

**ANALYSIS OF TEACHERS' USE OF THE MORAL – PHILOSOPHICAL APPROACH
FOR TEACHING THE SWAZILAND GENERAL CERTIFICATE OF SECONDARY
EDUCATION SISWATI POETRY**

By

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ABSTRACT

The role played by SGCSE siSwati poetry in shaping and cultivating the learners' cultural, aesthetic and moral senses cannot be ignored. The moral – philosophical approach to teaching poetry is one of the approaches that is value – based in that it helps learners discover the worthiness of moral values and philosophical considerations discernible while reading a poem. The research sought to analyse teachers' use of the moral – philosophical approach for teaching the Swaziland General Certificate of Secondary Education siSwati Poetry. The objectives were; to identify the level of teachers' knowledge on the moral - philosophical approach to teaching poetry, to determine the extent at which teachers use the moral - philosophical approach for teaching SGCSE siSwati poetry and to identify the factors that determine the use of the moral – philosophical approach for teaching SGCSE siSwati poetry. The study utilised the mixed method Embedded research design. The questionnaire, interviews and focus group discussions were used for data collection. Twelve (12) schools in the Shiselweni region of Swaziland were sampled using critical case sampling method with thirty six (36) teachers being participants. Data collected through the questionnaire were analysed descriptively using frequency tables and percentages while qualitative data were analysed as interpretations of statements made and summarised. The study found that teachers understand the moral – philosophical approach and its activities. The moral – philosophical approach was used averagely by teachers. Usage of the moral – philosophical approach is determined by the intrinsic and extrinsic properties of the poem. It was concluded that teachers understood the moral – philosophical approach and were able to describe the activities that are used under this approach and averagely make use of the approach. It was therefore recommended that teachers should make use of all the activities under this approach.

Key words: Moral education, value – based education, moral – philosophical approach.

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1. Introduction

The inculcation of moral values through education is an urgent and controversial issue especially because moral values vary depending on nationalities and have a direct influence on learners' achievement (Iqbal, 2013). Every society has got its own particular culture that is highly variable and constantly changing. Culture is an integrated pattern of human knowledge, beliefs and behaviour. What is morally right in one society may be morally wrong with another. On the other hand, all societies expect their citizens to behave ethically, morally and responsibly. With the diminishing practices of oral literature among Africans, a decline in the transmission of culture from one generation to another is being experienced (Mafela, 2012). This affects the learners' emotional intelligences as they are related to their moral behaviours; their way of thinking, problem solving, social interacts, personal emotion and academic achievement. Morality is an educational objective that can best be served through the teaching of literature. In the earlier times readers of literature were really sceptical to think beyond Shakespeare and Milton (Madhi, 2015). It is only after colonisation that the literature of different countries gained prominence, making it easy therefore to incorporate traditional literature and culture relevant to each and every nation in the school curriculum.

According to Sone (2008) literature is a powerful tool that can restore the lost cultural heritage that are important in the achievement of target goals of education through hard work. Literature links readers to the broader cultural world of the society in which we live therefore, has the power to affect its readers' feelings and behaviour, finally influencing people to behave in various ways. The teaching of literature in education is aimed at developing the potential of students in a holistic, balanced and integrated manner encompassing the intellectual, spiritual, emotional and physical aspects in order to create a balanced and harmonious human being with high social standards (SGCSE SiSwati Syllabus, 2017 - 2018). Beyond language ability, students learn about people, culture, ethics, behaviours and other social norms. Hence, the introduction of literature expands students' imagination and literacy. There is no doubt that fictional lives have affected generations of readers and because of their power, immediacy and beauty influenced many lives in a profoundly moral sense (Carr, 2013). The art of teaching literature allow teachers to transmit the profound meanings of the determinable culture, its stereotypes and archetypes and collective conscience creating the possibility of social change through a critic that is able to act into the sublimed world of emotions (Carr, 2013).

In the past child upbringing in the Swazi society was a joint responsibility of the home, school and society. But due to a frail in the fabric of the Swazi society, it is gradually remaining the duty of the school to develop student's integrity by properly educating their minds and hearts on their social responsibilities and morality. This is necessitated by the fact that the 21st century classroom is crowded by a number of children from disorganised family structures; orphaned and vulnerable children, children from single and divorced parenting, grand parented, abused children and some children who are heading families by themselves. As a result immorality has eaten up the hearts of most learners. Immorality hampers not only on the learners' intellectual growth but also their emotional growth. Common acts of immorality exhibited by ESwatini learners include; rudeness, indecent dressing, disloyalty, absenteeism, bullying, examinations malpractice to mention a few.

The desire for effective moral order has become an issue of both serious and urgent concern for all Swazis. Human society everywhere has a set of core values to live by (Ohwovorione, 2013). These values can be better taught explicitly and implicitly within the school curriculum. According to the Council of Europe Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education (2010) in all areas of education, member states should promote educational approaches and teaching methods which aim at learning to live together in a democratic and multi – cultural society and at enabling learners to acquire knowledge and skills to promote social cohesion, value diversity and equality, appreciate differences, settle disagreements and conflicts in a non – violent manner with respect for each others' rights as well as combat all forms of discrimination and violence especially bullying and harassment . To imbibe moral values in the SGCSE curriculum, learning of the mother tongue, siSwati, has been made compulsory. The inclusion of the literature and culture components in the siSwati subject has made learning of moral values effortless for learners undergoing education in the Kingdom of ESwatini; it is a matter of the teacher adorning and exploring creative and culturally relevant teaching approaches that will allow learners to acquire and develop these values.

The 21st century curriculum does not specify exactly as to which values should be promoted in relation to the social, economic and political spheres of life except to say that the values should reflect universal principles of tolerance, diversity and justice (Mohammd, 2012). This therefore necessitated the paradigm shift from the General Certificate of Education (GCE) O' Level siSwati to SGCSE siSwati, an integrated curriculum that is offering skills, knowledge, attitudes and values that are related to the kingdom of Eswatini cultural context to diverse learners' needs. Teaching and learning of SGCSE siSwati is crucial to the development of competency in the use of the siSwati language and understanding siSwati literature and culture. As part of the course, learners study both modern literature and traditional/oral literature and culture of which poetry forms compulsory sections of both modern and traditional/oral literature (SGCSE siSwati syllabus, 2017 – 2018).

SiSwati modern poetry in SGCSE are written poems which are composed by known poets and writers, compiled and published in poetry anthologies and then prescribed for the school system by the National Curriculum Centre (NCC) through the necessary stakeholders. Under oral poetry, Swazi royal praises (Swazi Queens'and Kings' praises), Swazi clan or family praises and Swazi traditional songs are three categories prescribed for SGCSE siSwati poetry. Although poetry is perceived as a difficult genre by most learners, the poems taught in the SGCSE siSwati syllabus are an interplay of universal human conditions particularly the social, political and cultural circumstances . The mother tongue siSwati is a good source of moral instruction. One of the reasons why the position of siSwati learnt as a compulsory subject for learners at all levels cannot be challenged is based on the view that it is a vehicle for the transmission of cultural values, norms, beliefs and practices of the Swazi nation. The mother tongue siSwati is a basic social instrument important for the formulation of social structures, their maintenance as well as their continuity (Hertzler,1968).

Most studies on teaching activities for moral education recommend a problem – based approach to instruction whereby students work in small group discussions and use subject topics incorporating moral issues, dilemmas and values (Kohlberg, 2012). This approach gives room for dialogue and

interaction between learners which is crucial for their moral and pro- social development, thus making them open – minded and confident to express their thoughts, feelings and emotions. Self-evaluation exercises are another instructional activity used in moral education. It deals with the learners' personality through a personal interaction exercise known as the emphatic task. The learners imagine or put themselves in the shoes of the persona and it helps them develop the right emotions, ideas and opinions on the poem. According to Clark (2001) such exercises help stimulate the learners' cognitive moral growth by helping them solve conflicts, become autonomous and critical thinkers. In the process learners develop feelings for themselves and others as well, a tranquillity of mind, subdue rude and uncultivated nature, awaken the learners' sympathy and promote harmony (Han, 2014).

Besides selection of appropriate instructional strategies effective teaching of the poem call for other ethical considerations such as the teachers understanding of the subject matter, appreciation of the use of language in a vivid manner and the different poetic tastes that makes some poems difficult for learners. The teachers' understanding of the poet's ideology, background and diction are of equal importance before discussing the poem with the learners. A well taught poem should be educational, cultural, moral, recreational and socio-political (Xerri, 2012). Such a poem can be an aid to cultural assimilation of acculturation; language development and competence, conflict resolution; emotional development and stability; development of positive and good oriented - attitudes to life; a good liberal education, entertainment, relaxation and the sharing of vicarious experiences of positive value; development of desired and desirable moral or other attributes and a consequence of all these is a stable and mature personality (Nava, 2001).

Instilling moral values through the teaching and learning of SGCSE siSwati poetry entails that the students learn the poem to learn- which is a natural search for knowledge aimed at changing the society through intelligent and responsible actions adapted from the poem. Teaching and learning of the poem for total or holistic human growth calls for learners to acquire values and attitudes in the poem that will make learners live responsibly, respect and cooperate with other people and in general with all the living organisms in the planet.

Learners should discover universal dimensions where genuine human values, not individual human values reside. Learning the poem should lead to the discovery of one's own being and the inner wisdom achieved through self-knowledge. Hence, this study sought to analyse teachers' use of the moral – philosophical approach for teaching SGCSE siSwati poetry.

Theoretical Framework

The study was framed within the moral reasoning theory by Kohlberg (1975). Kohlberg (1975) argue that moral education should be aimed at moral development of the individual and his or her ability to deal autonomously with moral dilemmas and ethical issues. Kohlberg's (1975) theory focussed especially on cognitive skills such as critical thinking, moral decision making and moral reasoning. Based on Kohlberg's theory teaching and learning outcomes of the poem should be based on the learners' ability to apply moral principles of justice to moral dilemmas.

Research Questions

The following questions were answered by the study;

1. What are the teachers' understandings of the moral - philosophical approach?
2. To what extent do teachers use the moral – philosophical approach for teaching SGCSE siSwati poetry?
3. What are the factors that determine the use of the moral – philosophical approach for teaching SGCSE siSwati poetry?

2. Methodology

The study adopted a mixed method (quantitative and qualitative) embedded research design approach. Critical case sampling method was used to select three (3) schools per cluster and three (3) teachers per school out of the four (4) clusters that exists in the Shiselweni region of ESwatini; making a total of twelve (12) schools and thirty six (36) teachers. Data was obtained through the questionnaire as the primary source, interviews and focus group discussions as secondary sources. The instruments had a reliability value of 0.864. The researcher personally delivered the questionnaire and conducted face to face interviews and focus group discussions with teachers teaching SGCSE SiSwati in all the four chosen clusters of the Shiselweni region on agreed dates of appointments. Quantitative data from the questionnaire was analysed descriptively using frequency tables and percentages in relation to the problem and questions. Qualitative data given from the interviews and obtained from the focus group discussions were analysed as interpretations of statements that were made and summarised as opinions and suggestions where applicable.

3. Findings of the study

Research question 1: What are teachers' understandings of the moral – philosophical Approach?

Most of the teachers' definitions of the moral - philosophical approach allude to the usage of poems to teach learners about accepted and non – accepted standards of behaviour in society. One of the teachers' definitions read *“this approach directs my learners to self- realisation and self- understanding while in the process of interpreting the poem”*. Some teachers' definitions alluded to the fact that different poems explore different ideologies and points of views. These teachers gave this definition *“it is an approach to teaching poems that explore different ideologies”*.

Also, from the teachers' definitions of this approach the findings revealed that teachers' responses to the definition of the moral - philosophical approach from focus group data proved that teachers are aware that the moral- philosophical approach entails teachers' awareness of the wisdom that is found in poetry. When asked as to how they use the moral – philosophical approach for teaching poetry, teachers said that they give the learners questions on the poem that will help instil positive values about life. One teacher said *“the moral - philosophical approach is value based education”*.

The findings from the teachers' response revealed that this approach of teaching poetry adhere to the learners' cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains of learning. Teachers gave an example of the poem "Vuka Mfati" translated as "Woman Wise Up" which is written from the ideology of a female poet exploring expectations from women as viewed from the African society perspective. Teachers also mentioned the satiric songs taught as traditional poems to the learners like the one that instil chastity values with the girl child entitled "Ge- ge- ge emcamelweni" meaning a giggle made by girls who sleep around with all men. Also, the traditional poem mentioned above by teachers figuratively paints a visual image of the prostitute who exposes her thighs scarlet for men to see. Teachers said the learners can role play, dramatize and discuss the values about the girl child explored by the poem and this educates them holistically about the poem and in that way they gain pride thus, boosting their self - esteem and confidence. Such methods also instil a lot of positive values in life like tolerance, team spirit, effective communication, love, responsibility and so forth and so on.

Research question 2: To what extent do teachers use the moral – philosophical approach for teaching SGCSE siSwati poetry?

Teachers teaching SGCSE siSwati poetry filled the questionnaire which had indicators representing the different activities that teachers engage on under the moral – philosophical approach and the extent to which they use each of the indicators for teaching SGCSE siSwati poetry. An interview guide was also used to find out which activities do teachers use under the moral - philosophical approach to teaching SGCSE siSwati poetry and the extent at which they were used. Table 1 presents the responses from the questionnaire on activities teachers used under the moral – philosophical approach.

Table 1

Activities used under the moral – philosophical approach and the extent at which they are used by teachers (N=38)

Teaching Activities	NE	LE	ME	GE	Total
Discussions on moral dilemmas	2.6% (1)	10.5% (4)	28.9% (11)	57.9% (22)	100% (38)
Get learners search for moral values	0% (0)	7.9% (3)	44.7% (17)	47.4% (18)	100% (38)
Conduct self – evaluation exercises	7.9% (3)	21.1% (8)	36.8% (14)	34.2% (13)	100% (38)

KEY: NE – No Extent; LE – Little Extent; ME – Moderate Extent; GE - Greater Extent

NB: Number in parenthesis represent frequency

Table 1 indicate that teachers do use the moral – philosophical approach for teaching SGCSE siSwati poetry. From the table the findings revealed that giving the learners tasks in which they discuss on moral dilemmas was used at a greater extent by 57.9% of the teachers (n=22). Activities in which the learners are to search for moral values explored by the poem were used also at a greater extent by (n=18, 47.4%) of the learners. Conducting self – evaluation exercises was used at a moderate extent by 36.8% of the teachers (n = 14).

Teachers teaching SGCSE siSwati poetry were probed deeper on the activities they use under the moral - philosophical approach and the extent at which they are used. The findings from the interview data concur with findings from quantitative data. The findings revealed that the moral - philosophical approach entails teaching poetry for instilling positive values, beliefs and attitudes to the learners. This is revealed by the fact that giving learners tasks in which they discuss the moral dilemmas raised in the poem was used greatly by teachers at (n=22, 57.9%). Teachers also revealed that getting learners to search for moral values in the poem is also used greatly by 47.4% of the teachers (n=18). According to the teachers, using these activities is best enjoyed more especially when teaching traditional poetry (African songs, chants, praises, poems and praise names). One teacher was quoted as saying “*traditional poetry contains wisdom*” Teachers said such activities assist the learners explore how the poem project and manifest the world we inhabit. Conducting self – evaluation exercises for the learners were used at a moderate extent of (n=14, 36.8%) in this approach. Teachers moved on to explain and justify their limited use of self – evaluation exercises by emphasising on the fact that the moral – philosophical approach is value – based learning; values are not individualised instead they are a group activity. Most teachers said “*group activities are used in this approach because they inculcate team spirit and effective communication skills*”. When asked if this approach also suits learners with whom siSwati is not their first language, teachers responded that this approach help those learners learn the values associated with the Swazi culture to the fullest. The findings also revealed that teachers use the moral - philosophical approach of teaching poetry as a way of strengthening the learners' beliefs system and developing their inter and intra – personal skills (producing learners with good social interaction skills as well as well understood thoughts and emotions).

Research question 3: What are the factors that determine the use of the moral – philosophical approach for teaching SGCSE siSwati poetry?

Teachers teaching SGCSE siSwati poetry were asked on the factors that determine the use of the moral - philosophical approach for teaching SGCSE siSwati poetry. The findings from the teachers revealed that firstly, teachers see no difference between a teaching approach and a teaching method. According to the teachers, an approach is what informs the teaching method. Teachers said teaching approaches are good because they recognise the fact that every poem is likely to be a complex entity and capable of analysis and commentary from a variety of different points of views. From the teachers' responses the findings revealed that the factors that determine the use of the moral – philosophical approach for teaching SGCSE siSwati poetry can be grouped into the intrinsic and

extrinsic properties of the poem. The intrinsic, being the language properties of the poem and the extrinsic being the type of the poem subcategorised into; biographical factors, historical, philosophical and aesthetic factors of the poem.

A teacher referring to the intrinsic properties of a poem was quoted saying *“No poem could be used without it being read and assimilated”*. According to teachers, intrinsic properties of a poem are the; grammatical, lexical, structural and the cultural elements of the poem. Teachers’ responses were all based on the fact that teaching approaches that will help expose learners to the intrinsic properties of a poem are compulsory in the teaching and learning of a poem. Another teacher said that *“all poems should be taught with the inclusion of the stylistics and language - based response approach”* Another teacher emphasising the idea of the intrinsic properties of the poem said *“poems may differ but they are all made up of language”*. Teachers emphasised that the approach to poetry goes via the language of the poem.

On the biographical features of the poem, one teacher said *“Other poets write from their own points of view not from the world’s and the same thing applies to the readers who attach different views on the poem”*. Teachers said therefore, that the teacher should be conscious enough to choose an approach that will help learners give meaning to the poem without neglecting the poets’ intentions, which will lead to learners identifying the values and issues explored by the poem.

Historical factors adhere to the acute awareness of cultural situatedness of reading and cognitive interpretation. One of the teachers said *“every poem has been created at a particular point in historical times and may bear evidence of historical processes that are economic, social, political or ideological.”* From the teachers’ responses it is revealed that some poems may bear a special type of influence like that of literary history. Teachers mentioned that teaching such poems may include the sociological point of view of the poem whereby the poem is taught in a way that it reflects various aspects of the social contexts in which it has been produced.

A teacher was quoted mentioning the use of projects as effective teaching methods for the poem *“philosophical poems demand language libraries and internet facilities so that learners can do research”*. Teachers mentioned that through research the learners can get the idea behind the poets’ writing. To this end, learners can be given activities in which they conduct self - evaluation of their own work. These can be journal writings where they can record their understandings of the poem.

Teachers mentioned that aesthetics deals not only with the nature and value of the arts but also with those responses to natural objects that find expression in the language of the beautiful and the ugly. When probed deeper as to which teaching approaches could be used for such poems, teachers said *“the teacher should give learners activities that will make them venture into language creatively with deliberate intent”* and that teaching approaches for such poems should be those that equip the learner with both the language and a sensible aesthetic appreciation of the poem.

4. Discussion

The findings revealed that teachers understand the moral – philosophical approach as a value – based approach to teaching poetry that help instil positive values about life helping learners relate with the values explored by the poem. In support of this idea Carr (2013) alludes to

the idea that the art of teaching literature allow teachers to promote social change through transmitting the culture, stereotypes and archetypes of a particular culture. Teachers' understanding of the moral – philosophical approach showed their clear understanding of the general aims of SGCSE siSwati literature as stated in the SGCSE siSwati Syllabus (2017 – 2018) that beyond language ability, students learn about people, culture, ethics, behaviours and other social norms.

The study established that teachers used the moral – philosophical approach averagely. Discussions on moral dilemmas were used greatly by teachers at 57.9% followed by searching for moral values at 47.4%. Discussions on moral dilemmas are greatly recommended by Kohlberg (2012) because of its ability to give room for dialogue and interaction between learners which is crucial for their moral and prosocial development.

Self – evaluation exercises for the learners was the least used activity by 34.2% of the teachers. The findings are contrary to Clark (2001) who recommended the use of self – evaluation exercises as an instructional activity that teach the learners wisdom through stimulating cognitive moral growth, ability to solve conflicts, becoming autonomous and enhancing the learners' critical thinking skills. Han (2014) added that in the process learners learn to develop feelings for themselves and others as well as a tranquillity of mind thus subduing their rude and uncultivated nature; promoting peace and harmony on the other hand. The findings on the least use of self – evaluation exercises confirm the researcher's main argument that immorality has indeed eaten up the hearts of most Swazi learners.

5. Conclusions

The conclusions made from the study were that teachers understood the moral – philosophical approach and were able to describe the activities that are used under this approach. Teachers easily differentiated between activities that were learner – centred from those that were teacher – centred. Also, it was concluded that teachers used the moral – philosophical approach averagely. The language of the poem and extrinsic properties of the poem; which are biographical, historical, philosophical and aesthetic factors determine the use of the moral – philosophical approach.

Recommendations

The study recommended that teaching and learning of poetry for moral development should balance up the use of all the activities under the moral – philosophical approach which is an integrated approach to teaching and learning SGCSE siSwati poetry. This will help align poetry with the SGCSE curriculum which is a curriculum that views the world as complex, changing and unpredictable. The language, cultural and personal growth aspect of the poem are key constructs to be adhered to in teaching poetry using the moral – philosophical approach as their combination ensure learners' holistic appreciation of the poem. Lastly, for each and every poem, language - based activities should be used before considering the biographical, historical, philosophical and aesthetic factors of the poem because language is the mode of delivery of the subject matter for all poems. Research may further look into how the assessment syllabus for SGCSE siSwati poetry can

include emphatic task questions that test the learners' application of emphatic skills learnt in class through teachers' use of the moral – philosophical approach to teaching SGCSE siSwati poetry.

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