

A STUDY OF TEACHERS' PERCEPTION OF THE IMPORTANCE OF TEACHING CIVIC EDUCATION AT HIGH SCHOOL LEVEL

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Abstract

This study's primary purpose is to explore teachers' perception of the importance of teaching civic education at high school level. Two hundred high school social studies teacher participants from sixty-five schools in four townships participated in this study. The questionnaire was based on Boadu's "Teachers' perception on the importance of teaching civic education" (2013). This questionnaire contains 32 items, each with a five-point Likert Scale. The results pointed out that the total mean and standard deviation of teachers' perception were 125.18 and 11.79 respectively. It can be said that 80% of teachers perceive moderately good perception, 8% of teachers have bad perception and 12% of teachers have good perception. Therefore, it can be said that most social studies teachers in this study have a moderately good perception in teaching civic education at the high school level. The mean of teachers' perception on the characteristics of a good citizen is highest, whereas the mean of teachers' perception on the difficulties students faced in learning civic education is lowest. Moreover, there is a positive relationship among four dimensions of teachers' perception of the importance of teaching civic education at the high school level. Therefore, most social studies teachers have a good perception in teaching civic education at the high school level.

Keywords: Civic Education, Civic Knowledge, Civic Skill, Civic Disposition, Perception

Introduction

Education is a unique tool for bringing about change and development in economic growth. Moreover, it enables individuals to develop and fulfill aspirations and aims at achieving social, economic, and political progress by developing their abilities and talents. Therefore, acquiring knowledge and skills has become essential for an informed, efficient and responsible citizen. Civic education empowers young people to be well-informed, active citizens and allows them to change the world around them.

Teachers need to consider how best to prepare students with the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors to be informed, engaged, and caring twenty-first century citizens. Teachers play an essential role when it comes to the implementation of civics along with civic education. It is crucial to scientifically gauge teachers' views on civic education because their perception will determine their commitment to teaching the course. Thus, it is important to study the teachers' perception of the importance of teaching civic education.

Purposes of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to study the teachers' perception of the importance of teaching civic education at the high school level.

The specific objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To examine the levels of teachers' knowledge on the term civic education
2. To explore the teachers' perception on the characteristics of a good citizen
3. To investigate the teachers' perception of the importance of introducing civic education to the students

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4. To find out the teachers' perception on the difficulties students faced in learning civic education
5. To compare the teachers' perception of the importance of teaching civic education in terms of four dimensions
6. To find out the relationship among four dimensions of teachers' perception of the importance of teaching civic education
7. To make suggestions to improve the teaching of civic education based on the study

Research Questions

This study is intended to answer the following research questions:

1. To what extent do teachers perceive the importance of teaching civic education to high school students?
2. On what levels are the teachers' knowledge on the term civic education?
3. How do the teachers perceive the characteristics of a good citizen?
4. To what extent do teachers perceive the importance of introducing civic education to high school students?
5. What is the perception of teachers on the difficulties students faced in learning civic education?
6. Which perception is the highest and which perception is the lowest in four dimensions of teachers' perception of the importance of teaching civic education at high school level?
7. Is there any relationship among four dimensions of teachers' perception of the importance of teaching civic education at high school level?

Scope of the Study

The following points indicate the scope of the study.

1. This study is geographically restricted to Ayeyarwady Region.
2. Participants in this study are high school social studies teachers from the selected sample schools during the academic year (2021-2022).
3. This study is limited to four categories of the perception of teachers on teaching civic education: teachers' knowledge on the term civic education, teachers' perception on the characteristics of a good citizen, teachers' perception of the importance of introducing civic education to the students and difficulties of students faced in learning civic education.

Definition of Key Terms

Civic Education

Civic education means the acquisition of knowledge of the basic democratic institutions and regulations in a narrow sense and the acquisition of competencies that enables participation and democratic action in a broader sense. Nowadays, it includes social learning and political socialization (Oesterreich, 2003).

Civic Knowledge

Civic knowledge refers to citizens' understanding of the working of the political systems and their political civic rights and responsibilities (Carpini & Keeter, 2008).

Civic Skill

Civic skill is developed from civic knowledge which primarily aims at attaining useful and meaningful knowledge to solve problems in the life of society and nation (Branson, 1998).

Civic Disposition

Civic disposition refers to the traits of civic virtues and public character which contribute to the maintenance and improvement of democratic society (Branson, 2004).

Perception

Perception is an individual's or group's unique way of viewing a phenomenon that involves the processing of stimuli and incorporates memories and experiences in the process of understanding (McDonalds, 2012).

Review of Related Literature

Concepts of Civic Education

Cogan (1998) described civic education as the contribution of education to the development of the good characteristics of being a citizen. Another scholar described it as the process of teaching society's rules, institutions, and organizations, and the role of citizens in the well-functioning of society (Reimers, 1997). Civic training does not only occur at school as a subject in the classroom but also parental and home influences and experiences outside the class contribute to students' learning. Civic education can also exist in the form of a wide range of formal, informal, and non-formal training.

From country to country, the practice of civic education varies and most countries do not treat it as a separate school subject. Civic education mostly has been locally contextualized and taught as an element of subjects such as geography, history, social studies, and moral and religious values (Kalidjernih, 2005). Civic education is constructed by cultural norms, political priorities, social expectations, national economic development aspirations, geopolitical contexts, and historical antecedents (Kennedy, 2004). Therefore, the conceptions of citizenship and civic education vary among countries and democratic traditions. These various perspectives on citizenship have significantly varying implications for a curriculum of civic education (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004).

Introducing Civic Education in School

Osler and Starkey (2004) identified four key principles and ten key concepts for teaching citizenship in multicultural democracies.

Four Key Principles

The key principles mentioned by Osler and Starkey (2004) are:

- (a) Students should learn about the complex relationships between unity and diversity in their local communities, the nation, and the world.
- (b) Students should learn about how people in their community, nation, and region are increasingly dependent upon other people around the world and are connected to the economic, political, cultural, environmental, and technological changes taking place across the planet.

- (c) The teaching of human rights should underpin citizenship education courses and programs in multicultural nation-states.
- (d) Students should be taught knowledge about democracy and democratic institutions as well as be provided opportunities in which they can practice democracy.

Ten Key Concepts

The key concepts stated by Osler and Starkey (2004) are:

(a) Democracy

The emphasis is on democracy as a way of living together as well as a means of government. Democracy is acknowledged as a fragile concept and one which needs to be reinforced through education.

(b) Diversity

Diversity addresses the wide range of cultural, ethnic, linguistic, and religious variation that exists within and across groups within multicultural nation-states. Diversity variables also include class, sexual orientation, and abilities/disabilities. International migration is the major reason for increasing diversity at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

(c) Globalization

Globalization has a number of both positive and negative features. For example, on the one hand, it may give new access to freedom and democracy. On the others, many feel threatened by cultural hegemony. Globalization processes undermine less commonly spoken languages.

(d) Sustainable Development

This is the kind of social and economic development that meets the needs of present generations without undermining the ability of future generations to meet their needs.

(e) Empire, Imperialism, Power

An examination of these concepts allows students to consider inequity between nations and to further consider how relationships between nations can be effectively, democratically, and equitably managed.

(f) Prejudice, Discrimination, Racism

Racism, prejudice, and discrimination act as barriers to democracy. To protect democracy, students need to consider how they can effectively change such barriers.

(g) Migration

Historically, migration is an established feature of human behaviour. Students need to understand the movement of people through voluntary migration, as well as the movement of refugees and asylum seekers, as a result of conflict, terror, or persecution.

(h) Identity/Diversity

Students need to understand how identities are fluid and not fixed and how they can be asserted or ascribed. Genuinely multicultural societies need to be inclusive of all citizens.

(i) Multiple Perspectives

Enabling students to understand multiple perspectives on events is essential to citizenship education.

(j) Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism

Patriotism implies a pride in one's country. Critical patriotism involves examining national structures and cultures and a readiness to address injustices and inequalities. Critical reflection is most easily achieved through a study of other contexts and cultures. Cosmopolitanism is openness to those beyond one's community, locality, religion, ethnicity, and or nationality.

Learners are expected to engage with this considerable body of knowledge even though usually only one or two hours a week are allocated to citizenship education (Osler & Starkey, 2004).

Enhancing Civic Education in the School Curriculum

According to Osler and Starkey (2004), civic education is uniquely placed to:

- (a) help young people and adults be better prepared to exercise the rights and responsibilities stipulated in international human rights instruments and national constitutions
- (b) help them acquire the skills required for active participation in the public arena and civil society as responsible and critical citizens.
- (c) increase interest in educational change, stimulate bottom-up innovation and grassroots initiatives of practitioners and students
- (d) encourage a holistic approach to education by including non-formal and informal learning in education policies
- (e) establish productive partnerships with NGOs to encourage understanding of the inter-relationship of local and national as well as global and international perspectives.

Civic Education at High School Level in Myanmar

Education is fundamental to the development of human beings and has been viewed as a fundamental human right. Worldwide, education is viewed as a prominent factor that helps in shaping the future of individuals. In Myanmar, there has been tremendous effort for reform of the education and learner-centered approaches have been introduced but challenges such as large class size, limited materials and so on. Civic education policy prioritized teaching of moral education and values of discipline, obedience and loyalty in Myanmar. Currently, from the (2018-19 AY), high school level in Myanmar is implementing the new civic education subject with the following formulated objectives. The objectives of teaching civic education are as follows:

- (1) To become good citizens with good morals
- (2) To respect the value of human rights and follow the responsibilities of a citizen
- (3) To respect the rules and law, and follow by itself, and
- (4) To learn to behave with values not only as a citizen but also as a citizen of the world.

New moral and civic subject is based on the consideration of the curriculum framework aims to establish a global society who are capable of facing the challenges of the twenty-first century. Civic education subject refers to its four learning values as Social Ethics, Rights and Responsibility, Discipline and Peaceful Living. In addition, four learning areas are described as related to self, related to others, related to group or society and related to nature and universe. The teaching learning strategies or approaches used in the text will be supported students to make own decision what is right or wrong, and why does it so. Learning activities in some lessons are supported students to improve critical thinking skill and judgment on what they should do or not in their daily life situation (Basic Education Curriculum and Textbook Committee, 2020).

Research Method

Research Design

The research design for this study is a descriptive research design, in which this study emphasizes studying the teachers' perception of the importance of teaching civic education at the high school level.

Instrument

In this study, the questionnaire for studying the teachers' perception of the importance of teaching civic education was used as the instrument. The items in the questionnaire for this study are designed by the adaptation of "Teachers' perception on the importance of teaching civic education" developed by Boadu (2013). This research questionnaire was modified by the researcher to suit the purposes of the study with the advice and guidance of the supervisor. In particular, care was taken to ensure that each item was appropriate for the culture and context of Myanmar. It was constructed based on the four major dimensions. There were 32 five-point Likert-scale items to examine the teachers' perception of the importance of teaching civic education.

Dimension 1: teachers' knowledge on the term civic education (8 items, No. 1 to No. 8)

Dimension 2: teachers' perception on the characteristics of a good citizen (8 items, No. 9 to No. 16)

Dimension 3: teachers' perception of the importance of introducing civic education to the students (8 items, No. 17 to No. 24)

Dimension 4: teachers' perception on the difficulties of students faced in learning civic education (8 items, No. 25 to No. 32)

Each item in the questionnaire was described by five responses: (strongly disagree = 1, disagree = 2, undecided = 3, agree = 4 and strongly agree = 5). After preparation, the questionnaire was reviewed by expert teachers from the Department of Curriculum and Methodology, Yangon University of Education. According to the pilot study, some items were adapted under the guidance of the supervisor and experienced teachers.

Population and Sample Size

This study is geographically restricted to Ayeyarwady Region. Using a simple random sampling method, two districts (Patheingyi and Maubin) were selected from six districts and four townships (Patheingyi, Kanyadaung, Maubin, and Nyaungdon) were chosen from the selected districts. A total number of (200) social studies teachers from sixty-five schools in four townships participated in this study.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, and percentage) were used to analyze the collected data. The data were analyzed by using Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS 20).

Research Findings

This study is designed to find out the teachers' perception of the importance of teaching civic education at the high school level from four selected townships in the Ayeyarwady Region. It includes three parts. The first part is concerned with the findings of teachers' perception of the importance of teaching civic education at the high school level. The second part is concerned with the comparison of the mean score of teachers' perception of the importance of teaching civic

education at the high school level in terms of four dimensions. The third part is concerned with the relationships among teachers' perception of the importance of teaching civic education at the high school level.

Table 1 Total Mean Value and Standard Deviation of Teachers' Perception of the Importance of Teaching Civic Education at High School Level

Dimension	No. of Teacher	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
ITCE	200	125.18	11.79	38	155

Note. ITCE = Importance of Teaching Civic Education

The average mean scores and standard deviation were 125.18 and 11.79 respectively (see Table 1). Thus, based on these results, teachers with scores less than 113.39 were identified as a low group. Teachers with scores between 113.39 and 136.97 without exception were considered as a moderate group. Then, teachers with scores greater than 136.97 were identified as a high group (see Table 2).

Table 2 Percentage of Levels of Teachers' Perception of the Importance of Teaching Civic Education at High School Level

Level of ITCE	Score	No. of Teacher	Percentage (%)
Low	$x < 113.39$	17	8%
Moderate	$113.39 \leq x \leq 136.97$	159	80%
High	$x > 136.97$	24	12%
Total		200	100%

According to Table 2, it can be said that most of the social studies teachers in this study have moderately good perception in teaching civic education.

Table 3 Mean of Teachers' Knowledge on the Term Civic Education

Dimension	No. of Teacher	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Knowledge	200	32.41	3.78	13	40

The average mean scores and standard deviation were 32.41 and 3.78 respectively (see Table 3). If the average mean score was below 28.63, it would be defined as a low group. If the average mean score was between 28.63 and 36.19 without exception, it would be defined as a moderate group. If the average mean score was higher than 36.19, it would be defined as a high group (see Table 4).

Table 4 Percentage of Levels of Teachers' Knowledge on the Term Civic Education

Level of Knowledge	Score	No. of Teacher	Percentage (%)
Low	$x < 28.63$	17	8.5%
Moderate	$28.63 \leq x \leq 36.19$	156	78%
High	$x > 36.19$	27	13.5%
Total		200	100%

According to Table 4, among the 200 participants, 156 participants have a moderate level of knowledge on the term civic education.

Table 5 Mean of Teachers' Perception on the Characteristics of a Good Citizen

Dimension	No. of Teacher	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Good Citizen	200	33.10	3.23	8	40

When the mean and standard deviation were calculated, 33.10 and 3.23 were obtained (see Table 5). Based on these results, teachers with scores less than 29.87 were identified as a low group. Teachers with scores between 29.87 and 36.33 without exception were considered as a moderate group. And then, teachers with scores greater than 36.33 were identified as a high group.

Table 6 Percentage of Teachers' Perception on the Characteristics of a Good Citizen

Level of Good Citizen	Score	No. of Teacher	Percentage (%)
Low	$x < 29.87$	8	4%
Moderate	$29.87 \leq x \leq 36.33$	168	84%
High	$x > 36.33$	24	12%
Total		200	100%

According to Table 6, most of the social studies teachers know moderately the characteristics of a good citizen.

Table 7 Mean of Teachers' Perception of the Importance of Introducing Civic Education to the Students

Dimension	No. of Teacher	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Importance	200	31.91	3.70	9	40

The mean score and standard deviation were 31.91 and 3.70 respectively (see Table 7). If the mean score was below 28.21, it would be defined as a low group. If the mean score was between 28.21 and 35.61 without exception, it would be defined as a moderate group. If the mean score was higher than 35.61, it would be defined as a high group.

Table 8 Percentage of Teachers' Perception of the Importance of Introducing Civic Education to the Students

Level of Importance	Score	No. of Teacher	Percentage (%)
Low	$x < 28.21$	30	15%
Moderate	$28.21 \leq x \leq 35.61$	144	72%
High	$x > 35.61$	26	13%
Total		200	100%

According to Table 8, it could be interpreted that most of the social studies teachers perceive teaching civic education as moderately important.

Table 9 Mean of Teachers' Perception on the Difficulties of Students Faced in Learning Civic Education

Dimension	No. of Teacher	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Difficulties	200	27.76	5.15	8	37

The mean score and standard deviation were 27.76 and 5.15 respectively (see Table 9). If the mean score was below 22.61, it would be defined as a low group. If the mean score was between 22.61 and 32.91 without exception, it would be defined as a moderate group. If the mean score was higher than 32.91, it would be defined as a high group.

Table 10 Percentage of the Difficulties of Students Faced in Learning Civic Education

Level of Difficulties	Score	No. of Teacher	Percentage (%)
Low	$x < 22.61$	26	13%
Moderate	$22.61 \leq x \leq 32.91$	154	77%
High	$x > 32.91$	20	10%
Total		200	100%

According to Table 10, most of the social studies teachers in this study think that students have moderate difficulties in learning civic education.

Table 11 Mean of Teachers' Perception of the Importance of Teaching Civic Education at High School Level

Dimension	No. of Teacher	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Knowledge	200	32.41	3.78	13	40
Good Citizen	200	33.10	3.23	8	40
Importance	200	31.91	3.70	9	40
Difficulties	200	27.76	5.15	8	37

According to Table 11, it can be said that the mean score of teachers' perception on the characteristics of a good citizen is highest among four dimensions of teachers' perception of the importance of teaching civic education. Moreover, the mean score of teachers' perception on the difficulties students faced in learning civic education is the lowest among them.

Table 12 Relationship among Teachers' Perception of the Importance of Teaching Civic Education at High School Level

Variable		Knowledge	Good Citizen	Importance	Difficulties
Knowledge	Pearson (<i>r</i>)	1	.573**	.736**	.261**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000
Good Citizen	Pearson (<i>r</i>)		1	.668**	.164*
	Sig. (2-tailed)			.000	.020
Importance	Pearson (<i>r</i>)			1	.201**
	Sig. (2-tailed)				.004
Difficulties	Pearson (<i>r</i>)				1
	Sig. (2-tailed)				

Note. ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

According to Table 12, there is a moderate relationship between teachers' knowledge on the term civic education and teachers' perception on the characteristics of a good citizen. There is a high relation among teachers' knowledge on the term civic education and teachers' perception on the characteristics of a good citizen and teachers' perception of the importance of introducing civic education to the students. There is a low relation among teachers' perception on the difficulties students faced in learning civic education and others' perception. Moreover, these results show that the direction of correlation was positive.

Discussion

The main purpose of this study is to explore the perception of teachers of the importance of teaching civic education at the high school level. After studying the responses of all teachers, the results showed that the total mean and standard deviation of teachers' perception were 125.18 and 11.79 respectively. According to the result, it can be said that 80% of teachers perceive moderately good perception, 8% of teachers response weakly and 12% of teachers have good perception in teaching civic education at high school level. These results show greater consistency with the findings of (Adeyemi, 2019) who found that teachers have a moderately good perception in teaching civic education.

According to the descriptive statistics, the mean scores of teachers' perception of the importance of teaching civic education at the high school level were 32.41, 33.10, 31.91, and 27.76 respectively. The mean score of teachers' perception on the characteristics of a good citizen is the highest among them. This finding is consistent with the study of Lee and Fatus (2005) who found that most of the teachers emphasized the students to become right and dutiful citizens of their country. According to this result, it could be said that teachers can prepare students to become good citizens of the country. The mean score of teachers' perception on the difficulties students faced in learning civic education is the lowest among them. It could be said that students can face a little difficulty in learning civic education with the help of teachers.

Moreover, according to the result, there was a positive relationship with each other. This means that if the level of teachers' knowledge on the term civic education was high, the teachers' perception on the characteristics of a good citizen can also be good, or if the level of teachers' knowledge on the term civic education was low, the teachers' perception on the characteristics of a good citizen can also be poor. It can be concluded that most of the social studies teachers have a moderately good perception in teaching civic education at high school level.

Suggestions

Some suggestions for the teaching of civic education are presented as follows. Civic education can provide students to be informed and active citizens. To achieve this, teaching and learning should be participative, interactive, and thought-provoking. In order to cultivate a commitment to civic participation and to become active members of vibrant communities, students need regular opportunities to engage in civic learning activities from the preschool to the college.

Civic education also requires a school environment of openness to debate and discussion. Teachers should encourage students to build on the knowledge, understanding, and skills that they develop through active citizenship in schools by providing them with further opportunities for active involvement and participation in communities beyond school. Teachers play a great role in teaching civic issues in educational institution. According to the results of the study, most of the social studies teachers have a moderately good perception in teaching civic education. To effectively implement a civic education program, teachers must have the sound knowledge, pedagogical skills, and dispositions. Therefore, teachers should be provided with periodic

professional development trainings for civic education to ensure quality teaching and these trainings should not be a one-time event; rather, they should be a sustained and continuous effort.

In conclusion, the teaching of civic education in school is important for the development of the country so all stakeholders (students, parents, teachers, administrators, programmers, and policymakers) should try to infuse civic education skills into all aspects of all educational organizations.

Conclusion

Civic education is a social science subject designed to teach the virtues of good citizenship. Civic education brings broad understanding and awareness of the students helping them to understand and know their values, duties, and rights in their society, community, or country at large. Therefore, teachers can use their expertise and knowledge to instruct students on key aspects of citizenship and government. Moreover, the function of teachers is to help students learn by imparting knowledge to them and by setting up a situation in which students can and will learn effectively.

It is hoped that the findings presented in this study will contribute to getting the improvement of teachers' perception on teaching civic education. Moreover, it will provide a foundation for future research. In terms of the static results, most of the teachers have a moderate level of knowledge on the term civic education. So, they can assist the students to expand their civic knowledge in learning civic education. Moreover, teachers know moderately the characteristics of a good citizen and it is also the highest among other perceptions. Therefore, they are able to help the learner to be a responsible citizen (respecting the law, the rights, and interests of others).

Moreover, most of the teachers perceive teaching civic education as moderately important. It can be said that they can effort their students to develop knowledge, skill, and disposition in teaching civic education. Again, teachers think that students have moderate difficulties in learning civic education. It can be interpreted that if they know the difficulties of students in learning, they can help them to overcome the difficulties in learning by using various kinds of teaching methods and instructional aids. In addition, there is a positive relationship among four dimensions of teachers' perception of the importance of teaching civic education at high school level. So, most of the social studies teachers have a good perception in teaching civic education at high school level.

To sum up, this study investigated the social studies teachers from high school level. As teaching civic education is important for all teachers, additional studies should be conducted with teachers from both primary and middle school levels. This study was conducted in Ayeyarwady Region. Future studies could be conducted in other geographical areas of Myanmar.

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