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Identification and Critique of the Values Education Notion Informing the *Itorero* Training Program for High School Leavers in Post-genocide Rwanda

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Abstract While the academic literature is replete with affirming that 'values-explicit' citizenship education programs are biased and indoctrinatory, there is scant attention to substantiate this claim. The present paper fills this gap; it investigates the values education notion informing *Itorero*, a non-formal citizenship education platform for high school leavers (HSLs) in post-genocide Rwanda. The research reported here used a survey questionnaire, focus groups and interviews. The article engages with character education, care ethics, cognitive moral development and values clarification approaches to highlight the values education notion deemed preferable to competing concepts. It is revealed that in educating HSLs for values, *Itorero* is vehemently committed to character education. I argue that the overreliance on this approach raises serious concerns particularly because values education as it is done in *Itorero* seems like the cultivation of supportive behavior towards the government in office. Its content focuses on understanding what the government wants and the crafting of dispositions required for the implementation of defined policies.

Keywords Values and citizenship education · *Itorero* · Post-genocide Rwanda · Character education · Care ethics · Cognitive moral development · Values clarification

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Introduction

A decent society cannot turn a blind eye to the moral quality of the lives of its citizens, let alone its youth. This claim is not only plausible for civic republican/communitarian societies where virtue is seen as essential for the success of the polity. It also holds for liberal communities. As Kymlicka and Norman (1994) argue, the qualities and attitudes of citizens are absolutely critical to the health and stability of a modern democracy. This position is consistent with Galston's (1988) who contends that as the proportion of non virtuous citizens increases significantly, the ability of liberal societies to function successfully will progressively diminish. It is not being suggested here that the state should interfere with people's privacy. Nor is it being argued that the state should compel people to submit blindly to its set of ideologies. Rather, the idea is that it is a worthwhile consideration for education not only to provide knowledge and skills for *doing*, but also and more importantly values and attitudes for *being*. This claim echoes the idea of Theodore Roosevelt who strongly affirmed that: 'To educate a person in mind and not in morals is to educate a menace to society' (Sim and Low 2012, p. 381).

In the context of Rwanda, Roosevelt's claim becomes more meaningful. The vast majority of those who planned the 1994 genocide perpetrated against the Tutsi had arguably been 'trained only in mind'. But something had certainly gone enormously wrong with their training in morals. This situation suggests that post-genocide Rwanda cannot envisage reconstruction, social cohesion and peace building while ignoring the issue of values education.

In this context, the Government of Rwanda (GoR) decided in the 12 November 2007 Cabinet to retrieve its traditional citizenship education school—which is '*Itorero*'—to enable Rwandans re-learn values and taboos of their culture. This school was officially launched on 16 November 2007, and in 2013 it became the National *Itorero* Commission (NIC) as per law No. 41/2013 of 16 June 2013 determining its mission, organization and functioning. Pursuant to article 6 of the same law, its objective consists of: 'Bringing up a patriotic Rwandan who has values and taboos of the Rwandan culture and who has the culture of *Intore*'.

Though this non-formal training is meant for all categories of Rwandans, it is compulsory mainly for all high school leavers (HSLs). The scheme designed for this category comprises two phases: (i) a theoretical phase called '*Gutozwa*' involving moral, political and cultural education for 3 months; and (ii) a practical phase named '*Urugerero*' in form of national service or volunteerism for a period of 7 months (NIC 2012). The present article focuses only on the theoretical phase and seeks to answer the following questions: What is the values education notion informing *Itorero* training? Is this concept helpful and desirable for post-genocide Rwanda?

To answer these questions, in terms of theoretical framework, the paper engages with character education, care ethics, the cognitive moral development approach, and values clarification in a bid to establish the approach deemed preferable to competing approaches. The article reveals that in educating HSLs for values, *Itorero* relies heavily on character education.

It is quite uncontroversial that through character education *Itorero* allows HSLs to be conversant with values and taboos of the Rwandan culture. I argue, however, that the overreliance on this approach raises serious concerns. This is the case particularly because values education as it is done in *Itorero* seems like the cultivation of supportive behavior towards the government in office. Its content focuses on understanding what the government wants and the crafting of dispositions required for the implementation of defined policies.

The present article contributes to the existing literature on values education as a component of citizenship education particularly in a post-conflict context. In fact, citizenship education—as it is done in *Itorero* in post-genocide Rwanda—is 'values-explicit'. While research indicates that 'values-explicit' citizenship education programs are criticized for being biased and indoctrinating students (Kerr 1999), only a limited number of studies have been conducted to substantiate this claim. The present paper contributes to filling this gap. It seeks to investigate the extent to which *Itorero* avoids the problems encountered by 'values-explicit' approaches, which are predominantly bias and indoctrination of students.

In contrast to previous studies that viewed *Itorero* primarily as a political education forum (e.g. Mgbako 2005; Purdekovà 2011; Sundberg 2014; Turner 2014), the present study indicates that *Itorero* uses values education for political purposes. It is shown that values education does not have an intrinsic value; instead, it has an instrumental worth. Put differently, I present evidence to establish that in *Itorero* values are defined, upheld and taught to young people in order to legitimate and sustain the prevailing national ideology. I provide reasons to take seriously the claim that in *Itorero* values education is used as an instrument for statecraft.

The present study will arguably contribute to the improvement of values education of HSLs, which is crucial to the reconstruction process, social cohesion, and peace building in Rwanda. By extension, it will inform users of African traditional models in values education on other parts of the continent.

The study employs a mixed-method approach involving a survey questionnaire coupled with focus group discussions with HSLs, and interviews with *Itorero* trainers and NIC officials. The researcher found these instruments appropriate, because they allowed access to first hand information from people directly involved in *Itorero* training. The choice of the instruments is also partly justified by the lack of a systematic, reliable, and well elaborated documentation (e.g. curriculum, training manuals, and modules) about *Itorero* training.

The article is organized along four sections. Firstly, general considerations on the link between citizenship and values education are provided. Secondly, a consideration is given to *Itorero* as a platform for values education with a specific focus on the scheme for HSLs. Thirdly, the conceptual framework and methodology guiding the study are described. The fourth section is devoted to the presentation and discussion of key findings.

General Considerations on the Link Between Citizenship and Values Education

Citizenship is a rather contested, complex and ambiguous concept (Oliver and Heater 1994; Ramphele 2001; Riesenberg 1992; Van Gunsteren 1998; Wayne 2004). As a result, citizenship education lends itself to different interpretations and approaches (Arthur et al. 2008; Arthur and Cremin 2012; Staeheli and Hammett 2010; Steiner-Kramsi et al. 2002). In the present study, citizenship is taken to mean 'membership of and participation in the activities of a community or group communities' (Bailey 1998, p. 14). The construct citizenship education will be understood as the transmission of knowledge, skills, values and attitudes that will enable young people to participate meaningfully in the community of which they are part, locally, nationally, and globally (Arthur et al. 2008).

Fundamental to approaches used in citizenship education is to establish whether it should be 'values-neutral' or 'values-explicit'. As Kerr (1999, p. 9) puts it, the question goes as follows: 'Should citizenship education promote distinct values—a nationally accepted system of public values and beliefs, or should it take a neutral stance to values and controversial issues, leaving the decision to the individual?' What is at issue here is to decide whether citizenship education should be a 'private' or 'public' matter.

Some studies (e.g. Kerr 1999; McLaughlin 1992) suggest that countries which take citizenship as 'values-neutral' promote a 'thin' or 'minimal' conception of citizenship education; nations that advocate citizenship as a 'values-explicit' are committed to a 'thick', or 'maximal' citizenship education. Research reveals, however, that the two positions have their inherent problems. While the 'values-explicit' approach is criticized for being biased and indoctrinating students, the 'values-neutral' approach is reproached for failing to help students to deal adequately with real-life and controversial issues (Kerr 1999).

In post-genocide Rwanda, citizenship education provided for HSLs in *Itorero* is 'values-explicit'. As mentioned previously, the law establishing the NIC clearly stipulates that its mission consists of : 'Bringing up a patriotic Rwandan who has *values* and *taboos* of the Rwandan culture…' (law No. 41/2013 of 16/06/2013, article 6; emphasis added). The present article—among other things—attempts to establish the extent to which the citizenship education scheme for HSLs avoids the problems encountered by 'values-explicit' approaches, that is, mainly bias and indoctrination of students. In the paragraphs to follow, general considerations on values and values education are provided.

Values and Values Education

When it comes to defining values, one realizes that there have been as many definitions as writers. In this paper, values are understood as 'principles, fundamental convictions, ideals, standards or life stances which act as general guides to behaviour or as points of reference in decision making' (Halstead and Taylor 1996, p. 4). There are various types of values: social, political, moral, artistic, cultural, religious, etc. The present article focuses on moral values.

Values education can be understood as 'the explicit attempt to teach criteria for determining levels of goodness, worth, or beauty' (Superka 1976, p. xiv). It is premised on the view that there are values that can be established as meaningful to all humankind, irrespective of individual, social and cultural circumstances. It also stems from the conviction that it is worthy for a society to transmit its core values to younger generations. Values education is the responsibility of several institutions, such as the family, church, school and the state. This article is limited on values education as envisaged by the state in the framework of citizenship education. Its concern is values education involved in the *Itorero* training for HSLs in post-genocide Rwanda. In the next section, *Itorero*'s teaching and target groups are briefly described.

The Revived *Itorero:* A Platform for Educating HSLs

The traditional *Itorero* (before colonialism) focused primarily on military training and sport; it was a way of training a professional army. However, a second consideration was given to other domains of education: moral (values and taboos of the Rwandan culture), political (vision and policies of the Rwandan kingdom), cultural (traditional songs and dances), and linguistic (poetry, debate and rhetoric) (Codère 1973; Maison des Jeunes de Kimisagara 2008; Ndaruhutse 2008; Vansina 2004). In the revived *Itorero*, major emphasis is placed on moral and political education. Concerning moral education, the NIC has defined seven key values that every Rwandan is expected to know and live by. These are Rwandanness, patriotism, integrity, courage, self-sacrifice, hard work, and upholding one's dignity. Taboos have also been defined. They include issues like shedding blood, exclusion, inattention to result, avoidance of accountability, lack of trust, being covetous, etc. (NURC 2009).

With regard to political education, the revived *Itorero* insists on the history of Rwanda and national development programs mainly Vision 2020, as well as Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy I and II (EDPRS I and II)—programs meant to uplift Rwanda from poverty to a middle income country by 2020. In relation to the history of Rwanda, the historiography depicted in *Itorero* makes a distinction between three periods: the pre-colonial Rwanda or 'Golden age'; the 'dark age' (colonial rule: 1899–1962, first and second republics: from 1962 to 1994); and the 'renaissance' (1994 to present) (Sundberg 2014). While other categories are trained in *Itorero* as time and means allow, every year all HSLs are trained, i.e. university entrants on government sponsorship and the rest.

The *Itorero* training for HSLs comprises two phases. The first phase (theoretical) is dedicated to the *Itorero* core teaching described earlier: moral and political education. It takes generally 3 months and is concluded by an intensive four-days onsite training. The second stage is community service where HSLs—after completing high school—carry out various activities of public interest in areas, such as education, health, infrastructure, environment and conservation, safety and security, governance and leadership (NIC 2011). The present article focuses only on the first phase with a special attention paid to moral/values education as part of citizenship education. A detailed account on *Itorero* (e.g. its history, teaching

method, relationship with other state-sponsored citizenship education platforms, and trainers' qualification) has been provided elsewhere (Nzahabwanayo 2016). In what follows, the conceptual framework guiding the study is explained.

Conceptual Framework

Four conceptions of values education are critical to the present study. These include character education, care ethics, cognitive moral development approach and values clarification. I will establish the extent to which these conceptions inform the *Itorero* training scheme for HSLs. This will amount to answering the following question: Which values education notion is dominant in the *Itorero* scheme for HSLs?

Character Education

Although it is difficult to define character education (Sim and Low 2012), based on certain conceptual studies (e.g. Lickona 2011; Lockwood 2009; McLaughlin and Halstead 1999) character education can be described as the development and cultivation of values and virtues. It is ultimately concerned with the kind of person the youth will grow up to be (Sim and Low 2012). In other words, character education suggests that a society should identify its core values, virtues and interdictions (taboos), which in turn have to be *inculcated* in the youth. Its advocates include people like Bennett (1991), Kilpatrick (1992), Lickona (2004), Wynne and Ryan (1993).

According to Arthur (2008), character education uses mainly six teaching techniques: (1) instruction in basic values and virtues; (2) establishing and enforcing behavioral codes; (3) telling stories with moral lessons; (4) modeling desirable traits and behavior; (5) holding up moral exemplars in history, literature, religion, and extolling their traits; and (6) providing school and community outreach opportunities for learners to exercise good traits and pursue values.

Despite its popularity and support by many politicians (Bergman 2004; Kohn 1997), character education has firstly been criticized as being 'indoctrination' and as a moral *mis-education* (Arthur 2008; Boyd 2010; Kohn 1997; Liu 2014; Noddings 2002) chiefly because it takes the learner to be a passive receptacle swallowing up pre-established values and virtues without constructing meaning out of them. There is little to no emphasis on reflection and moral judgment here. Secondly, it is contended that character education is not sustainable (Kohlberg 1975; Kohn 1997; Liu 2014) particulary because it is unlikely that values learnt through mere inculcation will be internalized and applied to new situations. On the basis of these two weaknesses, Kohlberg (1975, p. 673) labels character education a 'bag of virtues approach' while Kohn (1997, p. 433) calls it a 'fix-the-kid approach'.

Care Ethics

Nel Noddings, widely seen as the founder of care ethics, roots values education in care. She commits herself to the view that being a fully fledged person requires to be

able to care for others, because we ourselves are the product of caring (Noddings 1992). However, much as we are the product of care, we are not naturally inclined to care for others; we have to learn caring. Hence Noddings formulates an alternative to Kant's categorical imperative: 'Always act so as to establish, maintain, or enhance caring relations' (Noddings 1995, p. 188).

Care ethics suggests four strategies: modeling, dialogue, practice and confirmation. Modeling refers to setting an example so as to shape and influence the behavior of learners in caring (Noddings 1995). Dialogue designates the capacity to hear and understand the needs of the cared-for, and to seek jointly the way forward to address them (Noddings 2010). As for practice, it refers to the idea of providing learners with the opportunity to engage in caring activities (Noddings 1984). Confirmation means to recognize something admirable, acceptable, and struggling to emerge in each person we encounter (Noddings 1995). Apart from Noddings, other proponents of care ethics are Slote (2007, 2010) and Gilligan (1982).

Care ethics has been criticized mainly on the basis of its characterization of care. First, it is argued that care ethics runs the risk of encouraging the exploitation of the caregiver as it accords little importance to caring for oneself (Hoagland 1991). The second criticism is that care ethics neglects justice and contains no mechanisms by which care can be regulated so as not to become morally corrupt (Halwani 2003), i.e. preventing the cared-for to become mature and own her or his existence. The idea here is that in the long run too much caring may render the cared-for eternally dependent; it is likely to stifle her or his growth.

The Cognitive-Developmental Approach

According to the cognitive-developmental approach, values education should aim at enriching the learner's moral reasoning (thinking) so that she can progress from the prevailing moral stage to the next higher one. The focus here is on developing the learner's moral judgment through active thinking (Kohlberg 1975). This approach has been supported by Piaget (1932), Dewey and McLellan (1964), and Kohlberg (1975).

Unlike character education and care ethics which are teacher-centered and heteronymous, the cognitive-developmental approach puts the learner at the centre of the process, and encourages the use of her or his *reasoning* and *thinking* capacities. It relies mainly on three techniques: moral dilemma discussion, moral exemplars and just community schools. It is believed that moral dilemma discussions (preferably real life-based instead of hypothetical ones) are a useful method of moral development (Snarey and Samuelson 2008). With regard to moral exemplars, the emphasis is put on brave people like Martin Luther King, Jr. and Socrates chiefly because of their exemplary moral reasoning, empathic moral emotions, and tangible moral action (Snarey and Samuelson 2008). As for just community schools, they provide a way for teachers and administrators to embody justice and care in their treatment of students and each other, and hence constitute a way for students to develop these moral values (Snarey and Samuelson 2008).

The cognitive-developmental approach has been the target of several criticisms based mainly on its emphasis on moral reasoning. For Liu (2014), Kohlberg's moral

education fails to capture or account for the *content* of morality and ignores moral sentiment. According to Gilligan (1982), Kohlberg's theory of moral development is biased towards a more *male-oriented* morality of justice at the expense of a morality of care and responsibility that better suits female moral perspectives.

Values Clarification

Unlike character education, values clarification is not as concerned with transmitting to the youth a predetermined set of values. Equally, unlike care ethics, values clarification does not aim at teaching people how to care for others. People are to care if and only if they prize doing so; caring is not a must; it is an option. The major concern in values clarification is to create favourable conditions for the youth to develop their valuing process: 'Clarifying avoids moralizing, preaching, indoctrinating, inculcating, or dogmatizing. It is an honest attempt to help a student look at his life and to encourage him to think about it, and to think about it in an atmosphere in which positive acceptance exists' (Raths et al. 1966, p. 80). Values clarification sets out to assist learners in taking sound decisions in a common climate of confusion and indecision.

Like the cognitive-developmental approach, values clarification does not deal with values as such; rather, it focuses on the *valuing* process. Both approaches emphasize logical reasoning in choosing among alternatives. However, contrary to the cognitive-developmental approach, the envisaged outcome of values clarification is not to achieve a higher moral stage; but to be clear (and not confused or undecided) about what is important and meaningful in one's life.

Forerunners of this movement (Raths et al. 1966) put forward seven steps of the valuing process: (1) choosing freely; (2) choosing from among alternatives; (3) choosing after thoughtful consideration of the consequences of each alternative; (4) prizing and cherishing; (5) affirming; (6) acting upon choices; and (7) repeating. The method used in this approach is the quasi Socratic dialogue between the teacher and the learner, which involves a strong use of critical thinking skills.

Values clarification has been the target of several criticisms. Some charges take it as value free, relativistic, superficial and without cogent theoretical or research base (Kirschenbaum 1977). Other criticisms of values clarification are directed towards its lack of empirical study guaranteeing its effectiveness, its lack of sustained theoretical argument and its teacher-neutrality (Harrison 1976).

As mentioned previously, the present article attempts to establish the extent to which character education, care ethics, cognitive moral developmental approach and values clarification inform the *Itorero* training scheme for HSLs.

Methodology

Participants

The present article engaged with three categories of participants: (i) HSLs who underwent the *Itorero* training mostly in 2013 and were in level one in 2015 at

Table 1 Frequencies for gender, age, marital status and training period for HSLs

Variable	Frequency	%
Gender		
Male	501	50.6
Female	490	49.4
Age		
15–19	31	3.2
20–24	716	74.0
25–29	182	18.8
30–34	26	2.7
35–39	12	1.2
Marital status		
Single	914	95.7
Married	41	4.3
Training period		
2014	98	9.8
2013	606	60.8
Others	284	28.5

private and public higher learning institutions in Rwanda; (ii) *Itorero* district trainers; and (iii) officials from NIC. Table 1 provides characteristics of HSLs respodents.

As Table 1 shows, males and females are almost in equal proportion (50.6% and 49.4% respectively), which ensures that data are not gender biased. In terms of age, the majority of the sample (74%) is located between 20 and 24 years. Only 12 individuals (1.2%) are above 35 years. Almost all HSLs (95.7%) are single. More than the majority of them (60.8%) underwent the *Itorero* training in 2013, a clear indication that they have a good recollection of their experiences pertaining to the *Itorero* training. Only a small number (9.8%) was trained in 2014, while 28.5% of respondents were trained in periods other than 2013 and 2014, i.e., 2012, 2011, and 2010.

Procedure

An estimate of 996 HSLs responded to the survey questionnaire while 19 HSLs participated in four focus group discussions. In addition, four interviews with district trainers and three with NIC officials were conducted. The data collection took place in Rwanda from November 2014 through March 2015. The data collection was sequential. The researcher started with the survey questionnaire which was supplemented by focus groups and interviews. Guiding questions for interviews with trainers and NIC officials as well as questions for focus groups with HSLs are placed in the Appendices 4 and 5, respectively.

Measure

The questionnaire for HSLs (which is in Appendix 1) was developed, piloted and validated by the researcher. In order to investigate the values education notion the *Itorero* training scheme is working with, its graduates, i.e. HSLs were presented with a list of 8 items depicting aims of values education. These items were drawn from four conceptions of values education constituting the conceptual framework: character education, care ethics, cognitive-developmental approach, and values clarification.

Character education generated two items: teaching the learner core values of the community; and telling the learner taboos/interdictions of the community. Care ethics is represented by two items: teaching the learner to care for others; and teaching the learner to speak and listen to others. The cognitive-development approach yielded two items: developing the learners reasoning capacities; and developing the learner's moral judgment. Values clarification contributed two items: initiating the learner into choosing freely; and inviting the learner to measure consequences of his/her actions or choices. The 8 items depicting aims of values education were suggested to respondents to be ranked on a four-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = agree; and 4 = strongly agree).

For the sake of ensuring reliability, the questionnaire for HSLs was subjected to Cronbach's Alpha test. The obtained reliability is 0.78, which is a good score given that the standard is 0.60 and above. In view of ensuring validity, Principal Component Analysis (PCA) and Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) were conducted on the 8 items capturing aims of values education. PCA was performed using SPSS 22 and CFA was carried out by means of AMOS 22. The end result of PCA and CFA was four scales with a good fit with the data: the goodness-of-fit index (GFI) is 0.99; the comparative fit index (CFI) is 0.97; and the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) is 0.04. The obtained goodness-of-fit is acceptable. PCA and CFA results are in the Appendices 2 and 3, respectively.

Research Design

The present article follows a non-experimental cross-sectional exploratory design. It seeks to establish the values education notion informing the *Itorero* training for HSLs. It engages with a mixed method approach; it is a quantitative–qualitative study.

Results: The Dominant Values Education Notion in the *Itorero* Training for HSLs

The extent to which each scale is recognized as informing aims of values education provided in *Itorero* is indicated in Table 2.

As Table 2 shows, character education outweighs all other values education notions in informing the *Itorero* training scheme for HSLs with a mean of 7.33 (SD = 0.93); the maximum score is 8 and the minimum is 3. This finding suggests

Table 2 Descriptive statistics for scales on aims of values education (N = 996)

Scale	Mean	SD	Min.	Max.	Skewness
1. Character education	7.33	0.93	3	8	− 1.50
2. Values clarification	6.79	1.26	0	8	− 1.27
3. Cognitive moral development	6.51	1.41	0	8	− 1.06
4. Care ethics	6.43	1.31	2	12	− 0.87

that *Itorero* training is *strongly* committed to character education as it educates HSLs for values. As a reminder, character education comprises aims such as teaching the learner core values of the community; and telling the learner taboos/interdictions of the community.

In the second place comes values clarification with a mean of 6.79 (SD = 1.26). This factor comprises the following constructs: initiating the learner into choosing freely; and inviting the learner to measure consequences of her or his actions or choices. It is followed by the cognitive-moral development approach with a mean of 6.51 (SD = 1.41). This factor includes developing reasoning capacities, and developing moral judgment. Care ethics is ranked last with a mean of 6.43 (SD = 1.31). It extends to teaching to speak and listen to others, and teaching to care for others.

Overall, these results lead to the conclusion that though the *Itorero* training scheme for HSLs engages with a variety of values education notions, it is strongly committed to character education. The present article investigates whether recognizing aims of values education provided in the course of *Itorero* training varies within HSLs subgroups mainly according to gender, marital status, age and the training period. To this effect, parametric inferential techniques, i.e. independent *t* test and ANOVA were used because normality and homogeneity of variance were assumed.

In terms of gender, a statistically significant difference was identified between males and females in their rating of values clarification: $t_{(989)} = 3.26$, $p < 0.05$. However, the effect size is small (Cohen's D score = 0.20). Indeed, females ranked slightly higher values clarification than did males. Their respective means are 6.92 (SD = 1.17) and 6.66 (SD = 1.34). Another difference was identified on values clarification between the group age of 15-19 and the three age groups: 20–24; 25–29; 30–34 with ($F_{(4, 962)} = 2.75$; $p < 0.05$) considering the Least Significant Difference (LSD). However, the effect size proves to be weak ($\eta^2 = 0.01$). With regard to marital status and training periods there was no statistically significant difference found within subgroups in rating values education notions.

These inferential results suggest that the rating of values clarification varies with gender and age. But the rating of other values education notions is not affected by background characteristics of respondents. More importantly, gender, marital status, age and training period do not affect the rating of the dominant values education notion, which is character education. This confirms the conclusion that the *Itorero*

training scheme for HSLs is unambiguously committed to character education; this claim is affirmed by all subgroups with no variation. Data from focus group discussions with HSLs, as well as interviews with district trainers and NIC officials support this conclusion.

Evidence from Focus Group Discussions with HSLs

HSLs were asked to describe briefly the aims of the values education they received in the *Itorero* training. The following is an exemplary opinion:

> The values and taboos that we learn are not only meant to be known or praised. No. We learn them so that they can mould our way of being and acting. We have to put into practice what we are taught…..We were taught values in order to know who we are; it was clearly meant to improve our character. [P22]

Evidence from Interviews with *Itorero* Trainers

Itorero district trainers were asked whether they give to HSLs a set of values during the *Itorero* training. Here is one of the answers:

> Yes, we give to HSLs a basket of values: Rwandanness; patriotism; integrity; courage; self-sacrifice; hard work; and upholding one's dignity. In my opinion, I would not give that basket to the learner as 'closed'. Rather, I would hand it over as 'open'. I would not definitely close it up because the learner may open and fail to understand its content. I feel that I should teach the learner about the content in the basket. [P54]

Evidence from Interviews with NIC Officials

Regarding the question whether, according to NIC officials, character education would inform the *Itorero* training for HSLs, the answer is very positive, as is apparent in the following view:

> Character education….That is the approach we use most. We teach values through the lecturing method, literature, and songs…So, we have that model. [P61]

The voices of HSLs, trainers and NIC officials clearly point to character education given the relative emphasis placed on the basket of values and taboos; improving character; and the lecturing method coupled with the use of literature and songs.

Discussion

Is Character Education an Appropriate and Desirable Approach to be Used in Educating HSLs for Values in Post-genocide Rwanda?

The present article acknowledges that by engaging with character education, *Itorero* fairly contributes to the transformation of HSLs' behavior so that they can meet expectations of the Rwandan society. It is also quite uncontroversial that *Itorero* allows HSLs to know some values and taboos of the Rwandan culture. The article notes, however, that the overreliance on character education raises serious concerns particularly because this approach has been found wanting in two important ways. First, it is perceived as 'indoctrination' and as a moral miseducation (Arthur 2008; Boyd 2010; Kohn 1997; Liu 2014; Noddings 2002). Second, it is not deemed sustainable (Kohlberg 1975; Kohn 1997; Liu 2014). In what follows, these criticisms are clearly unpacked and applied to *Itorero*.

The first criticism levelled against character education is that the model is indoctrinatory and a moral miseducation on the grounds that it takes the learner to be a passive receptacle to be filled with pre-established values and virtues without so much as being given the opportunity to construct meaning out of them. This caution about indoctrination and miseducation is relevant for *Itorero* training. In fact, it remains unclear as to what extent HSLs contribute in the definition of the values to be taught. This lack of clarity is an evidential fact from data; it does not result from a flaw in the research design informing the present study. Additionally, in inculcating values, *Itorero* relies heavily on direct instruction or lecturing method, with little attention being given to meaning-making, critical thinking, and moral conflict resolution skills. As a matter of evidence, when the researcher explained basic tenets of character education (teaching values and taboos; giving a bag of virtues), trainers took cognizance of this training model in the following terms:

> That is the approach we use most. We teach values through the lecturing method…So, we have that model. [P61]
> Yes, that is what we do. We give values to the learner. We use the lecturing methodology. [P62]

There are strong reasons here to suggest that HSLs are very passive in the whole exercise of values education provided in *Itorero*.

Second, it is indicated that character education is not sustainable. In fact, it is highly unlikely that values learnt through mere inculcation will be internalized and applied to new situations. According to Kohn (1997) and Liu (2014), though character education techniques may succeed in temporarily triggering a particular behavior, it seems problematic that they will leave the learner internalizing the values guiding this behavior and upholding them in other circumstances.

It is not clear by evidential fact from findings of the present research how *Itorero* training avoids the problems associated with character education (indoctrination, miseducation, and lack of sustainability). In view of this situation, *Itorero* runs the risk of simply being a 'bag of virtues approach' (Kohlberg 1975, p. 673), or a 'fix-

the-kid approach' (Kohn 1997, p. 433). What is further worrying is that there are currently no mechanism put in place by the NIC to establish the extent to which transmitted values have been internalized. In other words, there are presently no instruments developed specifically to assess the success of *Itorero* in educating HSLs for values.

All this seems to suggest that character education might not fully benefit post-genocide Rwanda. The present article argues that while educating HSLs for values, *Itorero* could gain more by engaging profoundly with other values education approaches (care ethics, the cognitive moral development approach, and values clarification). However, in so doing, *Itorero* should guard itself against their specific attendant limitations.

How would care ethics benefit *Itorero* for HSLs? Unlike character education, which upholds a free-floating set of virtues, for care ethics virtues are relational. Care ethics is much more concerned with 'caring relations' than with caring as a virtue. In this regard, instead of teaching HSLs a set of values about caring, *Itorero* would rather *practically* foster in them the establishment, maintenance and enhancement of caring relations. However, in accommodating care ethics *Itorero* should also take care to avoid its problems, which are (i) encouraging the exploitation of the caregiver as little importance is accorded to caring for oneself; (ii) neglecting justice; and (iii) not containing mechanisms by which care can be regulated so as not to become morally corrupt. The idea is that there is a need to set reasonable limits to caring; otherwise in the long run, it may hinder the development of the cared-for.

In educating HSLs for values, *Itorero* can retrieve from the cognitive-developmental approach the aspect of enriching moral reasoning (thinking). Instead of using lectures predominantly, *Itorero* could consider the use of moral dilemma discussions, preferably real life-based instead of hypothetical ones. While drawing from the cognitive-moral development approach, *Itorero* should guard itself against the belief that logical reasoning is the only factor determining moral behavior: one can be smart in terms of logical reasoning and moral judgment, and yet lead a morally impoverished life.

In relation to values clarification, *Itorero* could incorporate the aspect of logical reasoning in choosing among alternatives, and enabling the learner to think critically about her or his own choices and preferences. In drawing inspiration from values clarification, *Itorero* should avoid its limitations, which are being value free and relativistic.

More importantly, the present article suggests removing the conflation of citizenship education and character education within the *Itorero* training program for HSLs.

Removing the Conflation of Citizenship Education and Character Education

This article joins a debate on whether citizenship education is consistent or incoherent with character education. In fact, a number of scholars (Boyd 2010; Davies et al. 2005; Halstead and Pike 2006; Sears and Hughes 2006; Suissa 2015)

are strongly committed to the view that citizenship education cannot go hand in hand with character education, particularly because the latter has a tendency to be rather indoctrinatory, dogmatic and non-reflective.

According to Boyd (2010), character education relies primarily on a finite list of particular character traits or virtues arrived at by consensus; it is assumed that these virtues should form the core of all educational activities. Understood in this way, Boyd argues that character education is conceptually, empirically, morally, politically and educationally corrupt. It is concluded that conflating citizenship education and character education has the potential to foment an insidious *cancer of the body politic*. In other words, it is not sound to assume that one can aim *in the same way* to produce both the 'good person' and the 'good citizen'. Suissa (2015) warns that when citizenship education is combined with or reduced to character education, the idea of political education is displaced; the concept of the 'political' disappears if not addressed even in its most superficial sense.

Other studies (e.g. Althof and Berkowitz 2006; Berkowitz 2000; Hoge 2002; Sim and Low 2012), however, suggest that there is not only a possible but also a *necessary* relationship between character education and citizenship education. They hold the view that citizenship education actually needs a character education foundation. According to this trend, the perception of character education as inimical to citizenship education stems primarily from a misconception of what character education stands for. In this regard, Althof and Berkowitz (2006) argue that those who perceive character education as 'indoctrination' subscribe to a largely inaccurate stereotype and misrepresentation of the broad range of character education approaches. A defense is also mounted by Halstead and Pike (2006) that character education includes methods compatible with the need for promoting autonomous critical thinkers. Finally, character education is seen as essential in the development of 'good citizenship'; it supports citizenship and remains a critical element in any conception of citizenship education (Sim and Low 2012). The *Itorero* training scheme for HSLs in post-genocide Rwanda seems to have taken this orientation: that character education is essential in the development of 'good citizenship'.

How are we to position ourselves in the debate? It seems that the right way to alleviate the tension is firstly to acknowledge the broad relationship between character and citizenship education. Secondly, based on results from the present study, one can establish whether conflating citizenship education and character education is ill-fated or healthy.

Though there is a great deal of overlap between the two terms, citizenship and character education remain significantly different in a number of ways (Davies et al. 2005; Sears and Hughes 2006). In fact, as Davies et al. (2005) observe, both character education and citizenship education may be appealed to in order to address a crisis; they are responses to an alarm in society. However, Davies et al. (2005) acknowledge that character education and citizenship education draw from different sources. While citizenship education concerns itself principally with skills and dispositions required for one to play significantly her or his role in a democratic society, character education focuses on how to be an exemplary role model or part of a moral elite in everyday life. The idea here is that the domain of citizenship

education is public, social and political, while character education dwells centrally on personal motivation and moral grounds.

Such a distinction is important, particularly because confusing citizenship education with character education leads to transforming the former into indoctrination. As maintained by Sears and Hughes (2006), discourses and practices in the field of citizenship education most frequently exist in a state of tension between education and indoctrination. While indoctrination refers to teaching someone to accept doctrines (or values) uncritically, education is the opening of possibilities through engagement with evidence (Sears and Hughes 2006).

The present article sheds some light on the dispute; it carefully analyzes *Itorero*, a non-formal platform meant to educate HSLs for citizenship and values in post-genocide Rwanda. The article reveals that citizenship education (as it is done in *Itorero* for HSLs) is strongly driven by character education. Reference is made here to the pre-established list of values that are inculcated uncritically in HSLs and the predominant use of didactic approaches. As a reminder, these values include Rwandanness; patriotism; integrity; courage; self-sacrifice; hard work; and upholding one's dignity.

At this stage one might already raise the question as to whether these values are related to democratic dispositions and skills needed by emerging and second generations in post-genocide Rwanda. In fact, looking closely at the nature of the attributes on the list, one is led to conclude that *Itorero* is much more concerned with shaping the character of HSLs at the expense of teaching skills and dispositions necessary to participate in a democratic society. There is an assumption here that by making HSLs 'good people', they are also made 'good citizens', which is arguably mistaken.

In essence, this study shows that it is extremely difficult to reconcile citizenship and character education—at least in *Itorero*. In other words, it is nearly impossible to strike a right balance between the two practices when addressed concurrently. The idea here is that when citizenship education is combined with character education, the latter tends to swallow up the former; hence, indoctrination emerges. This conclusion was also reached by Sears and Hughes (2006), and Winton (2007) in their examination of citizenship education practices in Canada. The same conclusion was drawn by Tan and Wong (2010) in their study on character and citizenship education in Singapore. What these studies and my own paper show is that conflating citizenship education and character education is not attractive, let alone desirable.

It is not the contention of this article that citizenship education should not have a moral dimension. Understood as the acquisition of civic virtues or public morality, the moral aspect is important to citizenship education. But these civic virtues are to be acquired in as far as they relate to social and political frameworks (Davies et al. 2005), and they should be acquired otherwise than by character education given its inherent problems, chief among which is indoctrination as opposed to education in critical thinking.

Based on results from the present research, one is led to conclude that when citizenship and character education are taken as intimately related in theory and practice, chances of avoiding indoctrination are minimal. The end result is that

citizenship education is suffocated by character education. In this case, what is taken as 'citizenship education' amounts to nothing more than inculcation of character traits deliberately devised to suit government narratives. At the end of the process, learners have substantial gaps in democratic civic knowledge, skills, values and dispositions.

The *Itorero* training scheme for HSLs in post-genocide Rwanda testifies unambiguously to this state of affairs. Using the concepts of Heater (2004), citizenship education as it is done in *Itorero* seems like the cultivation of supportive behaviour towards the government in office; its content focuses on understanding what the government wants and the crafting of dispositions required for the implementation of defined policies. A number of other studies conducted on *Itorero* and *Ingando* came to the same conclusion (e.g. Mgbako 2005; Purdekovà 2011; Sundberg 2014; Turner 2014).

Conclusion

In educating HSLs for values, *Itorero* engages with all approaches of values education outlined by the academic literature. However, findings would indicate that *Itorero* relies *heavily* on character education. Other approaches, i.e., values clarification, cognitive moral development and care ethics are used *to some extent*. It is suggested that instead of relying deeply on character education, *Itorero* could draw on defensible or attractive features of other values education notions (care ethics, cognitive moral development approach, and values clarification), while avoiding their respective problems. More importantly, it is proposed to remove the conflation of citizenship education and character education.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

Conflict of interest The author declares that he has no conflict of interest.

Appendix 1

Appendix A: Questionnaire for HSLs

Name of the University:………………………

Gender: Male ☐   Female: ☐

Age: ....

Marital status: Single ☐   Married ☐

I underwent *Itorero* training in the year :…………………..

I was trained in the Sector…………………District……………   Province……….

***Question 1**: Based on the teaching you received, which of the following does constitute the aim of values education provided during* **Itorero** *training? Use the following scale (Tick √):*

1 = *Strongly disagree*	2 = *Disagree*	3 = *Agree*	4 = *Strongly agree*

Values education provided during the Itorero training mostly aims to:	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1. Teach the learner core values of the Rwandan community.	1	2	3	4
2. Tell the learner taboos/interdictions of the Rwandan community.	1	2	3	4
3. Teach the learner to care for others.	1	2	3	4
4. Teach the learner how to speak and listen to others.	1	2	3	4
5. Develop the learner's reasoning capacities.	1	2	3	4
6. Develop the learner's moral judgement.	1	2	3	4
7. Initiate the learner to choose freely among alternative ways of life.	1	2	3	4
8. Initiate the learner to measure consequences of her/his actions.	1	2	3	4

Appendix 2

PCA four-factor structure on aims of values education

	Loadings
Factor 1: Cognitive moral development	
1. Developing reasoning capacities	0.84

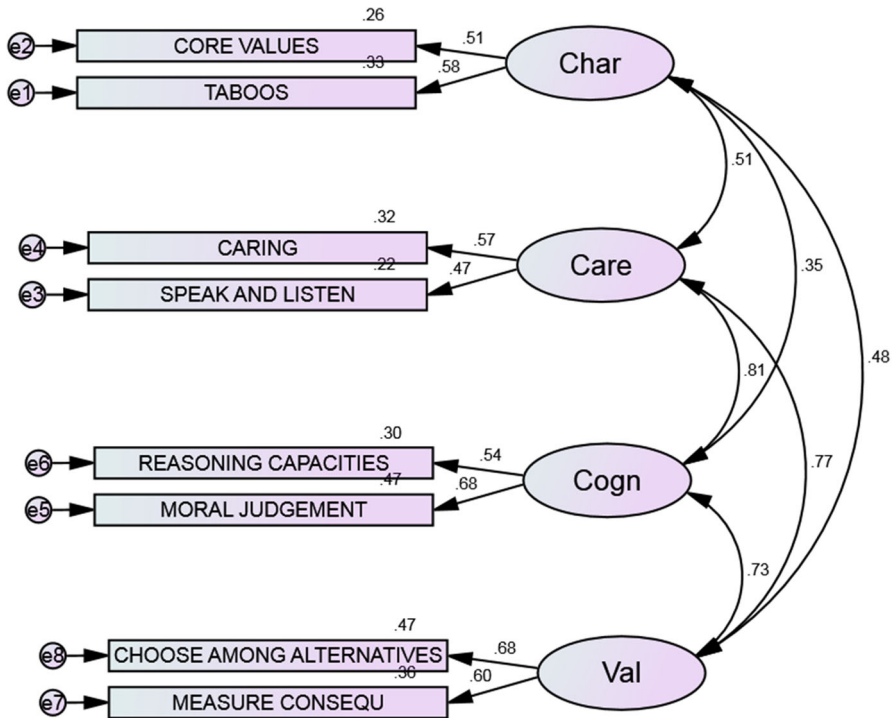|	Loadings
2. Developing moral judgment	0.68
Factor 2: Values clarification	
1. Teaching measuring consequences	0.82
2. Teaching to choose among alternatives	0.73
Factor 3: Character education	
1. Teaching taboos	0.79
2. Teaching core values	0.78
Factor 4: Care ethics	
1. Teaching to speak and listen to others	0.86
2. Teaching to care for others	0.41

Appendix 3

See Fig. 1.

Fig. 1 CFA on aims of values education

Appendix 4

Interview guide for district trainers and NIC officials

1. Based on the teaching dispensed in *Itorero*, how would you describe 'good citizenship'? What does it mean to be a 'good citizen' – a good Rwandan?

2. What does citizenship education provided in *Itorero* mostly aim at?

3. What does values education provided in *Itorero* aim at?

4. In your opinion, does the *Itorero* training scheme for high school leavers have some challenges? What would you suggest to overcome them? Who should implement the strategies you are suggesting?

Thank you!

Appendix 5

Guiding questions for focus group discussions with HSLs

1. When you hear the word "*Itorero*", what first comes to your mind?

2. Based on the teaching dispensed in *Itorero*, how would you describe 'good citizenship'? What does it mean to be a 'good citizen' – a good Rwandan?

3. What does citizenship education provided in *Itorero* mostly aim at?

4. What does values education provided in *Itorero* mostly aim at?

5. In your opinion, does the *Itorero* training scheme for high school leavers have some challenges? What would you suggest to overcome them? Who should implement the strategies you are suggesting?

6. What did you like most in the training? What did you dislike most?

Thank you!

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