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# Climbing the Ladder? Community Perspectives on Learning to Be a Good Citizen in Uganda

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines the ways in which members of a rural community in Western Uganda perceive and conceptualize diverse ways of learning to be a good citizen. It analyzes data generated by means of a tool called the ‘ladder of citizenship’, which facilitated explication of local ideas concerning good citizenship, and reflections on how one can ‘climb the ladder’, thus learning to be a better citizen. In relation to the debates on conceptualizations of citizenship in ways additional to the state-citizen relationship (e.g. Clarke et al., 2014; Lazar & Nuijten, 2013), we are particularly inspired by Kabeer’s (2005: 3) emphasis on the importance of

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exploring citizenship based on how ‘people define themselves in different contexts, how they see themselves in relation to others, and what this implies for their understanding of citizenship in the world as they know it’. Citizenship is often discussed as something that can be learned or strengthened through education. These discussions always contain an idea—although it is sometimes implicit—about the direction in which citizenship should be strengthened and the ideals underlying the notion of good citizenship which should be learned. Additionally, there are at least implicit ideas of how the learning leading to good citizenship is supposed to happen. In this chapter, we focus on local conceptualizations of how one learns good citizenship.

The chapter utilizes two theoretical ideas. First, the concept of *cultural citizenship* (Delanty, 2003)—which understands citizenship as a continuous learning process that takes place through interaction in informal settings—is used to scrutinize learning that occurs in the everyday life of a community. Second, the notion of *folk pedagogies*, introduced in the cultural approach to learning (Bruner, 1996), guides our examination of people’s own conceptualizations of learning. Folk pedagogies refer to everyday rather than academic theories concerning models of what learning is. In this chapter, the notion enables us to focus on community members’ own ideas about how one might learn to be a good citizen. Although coming from different research fields, both Delanty’s and Bruner’s theories draw on similar views of culture as an arena where meanings are continuously constructed in interaction with others. Therefore, in line with these theoretical approaches, and instead of departing from detailed academic definitions of citizenship and learning, the starting point of the chapter is to engage with the meanings of citizenship and learning articulated by community members.

Overall, this chapter seeks to answer the question: How do community members conceptualize the diverse ways in which they learn to be good citizens? Examining local ideas of good citizenship in rural communities is especially relevant in contexts where non-governmental organizations (NGOs) implement diverse initiatives to strengthen citizenship. To be feasible and sustainable, these initiatives need to build on existing conceptualizations of what good citizenship is and how it would be possible to support learning processes leading towards it. We explore the question in the context of Western Uganda, where one NGO, the Kabarole Research and Resource Centre (KRC), has interacted with rural communities through projects which are based on the principle

that civic competences go hand in hand with economic liberation (KRC, 2017). Most likely, many ideas concerning good citizenship articulated by community members in this study reflect their interactions with the KRC. Nevertheless, our main interest is not to explore only the ideas they have learned from the NGO or evaluate the influence of its programmes, but to analyze the meanings attached to learning good citizenship in general.

In what follows, we first discuss the concepts of cultural citizenship and folk pedagogies which inform our analysis. Then we provide a brief description of the study location and the methods used, before briefly describing the notion of good citizenship that holds in the area and presenting our main findings on their conceptualizations of diverse ways of learning good citizenship. In conclusion, we discuss these ideas in the context of our two theoretical sources of inspiration—Delanty’s theory of cultural citizenship and Bruner’s theory of folk pedagogies—and reflect on the implications of our findings for local development efforts revolving around strengthening citizenship.

## 2 CULTURAL CITIZENSHIP AND FOLK PEDAGOGIES

In this section, we discuss our conceptual approach to examining learning of what is perceived as good citizenship. Our main starting point is to define citizenship as a contextual phenomenon that entails an idea of continuous learning taking place in diverse ways. We draw on the notion of cultural citizenship suggested by Gerard Delanty (2003) and the cultural approach to learning proposed by Jerome Bruner (1996). In both, culture is understood as continuous meaning-making, where ideas are constructed in interaction with others by using and transforming the available cultural resources. These notions guide our examination of local ideas of citizenship and learning processes in the particular context of the rural communities under study.

The notion of cultural citizenship (Delanty 2003; Stevenson, 2012) approaches citizenship from the point of view of socio-cultural identity. Delanty (2003) differentiates the notion of cultural citizenship from what he calls disciplinary citizenship, which encompasses formal membership in a polity, usually a state. According to him, cultural citizenship differs from both liberal and communitarian ideas; rather, he suggests a cultural arena of citizenship where individual and social learning intertwine, and where beliefs, values and culture are preserved and shaped. Moreover,

cultural citizenship is highly contextual and is shaped in spontaneous ways through coping with lifestyles and survival.

For Delanty (2003: 602), cultural citizenship ‘is a learning process’ wherein common experience, cognitive process, cultural translation and empowerment gain more salience than citizenship as formal membership and the consequent learning of rights and responsibilities accompanying it. He categorizes citizenship learning using three intertwined levels: individual biography, the cultural level and the social level (ibid.: 601). For the individual, citizenship is learned through their life history, both through interpersonal interaction and increasing self-knowledge. Cultural level learning refers to the collective learning of symbolic forms and cognitive models that provide shared interpretations of the world. Social level learning embodies cultural level learning in an institutional form, enabling social change to occur. In cultural citizenship, these learning levels intertwine in a process that Delanty (ibid.) refers to as the construction of citizenship. Here, citizenship is understood as continuously evolving and, thus, also having the potential to transform.

Drawing on Delanty’s notion of cultural citizenship, we scrutinize citizenship as a learning process taking place in the space between the individual and communities. Our starting point is that rural communities in Uganda present a context for constructing citizenship through informal learning that occurs in the course of participation and interacting with others. Additionally, the construction of citizenship taking place in a particular community is intertwined with cultural meanings, especially those articulated in the vocabularies used when citizenship is discussed, and the beliefs and values that guide ideas of what is regarded as good citizenship to which it is worth aspiring.

Departing from the notion of cultural citizenship as a learning process in which citizenship is constructed and transformed, we aim to examine how the idea of learning itself is understood by community members. Whilst there are plenty of diverse theoretical accounts of individual (Kolb, 1981) and social (Bandura, 1977) learning, less research has been done on people’s own explanations of what they consider as learning and how learning takes place. In our effort to grasp these phenomena, we draw on Bruner’s (1996) notion of folk pedagogies, which incorporates diverse explanations for learning and perceptions of the interaction between mind and action (Bruner 1996; Ilić & Bojović, 2016). Bruner (ibid.: 46) suggests that in the practice of education and learning, whether in a classroom or any other setting, there are implicit ‘folk theories’ about learning

in play. These folk pedagogies might resonate with academic learning theories, but they are everyday ideas about mind and learning. Whilst Bruner mainly discusses folk pedagogies in the teacher-learner relationship, he also connects the notion of folk pedagogies with a wider ‘cultural approach’ to the mind and learning. He discusses the cultural approach in contrast to the ‘computational’ one where mind and learning are geared around information processing. The cultural approach emphasizes that learning takes place in cultural settings that provide tools for construction of meanings (ibid.: 4). Cultural meanings play a role in how people understand the mind, learning and, further, ideal society and the ideal citizen (ibid.: 5).

According to Bruner (1996: 63), people often hold both externalist and internalist theories of learning. The former focuses on how learning can be supported from outside and the latter on how learning is based on the intentional states of learners, thus, not only referring to cognitive capabilities, but also to beliefs, wishes and emotions (Ilić & Bojović, 2016). Under these two dimensions, Bruner (1996: 53) further proposes four models of learners’ minds which can guide teaching and also illustrate a range of ideas concerning learners and learning in general. These models perceive learners as imitators, as subject to didactic exposure, as thinkers and as knowledgeable. When a learner is perceived as an *imitator*, learning is mainly seen as following the models provided by teachers and mentors, and the skills and knowledge learned are taken-for-granted and neither negotiated nor subjected to critical reflection. In a similar vein, perceiving learning as resulting from *didactic exposure* includes the idea of unquestioned knowledge being presented to learners, as in many conventional classroom situations. These ideas emphasize the external generation of learning. The models that focus on the internal dimensions of learning, according to Bruner (1996: 56–61), include perceiving learners as *thinkers* and learners as *knowledgeable*. The former category pays attention to what the learner already thinks and strives to achieve, with learning aiming to develop these ideas through discussion and interaction. The latter refers to learning where the information provided is critically assessed and may be given credit or discredited based on the knowledge the learner already has.

Inspired by the general concept of cultural citizenship as a learning process and folk pedagogies as diverse ideas concerning learning, our next step is to examine how these are demonstrated in the particular context described in what follows.

### 3 STUDY CONTEXT AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter draws on a study that was carried out in the communities of Kanyatete and Busaiga in Harugongo Sub-County, Kabarole District in Western Uganda. The inhabitants of the two communities are peasant farmers engaged in subsistence agriculture. In distinction from many other similar rural communities, here most people have no land and therefore rent it from a few rich landowners, which makes them vulnerable due to unstable markets and fluctuating prices for their produce. The Kabarole Research and Resource Centre (KRC), a Ugandan development NGO, has been partnering with these communities for the last 25 years. The KRC's engagement has been in the fields of agricultural production and processing on the one hand, and civic education on the other, drawing on the philosophy that civic competence goes hand in hand with economic empowerment.

Data generation was designed with the KRC who also facilitated building close contacts with the communities. The research team decided to use the tool referred to as the 'ladder of citizenship' to facilitate community members' explications. The tool is based on the familiar image of a physical ladder used in construction and it has been previously used by Arnstein (1969) to illustrate a continuum of citizenship participation. In our study, the ladder's rungs represented a journey towards what was considered good citizenship, which is at the top of the ladder; this initiated discussion on possible ways to climb the ladder and learn to be a good citizen. Together with study participants, we drew the ladder and accompanying illustrations on any surface available, such as the floor, tables, paper or walls (see examples in Fig. 1). The ladder of citizenship was used during qualitative interviews ( $n = 37$ ), and the issues arising were further discussed in four focus-group discussions with a total of 52 individual participants.

The analysis and interpretations are supported by the first author's prolonged stay in the communities, where he participated in community meetings, farming groups, church services, Village Savings and Loans Association (VSLAs) meetings and other activities. Moreover, after initial analysis, dissemination meetings in each community were arranged, joined by major stakeholders such as the KRC, local government officials and other opinion leaders. For this chapter, the interview and discussion transcripts were analyzed thematically (Bradley et al., 2007), first identifying instances where 'good citizenship' was defined, and second, places in



**Fig. 1** Samples of field participatory discussion frames of ‘ladder of citizenship’ (Source Author’s own field photo)

which the acquisition and learning of the characteristics of perceived good citizenship were discussed. The concrete articulations of learning were further combined into five categories, which illustrate the diverse ways in which learning was conceptualized.

#### 4 LOCAL CONCEPTUALIZATIONS OF LEARNING CITIZENSHIP

In this section, we present our findings on the diverse ways in which local community members conceptualize their learning of good citizenship. We begin by briefly describing the general characteristics of good citizenship as explicated in participants’ reflections on how to situate people on different rungs of the ladder of citizenship. We then offer a more detailed analysis of diverse ways of learning and acquiring what was considered good citizenship qualities, based on the analysis of discussions with participants about moving up and down the ladder of citizenship.

##### *The Characteristics of ‘good Citizenship’*

In order to grasp local conceptualizations of good how citizenship may be learned, we start with a brief description of understandings of citizenship in this particular context. In the contexts of other Ugandan rural communities, Ndidde et al. (2020) claimed that the meanings assigned

to ‘citizenship’ by community members mainly revolved around local membership in the community, rather than legal status or membership of the polity of the Ugandan state. This resonates with Delanty’s (2003) remark that a process of citizenship construction takes place in a particular community via its common beliefs and interests, and the shared meanings used to make sense of the world.

Shared meanings are closely connected with the language and vocabularies used. In the local language or dialect, Rutooro, which was used in the interviews and other interactions, the word *omwikazi* was used to translate the English term ‘citizen’. *Omwikazi* literally refers to resident or member of a community, county or country more broadly. Thus, it was used to describe community membership at different levels, and further, at the national level, where it acquires legal status. However, when the research participants discussed the ladder of citizenship, their meanings revolved mostly around local residency and good community membership, whereas citizenship as membership in the state was rarely discussed, even when prompted.

In local accounts, *omwikazi* was perceived as attaching to a person who has lived long enough in the community to be accepted, has a source of livelihood and a known address. As one of the participants explained, ‘Citizenship occurs when a person stays in an area for a long time and works with people in that area in one way or another, and sleeps in their home.’ In a similar vein, the characteristics of good citizenship, *obwikazi oburungi*, were also usually reflected on in relation to what was considered the behaviour of a good member of the local community. Characteristics, such as a good home, hard work and self-sustainability were central to good citizenship: ‘A good citizen is one who ensures that her home is clean, and her children sleep well.’ Having a stable source of income and the economic ability to ‘educate one’s children’ were central qualities enabling one to climb the ladder. Furthermore, good relations with others as well as the ability and willingness to help others in need were seen as important. A good citizen is expected to participate in joint activities, such as cleaning community water sources and helping at burial ceremonies. Good citizenship also involves subscription and allegiance to acceptable beliefs and community values expressed in local culture and religion. Occasionally, it was also mentioned that good citizens ought to abide by government rules and regulations, as when one participant claimed, ‘A good citizen in the village must have good relations with

community members, attend community meetings and listen to what the government says.’

In general, the dimensions of good citizenship were mostly connected to one’s role in the local community. How then, according to community members, is it possible to climb the ladder, and learn new ways that make one a better citizen? We identified the following categories in participants’ responses: heredity (*obuzalirwaana*), religion (*ediini*), copying and observation (*kukopa*), challenges (*ebizibu*) and education and training (*kusomesebwa*).

### *Heredity (Obuzalirwaana)*

One of the most important ways of acquiring characteristics central to good citizenship in the community members’ accounts was what we call heredity. The local term *obuzalirwaana* literally means inherited traits or character. In community members’ references to family, they seemed to stress that learning—the question that interested the researcher—is not as crucial in terms of good citizenship as what one receives or inherits from intimate family. Overall, this category emphasized the role of kin and family in the kind of citizenship one exercises, some accounts also making reference to the ‘natural’ characteristics of a person.

Heredity was seen to play an important role when someone was *not* learning what was considered good citizenship. One of the characteristics frequently mentioned was laziness, explained, for example, as follows: ‘Some people are naturally lazy and they do not want to learn, adapt to changes ...; they remain in one state of life and also associate with people of the same character.’ However, the role of family was also discussed as a source of good citizenship. Whereas some families were seen as ‘producing thieves and children that will be murderers’, others were famous for being ‘hardworking, educated and developmental people, which gains respect from people in the community’. Locating a family that could cultivate good citizenship was especially important when reflecting on whom to marry so as to avoid any inherited bad habits, which included laziness, alcoholism, bad heartedness, bitterness, rage (*obulemu*) and selfishness (*okwegondeza*). As one community elder narrated:

Children will do the exact things that their parents do ... some people are not good citizens because that is how they were born. Even the Batooro say ‘*owasweera akaguuzza*’ [it is important to inquire about a family before

marrying into it]. It is common for some homes to produce children who are beautiful and handsome on the outside but with bad hearts... Unfortunately, your son or daughter can go and marry [someone] from such a family of, say, thieves or lazy people. This means that this kind of bad character or citizenship will also enter your home and this becomes cyclic. Such families produce bad citizens.

The role of inborn characteristics or those received from family and kin played a very important role in community member's ideas on how one becomes a good citizen. Although the community members did not stress the learning dimension here, the interpretation can be made that the characteristics and habits central to good citizenship are learned through socialization within family.

### *Religion (Ediini)*

Another important category which was not always explicitly related to learning was religion, *ediini*, which is an important part of the cultural landscape of the research location. The area can be characterized as deeply religious, the dominant faiths being Roman Catholicism and Anglicanism, with a growing following of Christian revivalists of the Pentecost movement, and a small Islamic sector. Whilst religious institutions were said to play an important role as intentional educators, religion was also described merely as an inner quality of a good citizen. For example, the characteristics of a good citizen were described as gift given by God, and reflections on how God has created persons as they are were common. It was said, for example, that some people struggle but 'God created them with good hearts' and they were therefore good members of the community. In terms of climbing the ladder, 'the fear of God' was often described as being the most important thing: 'When you do not know God or religion, you cannot move forward.' Additionally, having 'God in the household' was one reason for a person to be perceived as a good member of the community.

Religion as an inner force or source of motivation also played an important role in supporting personal growth towards good citizenship. As described by a male community member, 'I stopped drinking alcohol as I concentrated on God. This helped me to stop wasting money on alcohol and start saving up to buy property and animals like hens.' The stress on religion as an inner quality central to good citizenship, and a

source of one's possibility to change and take up habits of better citizenship, reflected the highly religious nature of the local community, and cannot, thus, be bypassed when local conceptualizations of what makes one a good citizen are discussed. In general, community members hold that good citizenship is built on a good religious foundation at personal, family and societal levels.

### *Copying Through Observation and Association (Kukopa)*

The local word *kukopa* is a direct translation of 'copying' in English. This category included accounts of learning through copying, observing and watching, and benchmarking by associating and interacting with others and was perhaps the most common description of learning good citizenship offered by community members. As a male participant stated, good citizenship can be learned 'by copying, [and] befriending others especially people who are at a higher level than me and who have good manners and who like working with others'. Unwillingness to learn by imitation was also seen as an obstacle to climbing the ladder: 'There are those people who are bad citizens and still don't care to work hard because they don't have an ambitious mind set, they don't like to copy or use successful people as an example and, with this, an individual will stay in the same position without rising to better levels.'

Important arenas for learning by copying were different kinds of meetings and gatherings: village meetings, government-organized events, meetings of Savings and Credit Cooperatives (SACCOs), village saving groups and NGOs, particularly the KRC, were mentioned. It was suggested, for example, that in the meetings 'people learn a lot of unity, working together to improve the community and to respect other people'. Initiatives such as demonstration gardens were also mentioned as opportunities to learn better cultivation practices through *kukopa*. Further important spaces for interaction that facilitated learning by copying were funerals, celebrations and casual visits and gatherings in diverse households, as explained by a female community member: 'People change through experience and the things that they face in life, for example in funerals, parties and visiting other places where you see how people do things and you learn from them, and that leads you to make changes [in your own life].'

One male community member illustrated the phenomenon by citing a saying, '*enkoni eteera ori haihi*', which can be translated as 'a cane

only beats someone that gets close to it', meaning in this context that good citizenship can be learned by being around those already considered to be near the top of the ladder. Many participants referred to ideas such as 'befriending others who are at a higher level and who have good manners' and reflected how those who might have bad manners can learn by 'moving around and interacting with various people [good citizens]'. Learning through interaction was seen to enable community members to 'change and be more socially approachable', and in that way manifest good citizenship, both by helping others and, if the need arises, deserving help from others.

In summary, community members stressed that one learns through observing those who have achieved characteristics considered important for good citizenship, and by copying their ways and practices. Different kind of meetings, funerals and celebrations provide opportunities for this kind of learning.

### *Challenges (Ebizibu)*

Challenges (*ebizibu*), were stressed as an opportunity to learn good citizenship. *Ebizibu* refers to challenges and problems encountered during the life trajectory, such as illness, loss of a family member or harvesting large crop gardens. One of the most common dynamic described in terms of this kind of learning was that, in a crisis, people may realize they are being ostracized due to their previous behaviour, and seek to change their ways of participating in the community as a result. As a female community member explained, 'When a person faces a challenge and people don't come to his aid, then he will learn that it's because he doesn't support others. This will now teach him or her to begin supporting others.' In some accounts, learning from challenges was related to hardship intentionally caused by others in response to someone's bad membership qualities. This was explained by a local government leader in the following terms: 'Now, some changes come after someone is punished; some of the punishments that we have given people have helped them to change.'

Some participants also reflected on the role played by 'tough conditions' in their own life in increasing their perseverance and teaching them good citizenship. For example, when a female participant talked about her devastating childhood and her work as a house help until getting married and then working hard with her husband, she said, 'The past suffering and

hardships pushed us from [ladder] level 1 to level 4, so we can improve our standard of living.’

In relation to challenges, the expression, *okweteera omukifuba* (beating your chest) was occasionally used. This referred to self-reflection resulting in changes being made towards the desired good citizenship, as a male community member narrates:

I was still young, stubborn and influenced by peers. ... Later, I noticed I was growing older and decided to leave the bad peer groups and I became a responsible person. I started farming because there was enough land for me. That’s how I left that kind of life.

Research participants stressed that whilst it is possible not to participate in community activities during the good times, encountering challenges somehow pushes one towards becoming a better citizen, in the sense of being ready to help and support others, in order to get reciprocal help from them. Such readiness to help fellow community members in times of hardship is essential in contexts where public safety nets are nearly non-existent, and families and communities are the main sources of social protection.

### *Receiving Education and Training (Kusomesebwa)*

One source of learning discussed by many community members was learning through participation in educational events or training programmes. The category of *kusomesebwa* (education) differs from *kukopa* (copying), as it was discussed in relation to events intentionally designed to foster learning by NGOs, churches and local government officials. Participation in these was considered important in order to gain what could be labelled ‘development’: ‘If people do not attend training [sessions] offered by the government and NGOs, that will leave them with no knowledge about certain things, and people should have the will to change from old practices to modern practices so that they can be good citizens.’ Education and training provided by diverse NGOs were frequently mentioned as important opportunities for learning. In the context of our research, the KRC’s educational programmes in farming practices, saving, addressing domestic violence and citizens’ rights were all mentioned as sources of new ideas and practices that enabled people to climb the ladder as a result of gaining new livelihood practices and

knowledge of their status as a citizen. Exemplifying the latter, one female community member narrated:

From the KRC I learned that a person has rights; for instance, everyone has the right to speak when a leader comes to our area, everyone can raise their hand and suggest and discuss. I also have the right to educate my children, and have learned that the teacher should not beat my child at school.

Church was emphasized as an important space, not only for worship by also as a provider of events designed for learning purposes. One research participant reflected on the church's overall significance by saying, 'Our grandparents were pagans. You find such people have backward thinking, whilst the teaching from churches and mosques has helped people to change and become good citizens.' In current times, churches conduct education sessions for diverse sections of the community, as one female community member described: 'In the church, we divide into groups, and each group is taught different topics according to their age and category... If you have been a wife with bad manners you will learn, and by the end of the lesson you will improve.' Furthermore, specific interventions by church leaders were mentioned, such as when they 'go and teach a person who has been a witch, and he changes from a bad to a good citizen'.

Although the government has established structures responsible for community education, such as community development officers and agricultural officers, they were mentioned as a source of learning only on a few occasions; rather, public office was discussed in relation to the Local Government Council (LC1), the village government level, when it was mentioned as a source of education on what a good citizen, a member of the community, should look like. As a male local council leader observed, 'The government, through its leaders, teaches people to work and develop their homes. For example, you must have an income-generating activity, you must have a garden and domestic animals.' Ultimately, education by officials was portrayed more as giving orders to make people fulfil the criteria of good citizenship and, on occasion, punishing community members for failing to do so.

## 5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The overall aim of this chapter was to investigate the meanings of citizenship and learning as constructed in certain locations. This starting point was inspired by, on the one hand, Delanty's (2003) idea of citizenship as a continuous learning process encompassing individual, cultural and social levels, and on the other, by Bruner's (1996) notion of folk theories of learning. In what follows, our findings on local conceptualizations will be discussed through the lens of Delanty's and Bruner's theoretical ideas.

In community members' descriptions, good citizenship revolved around being a good resident of the locale and a good member of the community. This included having a good home, being hard-working and self-sustaining in terms of livelihood, being socially engaged and willing to participate in common activities and help others in need. This mainstream of the findings resonates with Delanty's notion of cultural citizenship as a continuously constructed socio-cultural identity. In some instances, what Delanty terms *disciplinary citizenship* also occurred. The role attached to local government officials of instructing people in the nature of good citizenship and punishing those who fail can be seen as a manifestation of state's disciplinary citizenship. Moreover, stressing the importance of mutual help, in addition to being a sign of communality, also demonstrates how the ideals of good citizenship as a contributing and helpful community member are closely related to the political and societal condition of the absence of the state as provider of social protection in the event of hardship.

Delanty (2003: 601) categorized learning of citizenship under three intertwined levels: individual biography, the cultural level and the social level. Our findings reflect the intertwining of sources of learning citizenship. Some categories, such as heredity and challenges, reflected individual biography, whilst others, such as copying, acknowledged learning through interaction in acquiring and potentially changing the prevalent cultural meanings attached to good citizenship.

The identified notions of learning also resonate with Bruner's suggestion that certain folk theories of learning focus on internal sources of learning, whilst others stress the external. However, the overall themes in conceptualizations of learning were that, first, they were closely tied to community values and beliefs about what a good citizen is, and second,

they reflected, in a one way or another, combinations of social interaction and personal understandings, sometimes as a result of intentional education, sometimes of what was happening in informal spaces.

Taking a closer look on Bruner's (1996) theory, some further points of contact can be identified. For example, stress on copying resonates with Bruner's idea of learners as imitators, whereby the practices, ideas and behaviour of the more respected members of the community are imitated by the rest. Learning through the education provided by NGOs or the church demonstrates Bruner's 'didactic exposure' scenario. The internal dimension was mostly reflected in the category of challenges, when the realization that one was not regarded as being a good citizen resulted in changes in attitudes and behaviour.

To conclude, the meanings attached to the notion of good citizenship by community members were mixture of cultural beliefs, government regulations, religious guidelines and ideas introduced by NGOs. Local understandings of how good citizenship is constructed and the ways of learning it, of climbing the ladder of citizenship, are important for development workers and NGOs seeking to empower citizens. Identification of local understandings of cultural citizenship and the folk theories held on ways of learning it are vital in order to embed interventions in the local context to ensure their relevance, sustainability and resonance with the local priorities.

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