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# Forming learners through citizenship education to recognise and counter lawlessness in their surroundings

## ABSTRACT

Due to various conditions, countries such as Venezuela, Nigeria, and South Africa suffer from lawlessness (disregard of norms and rules of society) today, threatening their social fabric. It is contended on the basis of the situation in South Africa that citizenship education<sup>1</sup> is arguably a suitable vehicle (in combination with, for instance, religion education, moral education, and forgiveness education) for offering tolerance, forgiveness, hospitality, and reconciliation education in schools, all of these as means for counteracting lawless (deviant, errant) behaviour. Thus far, reflection on citizenship education has, however, been characterised by conceptual uncertainty, controversy, and a wide range of applications in practice. The paper reports on theoretical interpretive-constructivist research. This research is aimed at the question of how citizenship education could be employed to form (equip, educate) young people so that they can be able to display morally justifiable behaviour and recognise and counteract lawlessness wherever they encounter it in their lifeworld.

**Keywords:** anomie; citizenship education; globalism; lawlessness; morally justifiable behaviour

## OPSOMMING

Te wyte aan verskeie omstandighede is die burgers van 'n hele aantal lande regoor die wêreld - insluitend Venezuela, Nigerië en Suid-Afrika - aan die een of ander vorm van wetteloosheid blootgestel (die verontagsaming van die gangbare wette of norme van die land en die samelewing), en dit kan uiters nadelig wees vir die welsyn van die samelewing. Op grond van 'n ontleding van die situasie in Suid-Afrika word aangevoer dat burgerskaponderwys<sup>2</sup> - in kombinasie met byvoorbeeld godsdiensonderwys, morele onderwys en vergifnisonderwys - 'n bruikbare instrument in skole kan wees om wetteloosheid (afwykende en normverontagsamende gedrag) teen te werk. Tot dusver was die besinning oor burgerskaponderwys egter gekenmerk deur konseptuele onsekerheid, meningsverskille en 'n wye verskeidenheid toepassings in die praktyk. Dié artikel doen verslag oor teoretiese interpretivistiese-konstruktivistiese navorsing. Hierdie navorsing is gerig op die vraag hoe burgerskaponderwys ingespan sou kon word om jongmense te vorm (toe te rus, op te voed) om hulle in staat te stel tot moreel-regverdigbare gedrag, die herkenning van wetteloosheid en die bestryding daarvan waar hulle dit ook al in hul leefwêreld teëkom.

**Kernbegrippe:** anomie; burgerskaponderwys; globalisme; moreel-regverdigbare gedrag; wetteloosheid

- 1 When written in lowercase, this term refers to the broad academic study or expertise field. When capitalised, it refers to a scholarly subject taught and studied at institutions of higher education or a school subject. Lowercase is used in cases such as this one, where the argument cuts both ways.
- 2 Wanneer dit met kleinletters geskryf word, verwys hierdie begrip na die breë akademiese studie- of kundigheidsveld. Wanneer dit met hoofletters geskryf word, verwys dit na 'n akademiese vak wat aan hoërondewysinstellings onderrig en bestudeer word of 'n skoolvak. Kleinletters word gebruik in gevalle soos hierdie, waar die argument na twee kante sny.

## 1. Introduction and problem statement

Life in South Africa - as in several other countries worldwide, such as Venezuela and Nigeria - is currently characterised by an atmosphere of general lawlessness (i.e., a disregard of generally accepted norms and legislation at various levels of existence). According to some observers, crime and violence have become the order of the day in South Africa (Hattingh, 2019:3; Prins, 2019:20; Shoki, 2021). To mention only three examples: By 2017, an average of 52 persons were murdered in South Africa every day; this amounted to an annual murder rate of 34 per 100 000 of the population (Africa Check, 2018). In 2018, South Africa's homicide rate stood at 36.40 per 100 000 of the population, and its serious assault rate at 293.55 per 100 000 (World Population Review, 2023).

The mere fact that at least three commissions of inquiry into state capture and corruption were running concurrently at the beginning of 2019 (Zondo, Mokgoro and the Commission into the Independent Investment Corporation's activities) was a testimony to the widespread nature of the crime problem in the white-collar sector. A similar though smaller-scale crime problem is observable in everyday life on the streets: petty and opportunistic crime, attacks, robbery, car theft, traffic law infringements, xenophobia, murder, gangsterism, illegal weapons, drug peddling, rape, child molestation, assault, housebreaking, car hijacking, vagrancy, littering, disturbance of the peace, illegal land occupation, and many more, as reported in the daily press (South African Institute of Race Relations, 2017). Serious as the problem is in South Africa, it is not yet the worst in the world. The World Justice Project ranked South Africa 44th out of 113 countries in the world according to their Rule of Law Index (Denmark: 1; Venezuela: 113) (World Justice Project, 2018: 20-21).

The current lawlessness in South Africa could be a spin-off of the socio-political change that the country underwent three decades ago with the advent of full democracy. Social changes - as Swamy, Paluri and Koshy (2017:3) observed - particularly when they occur relatively fast, tend to restructure human social institutions (such as the state/government) and the social conditions in families and communities. Such changes, according to them, "have direct impacts on our life affecting and influencing our individuality, rights, livelihood, community formation and human relations and interactions". Varghese (2017:11) mentions several social problems that were observable in India due to social change, such as fear, hatred, xenophobia and "othering", violence, poverty and growing inequality, political instability, weakened democratic and social institutions, and corruption. All of these had "become the norms in the prevailing social order" (Varghese, 2017:11). Gangte (2017:59) adds social and racial discrimination to the list of social ailments in India. As Santhakumar (2019) has indicated, the caste system in India has had a seriously detrimental impact on the school attendance of children from the lowest socio-economic groups. According to The Conversation.com (2020), the violence in South Africa could be regarded as an extension of a long history of violence. Violence was used as a tool of power and governance by colonists<sup>3</sup> to repress and control the indigenous people. The apartheid regime between 1948 and 1994 used violence as part of its repertoire to gain and maintain social and political control. Such a culture of violence is hard to stop, especially when it has become legitimised and institutionalised.

The problem of lawlessness could, in part, also be seen as one of the consequences of globalism. According to Banks (2008:131) and Young (2020:124), recent global developments have eroded the traditional political boundaries between states. These developments create new sets of problems associated with stateless people, people with dual nationalities, and refugees, all of which lead to social problems such as marginalisation, "othering", differential

3 "Colonist" refers to an individual who migrates from their home country to settle in a colony. Colonists are typically part of a larger group of people who establish a permanent presence in a territory under another country's control. "Colonialist" is a broader term that encompasses various aspects of colonialism. It refers to the ideology, policies, or practices associated with the establishment, maintenance, and expansion of colonies (cf. Sharma, 2024).

exclusion, systematic and/or structural exclusion, xenophobia, discrimination (on ethnic or gender grounds), terrorism, ethnic and religious tensions and wars, poverty, corrupt governments, and even child trafficking (also cf. George, 2017:63). South Africa indeed has recently encountered problems of this nature in that it has had to host large numbers of migrants from other African states. This has led to many tensions and even to violence (in the shape of, for instance, looting and burning down the shops of foreigners and occasionally attacking and killing them) (cf. Anon., 2018). It is not difficult to see that (and how) global developments could feed into a general spirit of lawlessness. The problem in South Africa has been exacerbated by political strife regarding, for instance, service delivery issues.

The purpose of this paper is to report on the results of our research into how citizenship education could be employed to form (educate, equip) young people to understand not only the threat of lawlessness to themselves, their communities, and their countries but also to be able to counteract lawlessness wherever it is encountered. The remainder of the paper is devoted to, firstly, an outline of our method of investigation and the conceptual-theoretical framework against which the study was done and then to our findings, a discussion thereof, and a recommendation.

## 2. Method of investigation

We conducted a literature review covering the following parts of this investigation: what the term “citizenship education” means, what morality entails, and how citizenship education should be rooted in a sense of morality and hence could be employed to counter lawlessness. We used the EBSCOhost, Google Scholar, and Google Books databases to identify publications that addressed the different facets of the investigation. In the process, we used the following key terms for the computer searches: [“citizenship”], [“citizenship education”], [“moral” AND/OR “ethics”], and [“lawlessness”] (cf. Fink, 2014).

Analysis of the identified publications enabled us to gain insight into lawlessness and the underlying religious-moral-ethical causes of the problem. This analysis also enabled us to gain an understanding of Citizenship Education as a school subject and how it could be employed to help learners recognise lawlessness in their surroundings and counter it effectively.

We employed an interpretive-constructivist approach in an attempt to discover complex webs of significance that we bring to bear in reading text (Chapman, 2017:3). Particular words and phrases produced complex webs of association relating to the theories, methods, research and debates connected to our investigation (Chapman, 2017:3). Constructivism, namely the view that the investigator imposes meaning on the world rather than existing in the world independent from us, worked hand in hand with interpretivism in our efforts to structure the notion of lawlessness and suggestions for how to counter it through citizenship education (Duffy & Jonassen, 1992:3). Interpretive and constructivist work does not aspire to be “correct”, however. Different interpretations offer different views on the subject matter. As Chapman (2017:4) correctly states, the purpose of a constructivist-interpretive exercise is to analyse the subject matter (in this particular case, the different facets of the problem under investigation, as outlined above) and draw conclusions about it as it might be if based on a religious-moral sense of justice and lawfulness, and not simply what is, that is, the current state of lawlessness. Van Huyssteen (2006:33) concurs: We should accept the unavailability of complete consensus about the subject in question (lawlessness and what citizenship education could achieve in countering it) and work toward creating an optimally coherent, communal framework or wide reflective equilibrium of thought and action regarding it (see Van der Walt (2020) for a detailed discussion of the application of interpretivism-constructivism as a method of research).

### 3. Conceptual and theoretical framework

#### *Possible causes of lawlessness in South Africa*

Lawlessness in society - that is, the tendency to disregard the laws, rules, norms and demands or propriety generally applicable and obeyed by citizens - results from a collapse of norm structures, a tendency towards general normlessness, a lack of social capital and from moral laxity due to the loss or lack of a moral compass. In extreme forms, lawlessness could lead to social instability, violence, widespread socially unacceptable behaviour such as corruption, state capture and a collapse of discipline in public and private life, as well as in schools. The situation could even deteriorate into anomie. Anomie (derived from Gr. *a* (not) + *nomos* (law)) can be literally translated as "normlessness" or "lawlessness" but has been technically defined by Durkheim (1893/1984:4, 17, 29, 56, 99, 101) and others (Marra, 1989:67, 68, 69, 72, 75, 77, 79; Orru, 1983:499, 501, 503, 507, 511, 514) as a form of collective behaviour that erupts when the surrounding society has undergone significant changes (usually over a relatively short period of time). In South Africa, the advent of democracy in 1994 after the struggle against apartheid could be seen as such a change when a turnabout in socio-economic and political fortunes has occurred. More generally, it occurs when there is a turnabout in socio-economic and political fortunes in a country, when there is a significant discrepancy between the ideological theories and values commonly professed and what ordinary people actually believe to be achievable in their everyday lives. (The frequent service-delivery riots in South Africa seem to point in this direction: Citizens blame the new post-1994 government for not honouring service-delivery promises to citizens and communities.)

Anomie, in this technical sense, has no ontic status; it is not a phenomenon in the ordinary sense of the word but should be seen as a consequence flowing from a larger context. This refers to the social-societal conditions after a dramatic change, such as the advent of full democracy, as in South Africa. It points to a condition of increasing social disorder and a mismatch between personal or group demands of propriety and wider social demands of propriety, as well as the behaviour of a relatively large segment of the citizenry against the backdrop of the larger context. Anomie is one of the symptoms of a lack of moral guidance to its citizens by society at large. It also embodies the lack of an established, broad-based social ethic. Lawlessness, if allowed to deteriorate into anomie, could pose a serious threat to a country's social fabric (Naidoo, 2009:154, 164; Twyman-Ghoshal, 2021:2024).

For purposes of the research reported in this article, we worked with the everyday notion of lawlessness, that is, a widespread disregard of the acceptable norms, laws, rules, and demands of propriety on which life in the country is supposed to be based since we are not convinced that the situation in South Africa has already deteriorated to anomic levels. Our position is that Citizenship Education as a school subject could be used to address behaviour generally or widely adjudged to be anti-social and disorderly, in contravention of the spirit of the country's legislation, law and order, and way of life. This, we would argue, is required to prevent social life in South Africa from sliding into anomie.

The *social space and ethical function or action theory*, as expounded by Van der Walt (2017(a): endnote 5; 2017(b): section 6; 2017(c)), suggests that everything taking place in a specific social space – in this case South Africa as such a space – should ideally exude a spirit of morality, the awareness of being guided by a moral compass. In other words, this is an orientation towards always, or as far as possible, trying to care for the well-being of all other South African citizens and promoting the general good in and of society. A caring attitude should be observable in displays of love and courtesy wherever citizens interact with one another or where one individual's actions and behaviour might affect others' living conditions. It should also be observable in displays of mutual understanding of situations and conditions, and in demonstrations of empathy and moral imagination, that is, of the ability to place oneself in the shoes of another.

It is helpful in this regard to distinguish between morality and ethics, although the two terms are almost interchangeable in common usage. In this research, morality was seen to refer to the rights and wrongs of a person's conscious actions and ethics to cover the more general principles by which we understand moral questions (Thompson, 2018:3).

Put somewhat differently, morality refers to the value system that drives a person's actions and deeds from "within". In contrast, ethics was seen to refer to a value system that could impact a person's actions and deeds from "without" (such as a professional code, e.g. a manifesto of human rights: the law of the country). The focus of this research was on morality. Morality is categorical in the sense that it is about intrinsic questions of right and wrong, the good and the bad, obligation and duty, and consequences and intentions as these apply to people's conduct and relationships (Grayling, 2010:15). Ethics, on the other hand, reflects about the general principles at the root of moral questions and conundrums.

There seem to be a number of problems surrounding Citizenship Education as a school subject, and these problems cast doubt on whether the subject in its current form and state will be amenable to this moral purpose of countering lawlessness. Among these is the fact that there seems to be, as yet, no general agreement about what the term "citizenship education" designates. Furthermore, its moral base in the South African context might not be sufficiently robust for the task at hand, namely to help counter lawlessness. Put differently, there seems to be as yet not a sufficient moral drive from "within" South Africans as members of a unified nation. The citizenship education programme currently being taught in schools also does not seem to make a significant difference in this regard. The following two sub-sections reflect on these two issues.

#### *No agreement about the term "citizenship education" and its application*

There is as yet no agreement among scholars about the definition, conceptualisation and focus of citizenship education (Peterson & Bentley, 2017:106-107; Goren & Yemini, 2017:170; Moon, 2010:1; Ghasempoor *et al.*, 2012:114). Goren and Yemini (2017:170) correctly concluded that citizenship and citizenship education are fluid and contested concepts, subject to interpretation and ongoing debate. Goren and Yemini (2017:171) refer to the "moving montage that is ... citizenship". Meanings attached to "citizenship education" depend on context, time and locale. Theorists also differ about the nature of Citizenship Education as a subject and its place in the curriculum. The subject is beset with a number of controversies. These controversies include, among others, the following: the extent to which the subject should concentrate on the interests of nation-states as opposed to international/transnational/global interests (Moon, 2010:1-2), whether a liberal assimilationist approach should be preferred to a multicultural approach (Moon, 2010:5-7), a political view to an apolitical view of citizenship (education) (Eidhof, Ten Dam, Dijkstra & Van de Werfhorst, 2016:15), or whether an assimilationist, a liberal, a universal, a cosmopolitan or a more parochial approach should be preferred (Banks, 2008:129).

The question also could be raised, according to Biesta (2011:142), whether Citizenship Education should be employed for purposes of *socialising* the upcoming generations into an existing political order, domesticating them to think and behave in line with the extant political dispensation or whether it should be used for purposes of *subjectification*. "Subjectification" refers to engaging in an always undetermined political process and dispensation. In brief, according to Biesta, the issue revolves around the question of whether Citizenship Education should serve the community or contribute to the individual's personal development. In other words, the issue revolves around the question of what should be regarded as the aim of the subject. Biesta shows a preference for the latter: Citizenship Education should be pedagogically employed for the purpose of assisting learners/students to curb their personal wishes so that undesired behaviour could be pre-empted or avoided, thereby contributing to the general orderliness in society.



Our stance dovetails with that of Biesta in that we see the role and task of citizenship education in South Africa as an essentially pedagogical one; it should form, lead, guide and equip learners for their duties as future South African citizens, equipped with a moral compass (a set of values that inspires from within). Teaching learners to be citizens of the wider world should only be a secondary role, as outlined below. These aims seem pedagogically sound and fundamentally didactical in nature and intent. Moreover, the latest available research confirms this. The work done by Albanesi, Prati, Guarino and Ciconani (2021:157) suggests that Citizenship Education is embedded in the pivotal pedagogical activity domain of empowerment. From this domain, the above-mentioned forming, leading, guiding and equipping aims can be translated into observable and measurable pedagogical activities. These activities include, among others, the following: (a) the strengthening of the learner's sense of democratic values and teaching them respect for the law (Tuhuteru, 2023:1254, 1260), (b) teaching learners how to recognise and address social injustices and how to employ critical thinking and ethical decision-making (Peterson & Civil, 2023:1313-1328), and (c) accompanying learners towards civic engagement (Dovilla, 2023:147).

*The current citizenship education programme in South Africa lacking the necessary religious-moral base for equipping learners to understand lawlessness and to counter it*

Smith and Arendse (2016:69) summarise the aim of citizenship education, currently a part of the Life Skills / Life Orientation programme in schools in South Africa, as follows: "The rationale for introducing citizenship, human rights, democracy and inclusivity in schools was to develop a nation of competent and caring citizens who can participate meaningfully in society and achieve their full potential." They seem to find the programme not to be explicit enough regarding the "content and information presented to learners" and recommend that it be revised. Towards the end of 2018, there were even calls to drop the compulsory status of Life Orientation, the school subject embodying citizenship education for Grade 12, and replace it with History. One commentator stated: "Our political and social focus has shifted in the 2010s as the younger generation leads the way in reworking our identity as a nation. This naturally plays out in emphasising identity-related subjects such as history and the languages." (Bailey, 2019). Her call to replace Life Orientation as a compulsory subject for Grade 12 forms part of a drive to have the entire Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (RSA, 2011) revised. For instance, Le Cordeur (2018:9) has called for its revision because it has failed to prepare learners for practical occupations and hence cannot contribute to the termination of the current unemployment cycle. Spamer (2018:17), in turn, calls for its replacement with a more suitable curriculum because of its many practical shortcomings, including its teacher-centredness and elaborate administration / paperwork. Some commentators find the subject as currently offered in the schools to be remote from the learners' real lifeworlds and concerns; learners seem to learn more from their peers and life experience ("the university of hard knocks") than from Life Orientation in schools (Mthatyana & Vincent, 2015:60).

It is interesting to note that, apart from the reference to "caring citizens" by Smith and Arendse (2016:69), none of these commentators saw the flimsiness of the moral base of the current citizenship education programme as a shortcoming. Furthermore, these commentators did not see the neglect of rooting the subject and its moral base in a religious/religion orientation. All of them seem to be content with the fact that the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (DBE, 2011) does not mention Citizenship Education as an independent school subject or field of study by name but only intersperses its outline of the curriculum for the Life Skills and Life Orientation programme with glancing references to morality and ethics. These include values worth learning, improvement of the quality of life, meaningful participation in social life, successful living, social well-being, social health, relationships with other people, values and attitudes, responsibility and accountability, respect for the tolerance of others, tolerance, an active and responsible role in society, relating positively with others, understanding of self-in-society, development of own life-goals, sustaining relationships, communication skills, rejection of violence, healthy lifestyle choices, social

skills and responsibilities. In addition, it includes values such as the rejection of social injustices, which include discrimination and unfair practices, responsible citizenship, social responsibility, coping with change, values such as respect for self and others, personal well-being, and several more throughout the curriculum, from the Foundation Phase through the Further Education and Training Phase. The curriculum does not prescribe or embody a systematic approach to citizenship education, nor a systematic study of the norms of good conduct, general morality, personal and social well-being, appropriate values to adopt, and the moral-ethical-religious foundation in which such an approach to citizenship should be rooted.

Consequently, it is evident that citizenship education is not elevated to the status of a self-standing compulsory school subject, and the subject is not bolstered with a solid moral/ethical and religious/religion base. In view of the social malaise the country is struggling with, it is a cause of concern that experts in the field are instead now agitating for Life Orientation's replacement with History as a compulsory subject for Grade 12, a subject the primary aims of which are not pertinent to the forming (education) of future citizens. The following two sections of this article contain suggestions about an alternative route to address the problem of lawlessness in South Africa.

#### **4. Furnishing the citizenship education programme in South Africa with a stronger religious-moral foundation**

A more socially just and equitable dispensation was inaugurated in South African schools post-1994, and the task of providing confessional Christian religion / religious education since 2003 has fallen where it arguably belongs, namely with the parents and religious institutions such as churches. However, there is a distinct possibility that banning confessional religion from public schools might have had a detrimental effect on the general standard of morality in the country. As far back as 1997, former South African President Nelson Mandela spoke about the role of religion in nation-building and the need for religious institutions to work with the state to overcome the "spiritual malaise" underpinning the crime problem. In 1998, he reiterated this message with an emphasis on the symptoms of the moral depravity that South Africa was suffering from (Moral Regeneration Movement, 2018). If anything, the moral depravity has increased since then (Prins, 2019:20; Prince, 2023:1).

Since confessional Christian (and other forms of confessional) religion/religious education has been privatised, banned from the public arena as it were, it is now unclear to what extent parents still teach confessional religion, along with the concomitant moral principles, to the upcoming generations. It is also unclear what the standard of such instruction has been. The current levels of lawlessness in South Africa could be an indication that this important facet of education, in general, and of citizenship education, in particular, is being neglected. Its removal from the public school, and hence from the public arena, might already be having negative consequences for the moral behaviour of the general population. The moral base of South African society has clearly deteriorated in the last three decades, as indicated.

Public school education in South Africa, particularly citizenship education, currently lacks a deep and underlying nexus with a confessional approach to religion. This lacuna exists even though religious instruction may be given and religious observances may occur in public schools. These provisions are stated in the National Policy on Religion and Education (Dept. of Education, 2003) and Section 15(2) of the South African Constitution (RSA, 1996). In other words, citizenship education in its current state in South Africa has been deprived, particularly with respect to its moral foundations and principles, of a deep connection with the parents' and the learners' and arguably also the teachers' deepest religious convictions. Thompson (2018:11) correctly observed that people's values are intrinsically linked to broader and deeper life-conceptual (personal philosophical) and religious questions. Thompson (2018:192) recalls Nietzsche's challenge: In the absence of God (who might have provided a fixed set of values), by what criterion can one judge what is right?

A case could indeed be made for reinstating confessional religious instruction in all South African schools to furnish citizenship education with a religious foundation. This will help guide its efforts to inculcate a stronger sense of morality in the country's future citizens.

However, people are not only religious but also moral/ethical beings. All human beings possess a sense of morality, in other words, a sense of what behaviour would count as morally acceptable or not (right or wrong, good or bad). Each person and their community root their sense of morality in a unique set of principles or norm system, usually co-determined by their religious orientation or commitment. The most widely applied indicator of morally acceptable behaviour is the age-old adage of "Doing unto others as you would have them do unto you". This norm has been cast in various forms through the ages (an issue that cannot be discussed in depth here; suffice it to refer to alternative formulations of the norm such as "Love your neighbour as yourself" in the Bible, Rousseau's golden rule, Kant's categorical imperative, and diligent care of others and their interests (Van der Walt, 2017(a):156). Lawlessness, therefore, can be seen as behaviour due to ignorance or deliberate violation of this basic norm. The restoration of law and order, respect for others and their rights, social justice (the obverse of lawlessness), and hence moral behaviour entails a revived appreciation of the norm, preferably also from a religious perspective.

Citizenship education could and ideally should play a key role in this process. As Marshall (2018:31, 44) correctly explained:

"Educatedness" has a moral dimension: future leaders and scholars need a heightened awareness of living in dynamic and plural societies and understanding issues of social change and development, and also of the origins and nature of the lawlessness that might follow from socio-political change.

Dill (2012:541) concurs that citizenship education should be reframed so that it can be used to bring home the awareness and competencies needed to prosper in a more tolerant, just and peaceful world. To do so is possible, according to Veugelers (2011:473), because both citizenship and moral development can be interpreted as ways of being in the world; they both coincide in the personal identities of people. As Olthuis (2012:4/7) also correctly argued, being in the world and possessing the "right" identity is not as important as "right" living.

We maintain that while care should be taken against employing education (and the school) to counteract all kinds of social ills, citizenship education could play a meaningful role in the struggle against lawlessness, as Goren and Yemini (2017:171) suggested.

## **5. Recommendation regarding the possible harnessing of citizenship education for the countering of lawlessness in South Africa and, hence, for the restoration of morality and social harmony in society**

In an effort to overcome the relative confusion regarding the term and the broad discipline referred to as citizenship education, as well as the contents of the school subject known as Citizenship Education, we recommend that planners of education systems and school managers consider the following. Firstly, in our opinion, religion education (with particular emphasis on the moral implications of, for instance, the mainstream religions) and citizenship education should, where possible, share an interlocking task in schools. Schools that already teach Religion Education of a *confessional* type (such as in Christian, Muslim or Hindu independent schools and mono-religious public schools) could follow a confessional or faith-based approach to the norm of doing unto others as you would have them do unto you. However, in public (state) schools where confessional Religion Education is not allowed (the current situation in South Africa is an example), the norm of caring for others



and their interests could be brought home to the learners/students. This could be done by demonstrating within the context of citizenship education how adherents to different religions conceptualise and apply the norm. In this case, citizenship education has the dual task of not only explicating the norm of loving your neighbour as yourself but also of teaching and demonstrating how to apply the norm so that acceptable moral behaviour could ensue. As mentioned, finding ways and means to reinstate confessional religious / religion education in South African public schools would be advisable.

We furthermore agree with Egan (2008:93) and De Cicco (2016:3) that citizenship education has to become more imaginative in showing greater empathy with the plight of others. We also agree with Miedema and Bertram-Troost (2015:45-46) and Banks (2008:129; 2017:369, 371) that citizenship education should be maximal, participatory and transformative (i.e. help transform the current lawless situation in schools, which includes, among others, a lack of discipline) in society (for instance, in the shape of general lawlessness) into behaviour that is morally and socially acceptable. Citizenship education should also be active and progressive (Gholtash & Yarmohammadian, 2011:77, 78). In our opinion, the maximal task of citizenship education has to cover the following five concentric fields as part of a comprehensive strategy to combat lawlessness (space constraints prevent a detailed discussion of each):

- A well-educated citizen is aware of the self as a (future) citizen of the country. In this regard, the learner/student has to master the following: how to maintain personal hygiene and health; learn about appropriate attire, good manners and morally acceptable behaviour; what would be regarded as unruly, anti-social behaviour; learn how to prepare for a future occupation and success in life; and how to develop a rudimentary relationship with what they regard as the divine power in their life (where applicable).
- A well-educated citizen is also aware of entering into relationships with other people, of getting “access to visions of society, ... (of breaking) with the unconditional nature of the home, and of beginning to experience a sense of ‘us’, extensive or restricted, which is the basis of civic life” (Cox, Basopé, Castillo, Miranda & Bonhomme, 2014:2). The learner/student has to master the skill of getting along with other students and people such as teachers, parents, members of the extended family, members of the wider community, members of their own religious affiliation, as well as those of other affiliations. Furthermore, a learner/student must gain a more profound understanding of what would be regarded as lawless behaviour; how to ask and extend forgiveness in cases of transgression, injustice and unruly behaviour; how to tolerate the behaviour of others; how to understand and deal with diversity and multi-culturalism (for instance, with the presence of foreigners); learn to master the norms, notions and values for morally and socially acceptable behaviour prevailing in communal living (Cox *et al.*, 2014:8).
- A well-educated citizen is aware of being a member of a wider community (Cox *et al.*, 2014 2, 8): of a family, of a church/synagogue/mosque, a sports club, a region, a province of the country; s/he has to learn how to make a living and how to be prepared for a meaningful existence in the future. A well-educated citizen must also learn how to serve others while making a living, how to master skills that might be fruitfully employed for making the community more prosperous, how to support the general law and order of the country, how to avoid normless behaviour, how to promote a peaceful *modus vivendi* and quality of life for all. Furthermore, a well-educated citizen must learn what it means to vote for municipal, city, regional and provincial representatives; learn the correct use of roads and other amenities; learn about the conservation of scarce resources and how to care for the environment; and learn about the social duties and responsibilities as a requisite for pre-empting the rise of lawlessness.

- A well-educated citizen is further aware of their nation-state and its interests: The learner/student has to master the intricacies of the electoral system and of democracy; what good governance of a city, community, region, province or a nation entails; how the national government is structured; how law and order are legislated and how transgressions can be punished; and how taxes, the economy, trade and politics work and how to participate therein. (The “active citizenship for democracy”, advocated by Smith and Arendse (2016:69), seems to cover the four areas discussed so far.)
- Finally, a well-educated citizen is aware of global and transnational relationships. We concur with UNESCO (2018) that human rights violations, inequality and poverty are global issues and, therefore, have to be countered on a transnational basis. We also agree with Moon (2010:1-2) that the modern world has changed from a space of “places” to a space of flows. The learner/student, therefore, has to learn about the transnational/global world and transnational mobility and connectivity, hence about social media and electronic communication; about lawlessness in the international arena that could result in wars and conflict; about asylum-seeking and forced migration; about prosperity and improved transport that enable people to travel frequently over long distances; about tourism, xenophobia and other forms of discrimination against strangers; and about tolerance, forgiveness, hospitality, reconciliation and anatheism (Ghasempoor *et al.*, 2012:114). Learners/students must develop a sense of belonging to a shared humanity. They must be guided to become responsible and active global citizens, gaining a sense of being a responsible part of humanity and hence abhorring lawlessness (United Nations, 2018; also cf. Miedema & Bertram-Troost, 2015:45). Global citizenship education will assist them to develop a moral responsibility for a better world for all (De Cicco, 2016:3; cf. Sklad, Friedman, Park & Oomen, 2016:323-324).

Our investigations repeatedly indicated that whatever solution we proposed as both a pre-emptive and a formative measure for counteracting lawlessness should form part of a country's formal school curriculum. In other words, it should be part of learners'/students' total formation as future citizens of their communities and countries. We agree with Byrnes (2010:316) and Byram (2010:318) that forming learners/students should contribute to transforming the whole person in their social context. Thus, learners'/students' formation should enable them to display morally acceptable behaviour and to act in the interest of the general social good. Maximal, participative, transformative and progressive citizenship education that covers all the areas outlined in the five bulleted paragraphs above will hopefully lead to the avoidance, pre-emption and possible eradication of lawlessness. The formation of young people to understand the need to avoid and combat lawlessness in whatever form or realm should form an intrinsic part of the entire citizenship education programme.

## 6. Concluding remarks

Lawlessness is a persistent problem in many countries. It should be addressed resolutely, among others, with a well-planned and organised citizenship education programme in schools (Peterson & Bentley, 2017:107), arguably embracing the five fields outlined above. Tolerance education, forgiveness education, hospitality education and reconciliation education, all focused on the broad moral formation of future citizens, should form part of Citizenship Education in the formal curriculum, particularly in countries suffering from lawlessness as an aftereffect of historical injustices. Such programmes should be as inclusive, maximal, participative, democratic, progressive and transformative as possible.

Citizenship education programmes arguably will be more successful (maximal, i.e. personhood-forming and morally justifiable) if offered in tandem with a religion education programme in which the norm or maxim for socially and morally acceptable behaviour is pertinently (confessionally) discussed and applied (cf. Miedema & Bertram-Troost, 2015:46).

The citizenship education programme can then build on this foundation. In this process, learners/students can be equipped, guided, formed and shaped to become fully educated and morally conscious future citizens of their nation and the world.

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## Author Contributions

Van der Walt conceived, structured the article and outlined the line of argumentation. Potgieter and Wolhuter built on this by strengthening the line of argument with further evidence and the insertion of additional information from sources.