepare the young citizens for effective democratic life? This is because, having a theoretical understanding of something is different from putting that to practice.

4.2. Students' Voices on Schools' Issues and How They Are Treated

The second research question sought to explore how the voices of students in Junior High Schools in Ghana on issues concerning them were allowed and treated. Subsequently, I explored various ways that students can have their voices expressed. Specifically, I examined the involvement of students on committees and boards in schools, staff and students meetings, and channel of communication in schools. This is appropriate because the question of how students can learn the political capabilities that empower them to function more effectively in a democratic state and society certainly has implications for formal education for democracy is best learned in a democratic setting [41]. In ideal schools, there is

distribution of decision-making power, participation is encouraged, and freedom of expression and sense of justice and fairness prevail in order to help to produce citizens who are fully capable of functioning in a democratic state [41].

4.2.1. School Committees and Boards

Democracy is described as the rule of the people [42, 43]. This means that the process of decision-making should involve the people. How much participation are students allowed to have in the decisions that affect them in schools? It emerged from the study that all the schools involved in the study had committees and boards that handled or conducted affairs in the schools. Though the committees and boards varied from school to school, all the schools had a form of a committee and or a board. For example, the head teacher of one of the schools indicated:

We have a number of committees and boards in this school that help to make things work for successful teaching and learning and the betterment and progress of the school. The committees and boards in this school include disciplinary committee, examinations committee, welfare committee, and the prefectural board. Issues that come up are therefore referred to the appropriate committee or board for action (Field data, 2019).

This is a very encouraging finding where schools are governed through committees and board. This will provide platforms for stakeholders in the schools to be involved and to contribute to the wellbeing of the institutions. Interestingly, however, in all the schools, except the prefectural board, no student served in any committee or board. Membership was only made up of staff and in few case parents and guardians. This generally makes decision-making process in the schools to be vested in only staff, parents and guardians excluding students, hence, reducing their participation as expected of democratic citizens. Students were therefore recipients of decisions, policies, and directions from above and were expected to abide by those decisions. This practice contravenes the requirement that children's participation in issues that affect them and more so, the unarguable fact that students constitute the greater proportion of the population of schools [44].

At a focus-group discussion in one of the schools, a student lamented about the issue describing it as unfortunate, a case of power imbalance in favour of adults, and discriminatory. He expressed it in the following words:

This case of teachers serving in all committees and boards in the school is so unfortunate. It does not allow for the championing of the interests of students since no student is part of decision-making processes in the school. How can our interests be expressed and taken care off with this system?

We only receive directives and our only response is to obey. How can a school in modern time train children who are been prepared to take over responsibilities and manage the affairs of society this way? This represents a case of power imbalance which to me is discriminative (Field data, 2019).

This reveals a feeling of young people who have an understanding that they have a part to play to get things done been left out. It expresses a case of young people being willing to take up the challenge of contributing to dealing with things that concern them and are not prepared to disregarded. The case in the schools shows a top-down approach to decision making processes leaving the children only as spectators but not citizens.

Teachers in all the study schools indicated that it was the prefects that provided a link between students and school administration. It is therefore, expected that, at least, schools prefects be made to share decision-making platforms such as committees and boards with teachers. However, students were generally left out. Students indicated they were only minimally and selectively involved in decision making processes. The Senior Boys prefect of one of the schools indicated that he had only worked with the Disciplinary Committee, not as a member, but as a witness to cases. Furthermore, records showing committee membership to various committees in all schools did not include students.

4.2.2. Meetings

Meetings provide platforms for members of a group to share knowledge and ideas, plan for the future, and also review and evaluate programmes and activities. One would, therefore, expect naturally that schools will take advantage of meetings to engage students and elicit from them their opinions on issues that concern them as required by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Nelson, Lott, and Glenn contend that class meetings provide the best possible circumstances for adults and students to learn cooperation, mutual respect, responsibility, and social skills. Generally, students have many excellent ideas when they are allowed and encouraged to express them and meetings provide such opportunity for the students to express their ideas. They further contends that students learn listening skills, language development, extended thinking, logical consequences of behavior, memory skills, and objective thinking through meetings and that students are much more willing to cooperate when they have been involved in taking decisions, even when the final solution is one that has been suggested by the teachers [45].

However, it emerged from the study that none of the study schools ever organized general meetings with students. It is

possible for these schools to hold general meetings with the whole student body or on class-by-class basis. A student in a focused group discussion expressed his view on this in the following:

I am in my third year in school and there has never been a single general meeting organized for us the students to meet our teachers for us to share ideas and discuss issues that concern the school. I often hear of staff meetings but we the students have never been called to meet with our teachers. I think they think we have nothing to offer so they always leave us out (Filed data, 2019).

From the above expression, it can be noticed that students feel that they have great ideas to offer but are disappointed by the school system as they are not granted platform in the form of meetings for them to contribute. Surely, children have wonderful ideas on issues especially those that concern them and if only they are heard out, it would amaze the school authority how they would help make the administration and management smooth and successful. From the expression above again, one can notice that students feel felt out in the administration of the affairs of the school. This presents a major challenge as proper leadership and management should engage all stakeholders of an institution for good result and students constitute the biggest stakeholder in the school.

Another student lamented on the no meeting practice in his school in the following:

I know that things that will happen for a group of people in a democratic society are usually first agreed upon if not by all the members but majority of them. I am also expecting a similar thing in my school but unfortunately that is not the case here. We the students have not had the opportunity to either contribute or consent to proposed views of others on issues concerning our school. This surprises me the more because we are brought here to learn and become or fit into society as useful persons who can contribute meaningfully to the progress of society. In a democratic society like Ghana, I expected the school that is training us to give us the opportunity to learn and practice how to bring out good ideas for the betterment of society (Field data, 2019).

This above statement by the student also reveals how students expect their schools to provide them the training needed to produce them as competent actors in the democratic regime we are operating. It shows that students have a fair expectation of what schools are to provide (they understand why they are in school). Unfortunately, they find the school which is a training ground for democratic citizens to be failing them from this perspective.

A head teacher on her part held the view that the way the school time table is structured does not allow for meetings to be held with students. She asserted:

Students are expected to arrive in school at 7:00am, clean classrooms and compound up to 7:30am, go for assembly at 7:30am and settle in class for the first lesson to start at 8:00am. They also get to go for break so that they can feed. Lesson continue till we close at 3:00pm. At that time students and teachers alike are tired and hungry and have to go home. As a result, we cannot have meetings with students except we invite them to school on Saturdays for such meetings.

The claim of the head teacher above leaves so much to desire. First of all she provides an option of meeting them of Saturdays which can be once a month (which is not too much to do) which they have not deployed. Secondly, with the same time table arrangement, they are still able to organize staff meetings, why not staff-students meetings? Thirdly, schools are able to organize Parents Teachers Association meetings but not Students Teachers meetings or even Parents-Students-Teachers meetings.

The case of no meeting in the schools seems to amplify a certain cultural assertion in Ghana that children are generally considered unable to think and make good decisions. This entrenches a kind of power imbalance in favour of the elderly even in schools.

4.2.3. Channel of Communication in Schools

One other way I sort to examine how students' voices were expressed and treated in schools was looking at channel of communication in the schools. Channel of communication defines how persons with grievances can follow to report such grievances for redress in an institution or organization. It is a means through which information is shared or communicated among people.

From the study, students indicated that they had Class Prefects, General Prefects, Form Teachers, Assistant Head Teacher, and Head Teacher available to them to approach and express their concerns. When a student from one of the school was asked about channel of communication in their school, she responded as follows:

Depending on the case, you go to the right person but generally, we have our Class Prefects, School Prefects, Form Teachers, Assistant Head Teacher, and the Head Teacher who grant us audiences when we approach them with issues. When for instance, an issue is taken to the Class Prefect which he cannot solve, he takes us to the Form Teacher. Similarly, when a Form Teacher considers an issue above him or her, he or she refers us further till it get to the Head Teacher.

The existence of a defined channel for students to express

their concerns in the schools is very laudable. The concern however is, do students take advantage of this to express their voices on issues in their schools? Are teachers opened to students so that students can share the views and opinions on issues about the schools with them freely? And are views shared by students through these channels of communication in the schools given attention and consideration where necessary? Without a positive commitment that will make the students know that views they express through these channels are given the needed attention, their existence will serve no purpose.

4.3. Involvement of Students in School Governance

The third research question explored how students in Junior High Schools were involved in the governance of their schools as a way of training them into democratic citizenship. Prefectural system, Students' Representative Council, and Extra Curriculum Activities in schools were the three sub-themes I used to achieve this.

4.3.1. Prefectorial System

This part of the study sought to examine the prefectorial system in the schools as prefectorial system is characterized by various democratic practices. Democratic citizens are active participants in deciding who gets to have the mandate to lead them. Democratic citizens, therefore, consider leadership and all the processes to producing acceptable leaders very important. All the study schools had a system that made prefects to serve students as leaders. A major concern was the way these prefects were chosen in each school and how the schools endeavoured to hear the students' voices through their prefects.

In all the study schools, almost all of the prefects were voted for. Interestingly, there was an opened process for choosing candidates for school prefects' positions. As a result, in many instances, the portfolios were opened up for interested candidates to apply. In one school, however, staff nominated a couple of students as candidates for various positions to be voted for and only had a limited consultation with incumbent prefects to give suggested names of students to take over from them.

After filing for the various positions by candidates, the candidates are interviewed by teachers with no student representation on the interview panels. At a focused-group discussion, it emerged that many of the students had problems with the process through which prefects were elected. A female student from the school where teachers nominated candidates for election questioned the process and blamed the school administration for imposing representatives on them. Students accused the administration

of sidelining justice-oriented students in favour of personally responsible students.

Generally, however, it was encouraging to notice that in many of the schools, students' participation in the elections of prefects was very high. Students were actively and directly involved in the selection process in the forms of expression of interest, filing for positions, campaigning, supporting candidates of choice, reading manifestos, and voting. A head teacher expressed pride in the school's democratic process when choosing representatives: *We involve the students directly, and those that are aspirants, go round classes to campaign.* (Field data, 2019). This was corroborated by the students in the school. One student expressed satisfaction with the open and democratic nature of their prefects' election process as follows:

The process of electing prefects in this school for me is one of the best. Starting from expression of interest for a position to voting for candidate, students are directly involved. We have a chance to vote a person we want into a position (Field data, 2019).

This practice, therefore, allows students at the Junior High School to experience the dynamics of a democratic election. Although there was apparent democracy in the elections, the process was mediated by heavy teacher influence through vetting and interview processes [17]. Candidates who express interest for positions are interviewed to check their suitability before campaigning, and only 'suitable' candidates get past the interviews. After voting by secret ballot, teachers vet the results before announcing the winners. Explaining the outcome of the voting process, the head teacher in one of the schools said:

... after everything, there is a committee made up of teachers that considers and scrutinizes the results of the voting. Admittedly, there are times where candidates win election from the poles but are denied by the teachers who collate the results (Field data, 2019).

This in a way trained the students at that level to learn negative attitudes as to be accepted a prefect, students had to do what teachers, and not the voters, would find acceptable. From these practices, students learn subtle lessons that only the views of people in authority matter [47]. This can also lead students to accept dictatorial tendencies since they are socialized into a culture of accepting choices of people in authority [49]. This invariably takes away the good thing in allowing students to elect their leaders freely in schools. Robinson and Taylor contend that to derive the benefit of students in schools, students should not feel obliged to say what they think teachers want to hear. [18]

4.3.2. Students' Representative Council in

Junior Secondary Schools

Students Representative Councils (SRC) as we have them in Senior High Schools and tertiary institution in Ghana provide training grounds for training students in politics and governance. It also provides platform for students to be involved in the governance processes of schools. Students' Representative Council (SRC) is very popular among Senior Secondary Schools and higher education institutions in Ghana. It emerged from the study that there was no SRC in the schools. There were however, clubs such as Environmental Club, Peace Club and Drama Club which had voluntary membership. But teachers suggested through interview that there are many ways in which pupils could be encouraged to participate in decision-making at school and also learn. A teacher from one of the schools responded to whether it was necessary to have SRC in Junior High Schools as follows:

It is a very laudable idea, something that I like because we have SRC at the senior high school and the university levels. Why can't we have it at the basic level, they are not too young at this level. The students also have their views and can lead. We can organize SRC and other school clubs through which our students can learn from to enable them function effectively in society (Field data, 2019).

In theory, most teachers have ideas on how to engage and encourage student to be part of decision-making processes in schools and also learn democratic attributes, yet, these ideas do not get to be put into practice. I noticed that teachers in Junior High Schools had a lot of ideas and concepts to make their teaching better and also enhance their relationships with their students, but they preferred to stick to the traditional methods.

4.3.3. Extra Curriculum Activities

This part sort to explore how the schools employed extra curriculum activities such as sports, debate, quizzes, drama, and dance competitions to encourage and promote participation, tolerance, critical thinking, patriotism, communication skills, etc which are very critical for democratic citizenry.

On sports, both students and teachers in the study schools indicated that students were allowed during break times to engage in various games. Again, every class had Physical Education period on the teaching time table during which the students were taken out to engage in various games under the supervision of teachers. Some of the study schools organized inter-classes/houses sports competitions for the students. A student had this to say about sports and games in his school:

We are free to play various games during break time with our friends and school mates every day. Officially too, every

class has an allotted period on the time table for Physical Education (PE). Students in a class that has Physical Education are taken out to the field dressed in sporting attire and engaged in various games under the guidance of teachers. We always enjoy PE time and learn a lot from it (Field data, 2019).

This was corroborated by a teacher in one of the schools who said:

Our students are engaged in sporting activities regularly. On daily basis, they spend part of their break time on games of their choice with their mates and every week each class gets to be taken through sports when that class has PE. We also organize inter-houses sports competition every academic year where students from the various houses compete in various sporting events for trophies (Field data, 2019).

It can be noted from the above expressions by both a teacher and a student that students have regular opportunity to be involved in sporting activities through which they can learn some skills and attributes needed for democratic life. Some of these skills include tolerance, patriotism, critical thinking, communication, and participation in public activities. The students also learn leadership skills from these activities.

On academic related competitions such as quizzes and debates, it emerged that the schools did not provide students with such extra curriculum experiences. This deprived the students golden opportunity to learn directly and indirectly some very important attributes needed for democratic citizenship.

4.4. Subjects' Contents and Teaching

The fourth research question examined how the content and the teaching of subjects in the school curriculum contributed to the development of democratic citizenship in students.

Citizenship education encompasses preparation of young people for their roles and responsibilities as citizens. This they contend can be effectively achieved through teaching and learning in schools [50]. The content of subjects taught in the school, therefore, has a significant role towards training democratic citizens.

On the contents of the subjects and democratic citizenship development, it emerged from the study that both students and teachers considered the contents in the form of topics in the various subjects as largely good for democratic citizenship education. The students particularly named Social Studies subject as one whose topics and content are framed for the training of democratic citizens.

A student had this to say:

The topics in the various subjects we are studying are good for training us to be democratic citizens as they in one way or

the other provide us with the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes to act as democratic citizens. But in particular, Social Studies has such important topics as "Leadership and Followership, Democracy and Nation Building, The World of Work, Rights and Responsibilities, Socialization, Individual Obligations in the Family" etc which are good for training us to become democratic citizens (Field data, 2019).

This shows that the curriculum for JHS in Ghana provides foundation for the training of the young people at that level to become democratic citizens. It is refreshing that the framers of the curriculum for JHS through the various subjects have set the ground in readiness to deliver education that will produce democratic citizens for the state.

To teach for democratic citizenship, it has been argued that active and participatory teaching methods should be employed to achieve civic knowledge, skills and attitudes [51]. Teaching strategies such as co-operative learning, individual and group researches, debates, fieldtrips, and discussion of controversial issues are considered appropriate as these strategies would lead to critical thinking, activism and discovery. In preparing students for political participation in society, the classroom must provide for students voices and participation.

From the study, it emerged from the students that most teachers generally led students through the acquisition of concepts, knowledge, and facts by presenting these to the students. It emerged that in most cases teachers acted as vessels to convey expected ideas to students and students were expected to receive them as delivered by the teachers. For example, a student indicated:

We come to school to meet our teachers to teach us by taking us through what they know for us to also know. As a result, when we are in class, we are required to be quite, listen attentively and hear everything the teacher says to us. The teachers therefore take us through what they have prepared to come and teach us, gives us notes to copy, and exercises to do (Field data, 2019).

A teacher in one of the schools expressed a similar view as follows:

As teachers our responsibility is to assist our students to learn the content they are expected to know and to prepare them for examinations. It is, therefore, expected of us to meet our students in the classrooms regularly and take them through the various subjects at the time allocated for them on the teaching time table. In doing this, we must prepare well and employ different strategies to make our students get the knowledge, concepts, ideas and facts we are teaching them (Field data, 2019).

It can be noticed from the expressions above by a student and

a teacher that teaching in the study schools is all about passing on concepts, ideas and facts from teachers to students primarily towards passing examinations. This suggests the teachers employ teacher-centred teaching strategies. Again, it can be noticed that teaching and learning in these Junior High Schools do not consider and include training towards the acquisitions of the needed skills and attitudes for meaningful lives in society. This reveals that the teaching approach in the schools is not good for the development of democratic citizens as it is not active and participatory, and fails in stimulating critical thinking, activism and discovery [51].

5. Conclusion

Following the advent of democracy, the introduction of citizenship education in Junior High Schools in Ghana is very much needed. In practice, however, citizenship education in Junior High Schools is problematic

Students in the study schools have a good understanding of democratic citizenship and human rights which seem a twin concept as they go hand-in-hand. This has a likely potential to make students in the school to demand for space to be more involved in decision-making processes and governance in the school especially as we live in an era of children empowerment, wider media exposures, and human rights promotion.

In the study schools, sufficient structures exist that provide opportunities for student to express their opinions and voices on issues of their schools. The practical challenge was the failure to socialize the students into using the structures to express their voices and to be part of the decision-making processes in the schools. This to a large extent, stem from the cultural orientation in Ghana where children are seen not to be matured and responsible enough to be involved in decision-making. The result of this is producing children for a democratic world without equipping them with the needed knowledge, skills, and attitudes for that democratic life. This makes education at the JHS level in Ghana to have grossly failed in producing the needed caliber of citizens for the society which is largely a democracy. Again the existence of the structures without the school encouraging and empowering the students to practice using the structures to be part of decisions-making processes cannot produce such democratic citizens that the state requires for effective functioning.

The institution of prefectural system in the schools and allowing students to vote for candidates to become their leaders was a good practice in training children into democratic citizenship especially when it comes to participating in electing competent leaders. However, students were largely not involved in the governance process

of the schools. When it came to decision-making, students were largely left out. They were not part of committees and boards where major decisions about the schools are taken. The prefects only control other students according to what teachers tell them. There are no meetings held with students to discuss issues of the schools and students are only reduced to receptacles of decisions made by teachers and management. This certainly does not train these young one into democratic practices. This shows yet another failure of the school in training the students to become democratic citizens.

The contents of the subjects in Junior High School adequately provide for training of students to become democratic citizens as the topics would inculcate in students the relevant knowledge, appropriate skills, and desirable attitudes to function as democratic citizens. However, teaching strategies employed by most teachers were ineffective in translating the prescribed contents into reality. The teaching methods were rather teacher-centred where the teachers only transferred knowledge to learners who were expected to receive that which was transferred from the teacher. This suggests a challenge in the training of teachers from teacher training institutions that feed the Junior High Schools in the country with teachers. Regular in-service workshops for teachers can go a long way to address this issue.

Generally, one can conclude that there are structural provision for the education for democratic citizenship and human rights at the Junior High School in Ghana, but in practical terms, education in JHS is not achieving this. Indeed, the aims and purposes of citizenship and human rights education can readily be drawn up, but their successful achievement is a long-term project that can take generations of teachers and students.

This study has shown that aside challenges relating to centralization of education in Ghana, schools face pressure from parents and from within to achieve democratic citizenship and human rights education. As this study confirms, there is always resistance at organizational, cultural and individual levels. However, the author is optimistic that as students fight for their rights due to the wave of human rights empowerment programmes and activities especially by Non-Governmental Organizations and Civil Society Organizations, as well as the influence of the media, they will challenge teacher privilege and authority which will grant them some power, relevance, and involvement. To achieve education for democratic citizenship and human rights at the JHS, teachers must be given refresher courses to enable them conduct affairs of their school in a way that will help learners.

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