

The Making of Democrats in Sub-Saharan Africa

Education and Political Culture in Malawi and Ghana

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Content:

1. Introduction
2. Chapter 1: Conceptual Framework
3. Chapter 2: Literature Review
4. Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework and Methodology
5. Chapter 4: The Cases of Malawi and Ghana
6. Chapter 5: The Birth of New Citizens in Malawi and Ghana: 1999 – 2011
 - 1) Educative Dimension: Understanding and Political Attitudes
 - 2) Integrative Dimension: Active Participation
7. Chapter 6: Conclusion
8. Sources

Abbreviations:

NGO – Non-Governmental Organization;

UPE – Universal Primary Education;

Key words:

Citizenship, democrats, political culture, primary education;

Introduction

“Education is widely seen as the means for constructing citizens” (Kamens, 1988: 117). Both scholars and practitioners agree on this very purpose of education. The idea that education is a tool for turning people into citizens is not new (ibid.). The idea that education is a tool for turning citizens into democrats, however, is quite recent. Democrats, as defined in this paper, are citizens who not only belong to a certain state but who actively participate in its political life. The notion that education can construct not just citizens but democrats firstly emerged in the 1990s and ever since countless number of governments, non-governmental organizations as well as scholars have endorsed the expansion of Universal Primary Education (UPE) programs throughout developing countries. The main reason behind it is the assumption that well-educated people always become democrats, hence participating citizens. This precisely is the working hypothesis of this paper: *Citizens who are more educated and better informed are more actively engaged in the political life of their country.* The following paper is to problematize this very hypothesis and the reasons behind it by studying two cases in Sub-Saharan Africa and tracing that process of transformation of political culture. The main research question thus that will be addressed is: How does universal primary education in Sub-Saharan Africa transform the political culture of its citizens?

In chapter 1, I will draw a conceptual framework of the research. In so doing, I will define the concepts of education, democracy (or democrats) and political culture and will elaborate on the specific elements of these concepts that I will focus on during the analysis. In chapter 2, I will review primary and secondary literature on the relationship between education and political culture aiming to: 1) establish what policies have been endorsed by international organizations, 2) what assumptions and ideas these policies were based on, and 3) what is still missing from the existing literature, particularly in the context of Sub-Saharan Africa. Namely, this chapter will present the arguments behind the assumption that education plays a major role in reshaping people’s political attitudes, while raising the question how that translates into reshaping their political practices too.

Then, in chapter 3, I will draw the theoretical framework which will guide the analysis henceforth and will elaborate on the methodology. Namely, the republican theory of citizenship will be applied, which holds that the more well-informed citizens

are, the more actively involved they will be in the political life of their country. Hence, the hypothesis of this paper. According to republican theorists thus, when it comes to citizenship, there is a perceived relationship between how one understands an issue with how they would act upon it. Based on this theoretical model then I will study two cases in Sub-Saharan Africa – Malawi and Ghana. The cases are based on a ‘least similar’ principal. That is, Malawi and Ghana share more differences than similarities in the development of their domestic politics, however, they both committed to adopting universal primary education. By studying the different processes and the similar outcomes, these case studies will serve as basis for testing the hypothesis.

Chapter 4 will then elaborate on the cases of Malawi and Ghana and will outline the three relevant aspects of their political development: 1) democratic transition; 2) educational reforms; and 3) refined teaching curricula. In other words, this chapter will discuss the different historical developments in both countries as well as the similar educational policies they both eventually implemented.

Finally, chapter 5 will address the main research question: How does universal primary education in Sub-Saharan Africa transform the political culture of its citizens? Following the republican citizenship model, the analysis in this chapter will be twofold. It will examine 1) how exactly education managed to transform people’s understanding of and attitudes towards political phenomena in Malawi and in Ghana, and 2) how that changed their political practices and made them more active citizens. This will be done through the analysis of three rounds of the Afrobarometer survey conducted in Malawi and in Ghana, covering a time framework of 1999 – 2011. The analysis will illustrate that a change in primary education teaching methods can and does lead to a change in political culture (where political culture refers to understanding of and attitudes towards certain phenomena) and creates democrats (where democrats means participating citizens). It will be demonstrated how people with completed primary education in both Malawi and Ghana not only express stronger preference for democracy compared to those with no education, but also appear to understand the political system much better and thus participate in and contribute to its development. The analysis will provide good evidence that education not only de-constructs and re-constructs one’s understanding and attitudes – a notion which is widely agreed on by scholars and practitioners. When designed consciously, education has the power to guide one’s social behavior and to transform one’s political practices, and thus turn citizens into democrats.

CHAPTER 1

Conceptual Framework

The question of the effect of education on political culture and democracy deals with a number of broad concepts. We use or hear the words education, politics, culture and democracy on a daily basis which has turned their meanings into broad and ambiguous ideas. Therefore, before diving into arguments about what has an effect on whom, let us first conceptualize these terms in the context of this particular paper.

The concept of education has a countless number of notions and interpretations. Education can be formal and informal. Education can refer to training, teaching or learning. Education can refer to knowledge, understanding, skills, values, beliefs, habits, behavior, attitudes and many others. Wilson (2003: 105) has defined education in the following way:

A serious and sustained programme of learning, for the benefit of people qua people rather than only qua role-fillers or functionaries, above the level of what people might pick up for themselves in their daily lives.

In other words, in Wilson's view, education is a formal and sustained process the result of which cannot be otherwise achieved. Hence, there are specific kinds of knowledge, skills and values which can only be learned through formal education; they cannot be acquired from our natural every-day environment. This is the notion of education I will refer to. To be even more specific, in this particular context, I will not examine each and every component of education – teaching, learning, training, knowledge, understanding, skills, values, attitude, behavior etc. I will only study the transformation of the processes and content of teaching and the way it affects people's *understanding* of and *attitudes* towards certain phenomena. To paraphrase, when I speak of education henceforth, I will refer to the process and methods of teaching meanings and attitudes.

Moving to the next concept, political culture is also considered to be a broad and ambiguous term – even more so than education. Political culture is used to refer

to politicians, civil societies, institutions, political processes and many more. The term was firstly introduced by political scientists more than five decades ago and today it is used by scholars and practitioners from a wide variety of disciplines (Formisano, 2001: 394). Even though it is used as an umbrella for numerous other concepts, in its essence *political culture* refers to the set of values which govern people's political attitudes and behavior and give order and meaning to their political system (ibid.: 395). Just like education, political culture is tightly related to meanings and attitudes. Only this time it is not about learning them (taking them in), it is about expressing them and practicing them (bringing them out). In other words, political culture, in this particular context, is the reflection of a given educational system. Political culture is the internalized knowledge and attitudes of citizens which are then translated into behavior.

Last but not least, let us briefly problematize the concept of democracy. This is yet another term which we hear of on a daily basis and whose meaning is believed to be well known. The Freedom House (2004) has defined democracy as "political systems whose leaders are elected in competitive multi-party and multi-candidate processes in which opposition parties have a legitimate chance of attaining power or participating in power." Hence, democracy is a political system. However, the concept of democracy is much more multi-layered than that. Democracy refers to rule of law, personal freedoms, political freedoms, economic freedoms, active participation, political and social toleration and many more. In addition, all these carry numerous other elements within their conceptual reach. However, in this paper, when speaking of democracy, I will only refer to citizens' participation. Active participation in a country's political life is what turns citizens into democrats (Kamens, 1988: 114). Hence, just like political culture, active citizenship involves the element of agency. Or in other words, when speaking of democracy (or democrats), I will refer to citizens' understanding of and attitudes towards political phenomena and their ability as well as willingness to engage with and contribute to these phenomena.

This conceptual framework will guide the analysis of this paper. In sum, when addressing the question 'How does universal primary education in Sub-Saharan Africa transform the political culture of its citizens?' I am essentially asking 'How does the formal teaching system in Sub-Saharan Africa transform the political attitudes and practices of its citizens?'

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

Now let us see how the aforementioned concepts – education, political culture and democracy – are related to one another. As Kamens (1988: 115) has argued, “the expansion of national educational systems is currently one of the institutional “recipes” for creating modern nations”. This recipe was actively promoted in the years after the Cold War when the idea that education contributes directly to the spread of democratic values and to the fostering of economic development gained immense popularity in the West. And since liberalism and democracy were the winning ideologies, governments and non-governmental organizations started to actively promote the idea of improving democratic processes in the rest of the world through the introduction of universal education. As UNESCO put it:

It is clear that in this context of societal crisis and conflict, the pursuit of development in Africa is highly problematic without the flourishing of a democratic political climate. It is therefore imperative that the continent should initiate a comprehensive educational program to promote the enduring value of democracy and peace as a crucial feature in the quest for national development and transformation. (UNESCO, 1997: 9)

This conception of education as a tool for and of democracy still persists today. As the World Bank argues, “broad and equitable access to education is essential for sustained progress towards democracy” (2001). The idea that comprehensive education will automatically result in democratic transformation is based on past experience. Democracy and all its policies – including the education related ones – were the victors of WWII. Immediately after the fall of the Soviet Union and the Iron Curtain thus these policies were applied in Eastern European countries where they were well assimilated and indeed resulted in successful democratizations (Evans &

Rose, 2007: 904). Precisely this led policy makers to believe that education and democracy go hand in hand regardless of different historical or cultural backgrounds.

And so, new education policies were introduced throughout Sub-Saharan Africa in the 1990s. Malawi, being the first African country to reach Universal Primary Education (UPE) in 1994, was followed by Uganda, Benin, Gambia, Namibia, Eritrea, Tanzania, South Africa, Ghana, Lesotho, Kenya and many more (Harber, 2002: 274; Kadzamira & Rose, 2003: 502). All these countries adopted teaching methods from Western European countries and the United States which were believed to have an “impact on individuals’ political attitudes and participation” (Evans & Rose, 2007: 904). In other words, education was, and still is, seen and used as a tool for creating a sense of togetherness and belonging to a particular state or ideology (Dei, 2005: 279).

Just like practitioners, many scholars have argued that education plays an essential role in the formation of political culture in different countries. Dei (2005: 279) for example argues that the sense of belonging to a particular ideology has always been central in the process of nation building. He also adds that “education is seen as playing a pivotal role in developing this sense of national belonging and connectedness” (ibid.). In other words, it is education that *teaches* people what to believe in and what to support. Likewise, Harber (2002: 267) argues that no political regime – in particular democracy – is possible without the spread of certain values and attitudes which underlie the ideology of that regime. He further claims that: “As democratic values and behaviors are socially learned and are not genetic, education must play a part in fostering greater democracy” (ibid.). This idea that values are taught at school is also supported by Evans and Rose (2007: 904), who argue that the best way to have “an impact on individuals’ political *attitudes* and *participation*” is to “modernize [those] aspects of education” which directly correspond to the desired attitudes (emphasis added). Dei (2005: 267) further argues that if one wants to “change and guide broad policy initiatives”, they need to change and guide the “local discourses” that the education system instils into the citizens. It is precisely these discourses, Evans and Rose (2007: 904) claim, that influence the very understanding and interpretation of different political phenomena.

So in sum, numerous scholars believe that political culture – political attitudes– can be taught. In particular, it is the discourses that the education system initiates that mold the understanding and interpretation of certain events. As Harber (2002:

272 - 3) argues, “it is no coincidence that it is the better educated and more prosperous [citizens] who are pressing for reforms and the very poorly educated who are most open to manipulation and intimidation”.

So how do we know that? How do we know that people who are better educated have a better understanding of political phenomena and are more difficult to manipulate than people with poor or no education? In 1999 Bratton et al. conducted research in twelve African countries which studied citizens’ political attitudes and what influenced them. Education was only one of many intervening factors – age, gender, living in rural or urban areas, degree of media exposure and others. One of their conclusions thus was that “education induces support for democracy” (ibid.). Under the education category, Bratton et al. divided the respondents of their survey in a couple of groups – those with no education; those with some primary education; those with completed primary education; those with completed secondary education; and those with completed tertiary education. Henceforth, I will only compare the results of respondents with no education to those respondents with completed primary education.

Here is what some of these results tell us. When asked if there is a difference between a *party* and a *government*, 68% of the participants with completed primary education were able to identify key features which distinguish the two (Bratton et al., 1999: 807). Most of the respondents with no education, however, failed to explain the difference.

Similarly, when asked if they preferred an *elected* government or an *effective* government, around 50% of the participants with no education chose elected, and the other half chose effective government. However, the vast majority of respondents with primary education - more than 70% - demonstrated strong preference for democracy by saying that elected government is the better alternative (ibid.: 814). Likewise, participants with primary education demonstrated better understanding and were able to provide explanations of other political jargon, such as rule of law, liberties, constitution etc. (ibid.: 816; 821).

Based on the foregoing, it could be claimed that both theorists and practitioners strongly believe that education is the tool which constructs democratic citizens. So far, it has been studied if education affects political culture; and how education transforms people’s understandings and attitudes. What is missing from these analyses, however, is what all that does in practice. How do the improved or

different understandings of citizens, acquired through education, affect their practices in reality? How does internalizing specific (democratic) attitudes affect citizens' level of political and social engagement? Essentially, how does universal primary education turn people into actively participating citizens? Chapter 5 will focus exclusively on these questions. It will study how exactly education transforms people's understanding of and attitudes towards political phenomena and what that does in practice in the context of Sub-Saharan Africa. The following chapter will outline the theory which will serve as a model during that analysis.

CHAPTER 3

Theoretical Framework and Methodology

The aforesaid has demonstrated that many scholars and practitioners believe that education can be a political tool used for molding citizens' political attitudes. Since this paper problematizes the question of democracy and participation, citizenship naturally plays a central role in it: "The ideological link between nation-states and the individual is citizenship" (Kamens, 1988: 117). The meaning and role of citizens are widely debated topics in the academic world, however, there are three classical conceptions of citizenship: 1) liberal conception, holding that individuals and their rights are in the center of a community; 2) communitarian conception, holding that the community comes prior to the individual, as well as responsibilities come prior to rights; and 3) republican conception, holding that citizenship requires individuals to recognize their responsibilities and work together, through active participation, to establish common rules (Lister, 2008: 23). Hence, liberals focus on the individual, communitarians focus on the group, and republicans focus on the participation of the former in the building of the latter. Given the purpose of this paper thus, the most suitable theoretical framework which will guide the analysis of the transformation of people into participating citizens – democrats – through education is the republican conception of citizenship.

As Dagger (2002: 150) argues, "the republican standards embedded in the ethical dimension of citizenship provide an *ideal* of what a citizen should be" (emphasis added). According to him, "a good citizen" places the needs of the community ahead of their personal needs; "good citizens" take part in the political life of their community without being required to do so (ibid.). In other words, Dagger, and republicans in general, believe that active public participation is the key to citizenship which in turn is the foundation of a strong democratic society: "Politics is the public's business, and the good citizen, according to the republican view, will try to play a well-informed and public-spirited part in the conduct of this business" (ibid.). Similarly, Crossley (2001: 33) argues that "to be a citizen is to engage in the basic

exchanges of money and power which facilitate co-ordination between the economic, political and cultural sub-systems. The citizen qua citizen [...] exercises power in relation to it [the state] through their voting behavior and mass loyalty”.

At its core, the conception of republican citizenship has two dimensions: the *educative* and the *integrative* (Dagger, 2002: 150). With respect to the former, John Stuart Mill has argued in 1975 that through the active exchange of information about the public and political life citizens educate themselves and each other – they teach and learn skills that might otherwise remain untapped (1975: 196 - 7). Similarly, Dagger (2002: 151 - 52) claims that only well-informed individuals are able to understand the interests and needs of other members of their community. In other words, understanding of one’s social and political environment widens their horizon and strengthens their sense of belonging. As Crossley (2001: 40) argues, through this educative dimension a culture of citizenship is created: “Citizens must, to qualify as citizens, have internalized the attitudes of the generalized other about the ethics, rights and duties of citizenship” (Crossley, 2001: 41).

This brings us to the second dimension of active participation – the *integrative* one. Once citizens have internalized the attitudes of the generalized other – community members – they will start to act according to these attitudes. According to republican theorists thus, one truly integrates and becomes a member of a community not only when they gain understanding of the interests and the needs of the others who are involved, but also when they act upon them. In other words, the active exchange of ideas, views and knowledge through a public dialogue is essential for the integration of citizens into a community. Likewise, Elliott (2001: 47) argues that only when one knows their community, they can understand its needs; and only when one understands the needs, they can see their role in them. Knowledge, understanding and participation are “the foundations of citizenship” (ibid.).

To sum up, the republican conception of citizenship holds that an individual becomes a citizen when 1) they understand the needs of others in their community; and 2) they start taking actions towards these needs. This precisely will be the theoretical model in which the forthcoming analysis will be framed. Firstly, it will be studied how exactly UPE programs managed to reshape people’s understandings of political matters; and then it will be examined how that transformed their practices. Or, in other words, the hypothesis of this paper is: Citizens who are more educated and better informed are more actively engaged in the political life of their country. Testing

this hypothesis will be achieved through the analysis of two case studies – Malawi and Ghana. The case selection is based on a “least similar” (George & Bennett, 2005: 82) or “most different” (Hopkin, 2010: 293) principle. Through this method, I will examine cases which are similar in outcome but different in all intervening variables, except one. With this approach thus I seek to find similarities in cases which are profoundly different from one another. Hence, if both the cases of transformed political culture in Malawi and Ghana demonstrate a relationship with their improved primary education programs, despite all the different political, social and cultural developments, then indeed it can be concluded that citizens who are better educated are also expected to be more active.

So why precisely Malawi and Ghana? As explained, I have chosen cases which are different in all intervening variables, but one. Malawi and Ghana, albeit both in Sub-Saharan Africa, differ a lot from each other. They are situated in different geographical regions – south and west – and have undergone different political and historical developments. They are at very different stages of economic development – Ghana is considered to be one of the fastest growing economies in Africa whereas Malawi is still one of the world’s poorest countries. The specific elements of their political and historical developments (variables) that will be elaborated on, however, include: 1) democratic transition; 2) educational reforms; 3) refined teaching curricula.

The first aspect on which the two cases differ significantly from one another is the process of democratic transition. When speaking of democracies we cannot omit the fact that Malawi and Ghana underwent very different democratizations. While Ghana has seemingly been a democracy since its independence (1957), for the three decades that followed every change of government has been marked by military uprisings and forced overthrows. Malawi, in contrast, was the only country in the history of Africa to successfully overthrow a dictator and a “life president” through peaceful and democratic means – with a referendum.

In addition, the two countries had a very different stance on UPE. While Malawi was the very first African country to adopt UPE programs (1994), Ghana went through a long process of resistance and introduced UPE more than a decade later (2005). The process of reformation and the reasons behind it will be studied in the following chapter.

The foregoing briefly suggests that Malawi and Ghana have more differences than similarities in their political and economic development. However, there is the

one element they share – they both implemented Universal Primary Education programs. Even though those were introduced at different times, in different political and cultural settings, both countries committed to expanding access to and improving quality of education, arguably for all. How exactly the teaching methods and curricula were refined and what results that brought will be discussed in the following two chapters.

To sum up, this paper will analyze the cases of Malawi and Ghana, studying the effects of democratization and education reforms on the political culture (attitudes) of their citizens. This will be done in the framework of the republican theory of citizenship, holding that the more informed people are, the more active citizens they will be. The following chapter will discuss the relevant historical developments in Malawi and Ghana which will serve as a basis for the analysis thereafter.

CHAPTER 4

The Cases of Malawi and Ghana

This chapter is to briefly outline the key historical moments in the political and particularly in the educational developments of Malawi and Ghana which played a role in the formation of their political life. That said, three aspects will be discussed: 1) democratic transition; 2) educational reforms; and 3) refined teaching curricula.

It is well known that many countries in Africa have been marked by violent authoritarian regimes. Malawi in particular is said to have had “one of the continent's most brutal and firmly entrenched dictatorships” (Brown, 2004: 705). “Life President” Dr. Hastings Kamuzu Banda came in power in 1963, and in 1964 he led Malawi to its independence from British colonial rule (*ibid.*). Banda stayed in power for thirty years and his regime was often reported by International Human Rights organizations to be “marked by human rights abuses and absence of freedoms” (Africa Watch, 1990). Banda, however, strongly believed that Malawi had developed a unique and successful one-party system (Evans & Rose. 2007: 905). That is why, when the wave of democratizations reached Sub-Saharan Africa in the 1990s and the Malawian government felt pressure for transition from international donors, Banda was convinced that not only he but also the Malawian people did not want or need democracy. As a result, in October 1992 he boldly called for a national referendum on the future of his administration (Government of Malawi, Article 19, 1993). In June 1993 thus, with 63% voting in favor, the people of Malawi expressed their preference for a multiparty system and a change in regime which led Banda to peacefully step down from power (Evans & Rose. 2007: 906). To this date, Malawi is the only case in the history of Africa in which a dictatorship was peacefully overthrown through democratic means. It is often argued that this unique transition has played an essential part in shaping the political life of the country (Brown, 2004: 706).

Ghana is also often referred to as a successful example of democratization – even more so than Malawi. Ghana was the very first African country to declare its independence from British colonial rule in 1957, and to adopt a multiparty system. Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, the leader of these movements, called for a Ghanaian

constitutional referendum followed by presidential elections in 1960 (Reid, 2012: 303). These reforms, however, were not as durable as those in Malawi. Only a few years later, in 1966, Nkrumah was overthrown in a military coup, the newly established constitution was suspended, and the establishment of political parties was banned. These events were followed by over 20 years of different military and civilian governments, all of which were removed from power by force (ibid.: 328). The democratic multi-party system was not reintroduced until 1992 by President Rawlings. The very first peaceful and legitimate transition of power from one president to another – Rawlings to Kufuor – only took place in 2000 after the national presidential elections. Evidently, Ghana's democratic transition – in stark contrast to Malawi's – was marked by instability, military coups and violent resistance.

Education played a major role in both these transitions. In Malawi, with education being high on the campaign agenda for the first democratic elections in 1994, the newly elected government immediately introduced its *Program for Free Primary Education* (FPE) and abolished all primary school fees (Malawi Ministry of Education, 1995). With this, Malawi became the very first African country to introduce Universal Primary Education.

In contrast to Malawi, in Ghana the process of introduction of UPE was stretched over a period of more than 40 years. The Ghanaian government's efforts to improve quality of and access to education began already in 1961 with the introduction of the *Accelerated Development Plan* and the *Education Act* (Nishimura et al., 2009: 145). The former aimed to expand access to primary education, while the latter made primary education compulsory. Prior to introducing UPE, the Ghanaian government also developed plan *Vision 2020* which committed the country to "enhancing human capacities through the education and training of all citizens" (Government of Ghana, 1997: 6). Finally in 2005 – more than 10 years after Malawi –, the government of Ghana introduced Universal Primary Education for all (Rolleston & Oketch, 2008: 322).

Despite the different political developments, however, the educational improvements resulted in drastic increase of primary school enrollments in both Malawi and Ghana. In Malawi, in 1994 alone – the same year UPE was introduced – enrollment increased by over 50% (Nishimura et al., 2009: 146). Primary school enrollment rates kept growing steadily all the way until 2002 (UNICEF, 2016). The situation in Ghana was very similar, with primary school enrollment rate increasing

from 59% in 2004 to 81% in 2005 – the year of UPE introduction (Nishimura et al., 2009: 146). Evidently, the two governments, despite the different domestic developments, were both very successful in their efforts to provide access to education for all.

However, access – hence, fee abolition – was not the only aspect that was improved during the transitions in Malawi and in Ghana. As Harber argues (2002: 268): “Only *forms of education* more consciously designed to foster democratic values and behaviors can help to further democratic processes” (emphasis added). And thus the teaching methods in Malawi and Ghana were also enhanced and the old teaching techniques were revised. In Malawi for example, for the first time priority was given not only to expanding access to education but “to make[ing] education more relevant” for Malawian citizens (Evans & Rose, 2007: 503). In other words, instead of the traditional way of teaching - one teacher lecturing a group of children, and the children listening to and repeating what has been said – a much more interactive approach was adopted. Children were given assignments which they had to present in front of the class and thus work on their public speaking skills; the class would often vote on different matters such as whether to play outside or inside; pupils were also expected to participate in discussions in which they had to form, express and defend a certain opinion (ibid.: 904). In simple words, democracy was being taught.

In Ghana, despite the many differences in the political and educational policies, very similar curricula were progressively being introduced. As Dei (2005: 268) argues, “instituting change in Ghanaian schooling is, first and foremost, a question of reconceptualization of educational issues.” In other words, this reconceptualization referred to process, content and objective of primary education. Just like in Malawi, “Ghanaian teachers began using the *activity method of teaching*” (Dull, 2004: 304), meaning precisely allowing as well as encouraging children to express their views on different subjects. In addition, a strong emphasis was laid on group work and group activities (ibid.). That way children were taught how each and every member of a group can contribute to a certain task. In sum, just like in Malawi, democracy was being taught in Ghana. Or as Dull claims: “the lessons [in Ghana] had been democratic” (ibid.: 308).

The foregoing suggests that despite the major differences in the domestic politics of Malawi and Ghana – process of democratization, period of introduction of

UPE, and process of UPE adaptation – the two countries did eventually implement very similar educational policies. At their core, these policies sought to teach children democracy. Training people to be democratic citizens, however, does not necessarily mean that they would in fact become democrats. The next chapter, therefore, will investigate, within the framework of the republican citizenship theory, 1) how precisely the newly introduced educational curricula managed to shape new attitudes, new understandings and new interpretations of political phenomena, and 2) whether that resulted in more active public participation. Essentially, how did education construct new citizens?

CHAPTER 5

The Birth of New Citizens in Malawi and Ghana: 1999 – 2011

1) Educative Dimension: Understanding and Political Attitudes

So far, the literature that was studied in this paper has argued that education influences people's understanding of and attitudes towards political matters. It was also demonstrated that Malawi and Ghana deliberately adopted primary schools curricula which foster specific kinds of attitudes and behavior. Now let us begin the analysis of how exactly political culture transformed under these circumstances using the republican citizenship model. As explained, republican theorists argue that good citizenship comprises of two dimensions: 1) educative, in which people acquire information and better understanding of social and political matters and internalize certain attitudes, and 2) integrative, in which people start expressing, practicing and acting according to these attitudes. Or in other words, in this chapter I will trace how exactly the newly adopted educational programs in Malawi and Ghana 1) changed people's understanding of political issues and 2) made them active citizens. For this purpose, I will briefly analyze the results of the Afrobarometer surveys. The Afrobarometer is the largest and most comprehensive social research conducted in Africa on a regular basis. Its aim is to measure the public attitudes towards social, political and economic matters. The survey is developed and analyzed in partnership of six different research institutes from five African countries. The most recent round of surveys was in 2014 with 35 participating countries. The very first round was in 1999 and only 12 countries took part in it – both Malawi and Ghana participated.

Due to the size constraints, I will only analyze the first (1999), third (2005) and fifth (2011) rounds of the Afrobarometer surveys. Once again, I will only compare the answers of those with no education to those with completed primary education. That way, we can trace whether or not the improved educational programs affected people's political attitudes.

Beginning with Malawi, the participants in the three rounds are as follow: in 1999 there were 1,208 respondents (162 with no education, 622 with primary education); in 2005 there were 1,200 respondents (230 with no education, 517 with completed primary education); and in 2011 there were 2,407 respondents (275 with no education, 1,205 with completed primary education). In 1999, democracy and UPE had been in place in Malawi for less than 5 years which means that most participants had received their education under Banda's authoritarian rule. In contrast, in the third and fifth rounds, the majority of the respondents had already partly or fully completed the new educational programs.

According to the results of the first round of surveys, in Malawi there was no local term for the word *democracy*. As a result, almost three quarters of those with formal schooling failed to explain the meaning of the political regime they had voted for in the referendum. In the third round, however, the majority of people with completed primary education (80%) were able to demonstrate good understanding of the term, both in English and in their local language (Afrobarometer Malawi 2005: 17). Most of them (52%) associated democracy with personal and civil liberties; and 12% associated it with voting and elections. In the fifth round, the majority of respondents with completed primary education (49%) was much more concrete in their answers, claiming that democracy meant freedom of expression (Afrobarometer Malawi 2011: 19). Seemingly, the understanding and interpretation of democratic matters was improving proportionally to the improved primary education policies and practices.

When asked about the political system of their country in the survey in 1999, the majority of Malawians (33%), both with and without education, stated that "For someone like me, it doesn't matter what kind of government we have" (Afrobarometer Malawi 1999: 18). This clearly indicates that most people did not see the direct effects of governmental policies on their personal lives. In 2005, 28% of those with no formal schooling still replied that the political system of Malawi does not affect them individually. The majority of those with completed primary education (58%), however, clearly stated that "democracy is preferred to any other type of government" (Afrobarometer Malawi 2005: 19). In 2011 there is an even greater shift in numbers with 77% of those with primary education expressing strong support for democracy (Afrobarometer Malawi 2011: 18). Evidently, the more primary education people were acquiring, the stronger their understanding of and endorsement for democracy was.

In addition, in the third and fifth rounds of the surveys, the majority of Malawians (46% and 59%, respectively) expressed strong disapproval of one party systems; unlimited presidential power; as well as military governments (ibid.). The only viable alternative to all of these, they argued, was a democratic government. Malawians with no formal education, on the other hand, particularly in 1999, also expressed disagreement with one party rule and with military government, only as an alternative they indicated traditional rule (councils of elders and chiefs) (Afrobarometer Malawi 1999: 20). In other words, less educated people did not seem to understand and therefore support the new and unfamiliar political regime.

In sum, the Afrobarometer surveys in Malawi demonstrate that in the period of twelve years Malawians gained basic to advanced understanding of political matters and showed the ability to think critically and express informed opinions. In other words, they were gradually turning into democrats.

The surveys in Ghana, despite the different domestic political developments, show similar results. The participants in the three rounds were as follow: in 1999 there were 1,200 respondents (436 with no education, 251 with primary education); in 2005 there were 1,197 respondents (306 with no education, 196 with completed primary education); and in 2011 there were 2,400 respondents (434 with no education, 518 with completed primary education). The majority of these participants in all surveys were people aged 18-24 (39%, 26% and 45%, respectively). During the first round thus, in 1999, for the reasons explained previously, none of the respondents had experienced democracy in the traditional sense of the term. Similarly, no one had taken part in the official UPE programs. In the round of 2005, democracy and UPE had been in place for only a year, and in 2011 for about 7 years.

Here is how the understandings of various political issues differed. In 1999, when asked about the meaning of the word *democracy*, the respondents were very divided in their explanations of the term. The majority of both people with and without formal schooling (26% and 36%, respectively) admitted that they simply do not know what democracy means. Some 25% of Ghanaians with completed primary education said that democracy means “civil liberties”, however, most people were not able to provide examples of such liberties (Afrobarometer Ghana, 1999: 15).

Likewise, in the survey of 2005, the majority of those with no formal education (44%) still could not define *democracy*. And just like in 1999, in 2005 the majority of Ghanaians with primary education (52%) still believed that democracy meant civil

liberties, only this time they were much more specific in their definitions. The democratic features that were referred to the most included freedom of speech, freedom of religion, and freedom of movement (Afrobarometer Ghana, 2005: 16). Evidently, people's interpretation of political affairs improved together with the improved democratic institutions as well as the improved educational policies.

By 2011 most of the participants aged 18-24 were entirely educated in UPE fashion. That said, in the fifth round of the surveys one can observe a much bigger shift in numbers as well as in interpretations. When asked about the meaning of *democracy* and its main characteristics, most people with no education (27%) said that in a democratic society the president can be held accountable for his actions by the people, however, they could not specify what actions those are. In contrast, most of the Ghanaians with completed primary education (34%) demonstrated deep understanding of the term *democracy*. They claimed that, unlike in other types of political systems, in a democratic society people are free to establish formal or informal organizations which can influence political and public affairs. This clearly demonstrates how citizens progressively started to see their role in society. In addition, other popular answers to what democracy is included regular elections, multipartism, free media and rule of law (Afrobarometer Ghana, 2011: 20).

Clearly, people's interpretation of *democracy* improved over the years. This is mostly visible in those cases where primary education has been completed. Here is another example. In the survey of 1999, a big portion of both people with and without education (30% of each) said that the type of political system in Ghana does not affect them so they are not interested in the kind of political regime they have; or that in certain situations a non-democratic government might be better than a democratic one (Afrobarometer Ghana, 1999: 17). In 2005 and 2011, however, those with completed primary education demonstrated a drastic increase in democratic support with 75% and 82%, respectively, claiming that "democracy is preferable to any other kind of government" (Afrobarometer Ghana, 2005: 19; 2011: 17). Even though the majority of respondents with no education also claimed that they prefer democracy, still a very large portion of them (over 20% in both 2005 and 2011) seemed to believe that the type of government does not affect them personally.

In sum, the results of the Afrobarometer surveys conducted in Malawi and in Ghana from 1999 to 2011 clearly demonstrate that the newly introduced teaching curricula in primary schools, which aimed to stimulate more active and critical

thinking, indeed managed to reshape people's understanding of political issues and to create attitudes of democratic support. This serves as evidence to the previously mentioned assumptions of scholars and practitioners that education influences citizens' understanding and interpretations of various issues. However, what do all these new understandings and attitudes do in practice? Is the republican theory of citizenship right in its assumption that citizens who are better informed also become more active in the political life in their country? The following section will address these questions by studying how the newly formed interpretations and attitudes of Malawians and Ghanaians changed their political practices.

2) Integrative Dimension: Active Participation

As explained, the second dimension of the republican theory of citizenship – the integrative one – holds that citizens who are better informed also become more actively engaged by participating in the political life of their country in various ways. Here two types of participation can be distinguished – informal and formal. The informal participation of citizens in political life, in the Sub-Saharan African context, mostly refers to community meetings. Community meetings usually represent an informal social gathering for discussing various social, political or religious matters. Returning to Malawi and Ghana, the Afrobarometer surveys show us that community meetings in both countries are mainly organized and attended by citizens with primary education as opposed to those with none (92% to 43%) (Afrobarometer, 2005; 2011). Hence, once people's understanding of various political matters improves, as demonstrated in the previous section, their political engagement increases too. Just like the republican theory of citizenship predicts. Similarly, the Afrobarometer surveys also show us that people with completed primary education are much more likely to be community leaders than those with no education (94% to 31%) (ibid.). Hence, people with acquired UPE are not just involved in their communities but have a tendency to organize them and lead them. This suggests a positive correlation between one's improved understanding of political matters and their actions towards these matters.

After the introduction of UPE in Sub-Saharan Africa an increase can be observed not only in the informal but also in the formal political and social engagement of citizens. With formal political participation here I refer to formally established and registered non-governmental organizations, trustees, foundations etc. Once again, the Afrobarometer demonstrates that people with completed primary education have a tendency to be more engaged in the formal conduct of political matters (ibid.). Take Malawi for example. In 1994, the year of introduction of UPE, there was no record of non-governmental establishments. Most likely there were some, however, they were not registered and legally operating. Today, however, Malawi has 580 non-governmental organizations registered in the Council of Non-Governmental Organizations in Malawi (CONGOMA, 2017). These 580 establishments only include legally registered organizations founded by Malawians and operating on the territory of Malawi. Together with all the non-registered organizations, the ones that operate outside of Malawi and the international ones, according to CONGOMA, there currently are around 5,000 NGOs in the country (ibid.). Clearly, there is a rapid increase in formal public engagement on different social, political, environmental and religious issues since the introduction of UPE.

The situation in Ghana is very similar. Once again, there is no record of formally established non-governmental organizations in the 1990s. However, today, according to the World Association of Non-Governmental Organizations (WANGO, 2017), there are 699 NGOs registered by Ghanaian citizens and operating on Ghanaian territory. Once again, this number does not include non-registered or international NGOs. Evidently, the increased understanding of political issues demonstrated by the Afrobarometer has translated into more active and proactive participation. As discussed, according to the republican theory of citizenship, citizens who are better informed about their community and the issues its members face are believed to be more engaged in the day-to-day dealing with these issues. The cases of Malawi and Ghana provide convincing evidence for these assumptions.

Formal and informal establishments are not all that has improved after the introduction of UPE. According to the Afrobarometer surveys, as well as a large amount of other research data, there appears to be a direct link between levels of education and voters registration (Afrobarometer, 2005; 2011). In Malawi for example, the number of registered voters has been growing steadily since the introduction of UPE. While 73% of the citizens had registered to vote in 1994 – the first presidential

elections – this number increased to 87% in the most recent presidential elections in 2014 (Malawi Electoral Commission, 1994; 2014). The same can be observed in Ghana. In the 2000 presidential elections – which, as explained, are considered to be the first legitimate elections – 71% of Ghanaians had registered to vote. In the 2016 elections, however, 89.5% of the populations had registered to vote (Electoral Commission of Ghana, 2000; 2016). Once again a reference can be made to the link education vis-à-vis active participation. Evidently, the more educated people are, particularly in UPE fashion, the more willing they are and the more responsible they feel to participate in the decision-making process concerning their countries' political life. Hence, people with more knowledge and understanding about politics and political systems – in this case democracy – tend to exercise their political rights more than they otherwise would.

The aforesaid demonstrates that a change in primary education teaching methods can and does lead to a change in political culture (where political culture refers to understanding of and attitudes towards certain phenomena) and creates democrats (where democrats means participating citizens). Naturally one cannot claim that education is solely responsible for the formation of a new political culture. However, the preceding analysis strongly suggests that (specifically tailored) education is indeed one of the main driving forces in the change of minds and hearts about politics. As discussed, people with completed primary education in both Malawi and Ghana not only express stronger preference for democracy, but also appear to understand the political system much better and thus participate in and contribute to its development. To conclude, the assumptions of scholars and practitioners about the link between education and political culture proves to exist not only in theory but also in practice. Education does not only de-construct and re-construct one's understanding and attitudes – a notion which is widely agreed on by scholars and practitioners as demonstrated earlier in this paper. When designed consciously, education has the power also to guide one's social behavior and to transform one's political practices. And when following an agenda, as illustrated by the cases of Malawi and Ghana, it can create a new type of citizens. Education was one of the main tools in the 1990s through which Malawi, Ghana and many other Sub-Saharan countries succeeded in strengthening their democracies – by making democrats.

CHAPTER 6

Conclusion

The following paper was to address the question ‘How does universal primary education in Sub-Saharan Africa transform the political culture of its citizens?’. In this context, education refers to the meanings and attitudes people learn at school, and political culture refers to the behavior and actions these attitudes translate into. As discussed, numerous scholars and practitioners endorse the idea that education is a tool for shaping people’s political attitudes and understanding of politics. Whether that has any impact on citizens’ political practices, however, was the central question of this paper. It was demonstrated that in the 1990s the global political elite committed to promoting democratic developments in developing countries, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa, through the advancement of universal primary education. It was believed that UPE can change people’s understandings and turn them into democrats. Democracy, however, functions not on what people understand but on what they do. Therefore, this paper investigated the process of transformation of political culture in two countries - Malawi and Ghana – and studied not only how the newly adopted UPE changed people’s political attitudes but also how it transformed their political practices.

The hypothesis this paper was based on was: Citizens who are more educated and better informed are more actively engaged in the political life of their country. This hypothesis is grounded on the republican theory of citizenship. The theory has two dimensions, relying on two assumptions: 1) educative dimension – assuming that better informed citizens have a better understanding of their community; and 2) integrative dimension – assuming that citizens with better understanding of their community are more actively engaged in its political life. The case studies of Malawi and Ghana thus – countries which share more differences than similarities in their historical development – provided the basis for testing the republican theory of citizenship, and hence the hypothesis of this paper. Three relevant aspects of the political development of Malawi and Ghana were studied: 1) democratic transition; 2) educational reforms; and 3) refined teaching curricula. It was demonstrated that despite the different political settings, both countries eventually adopted very similar educational policies and introduced very similar teaching curricula.

The result of these new teaching methods was then studied elaborately. By using the data of three of the rounds of the Afrobarometer surveys, this paper demonstrated that in the period of 12 years (1999 – 2011), after introducing UPE, the citizens of Malawi and Ghana improved their understanding of political jargon, began to form opinions on different political matters, and started to express strong agreement and disagreement on specific issues. In other words, this analysis provided good evidence in defense of scholars' and practitioners' beliefs that education influences people's understandings and attitudes. What this paper added to this debate, however, was to take the analysis further and to examine what these new political attitudes did in practice. It was demonstrated, by examining the Afrobarometer survey as well as other materials, that since the introduction of UPE in Malawi and Ghana, citizens' involvement in the social and the political life of their country, both formal and informal, has been growing proportionally to the growing support for and knowledge about politics (democracy in particular). As discussed, since the introduction of UPE in Malawi and Ghana, the number of citizens with completed primary education who organize and lead community meetings which discuss different social, political and religious matters has been growing; the number of different non-governmental organizations established by Malawians and Ghanaians on the territory of their country has also grown rapidly since the introduction of UPE; and last but not least, the number of voter registrations and voter turnout has been increasing with each national election. It has been concluded thus that the improved educational policies had an effect on both citizens' political understandings and attitudes but also on their behavior and practices.

This paper does not argue that education is solely responsible for the transformed political culture in Malawi and Ghana, or any other Sub-Saharan country. The abovementioned analyses, however, suggest a positive correlation between education vis-à-vis political culture, where again political culture refers to political attitudes and behavior. This study has provided good evidence that education not only de-constructs and re-constructs one's understanding and attitudes – a notion which is widely agreed on by scholars and practitioners. When designed consciously, education also has the power to guide one's social behavior and to transform one's political practices. And as it became evident by the cases of Malawi and Ghana, education can even give birth to a new type of citizens. In this case - democrats.

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