

Education for Citizenship

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This special edition of Reflecting Education focuses on the teaching and learning of citizenship in the education system in England and in Lebanon. We have selected articles that raise questions for theory and policy and we have also included empirical studies based on the experiences of teachers and researchers who have engaged directly with classrooms.

We are able to do this because at the Institute of Education we work closely with practitioners around the world and schools across England. We help to train teachers of citizenship and offer a number of courses: the PGCE secondary citizenship; the MA Citizenship Education, which is offered in face to face and distance versions; and special Continuing Professional Development (CPD) courses leading to the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) certificate of citizenship teaching, also offered in face to face and distance versions. We also have a number of doctoral students investigating topics in citizenship education. Teacher researchers from these courses account for the majority of the contributions to this special issue.

In putting together this special edition, we aimed to:

- contribute to current debates about citizenship education;
- review critically the state of citizenship education in schools;
- compare citizenship education in England and in other contexts.

We are pleased to present a collection of seven articles that meets these targets. Before introducing the authors and the contributions we feel it appropriate to situate this collection in a policy context.

Citizenship as a concept refers to the free and legitimate participation of individuals and groups in society. It is both an attribute of individuals and a concept that embraces collective actions. Citizenship is a status that recognises the claims of individuals to agency. There is an expectation that citizenship carries with it the right to participate and a responsibility towards others. It is perhaps most easily understood as contrasting with other possible statuses such as slave, prisoner, subject of an absolute ruler, vassal (Faulks, 2000). Individuals in these conditions have little opportunity to influence their condition or that of others.

The romantic view of citizenship associated with the 1789 French Revolution links citizenship to democracy. Citizens started a process of overthrowing an absolute monarch and creating a constitution based on fundamental rights. When associated with democracy, citizenship is about inclusion. The more people feel included, the better the quality of democracy.

Other definitions of citizenship may be in tension with democratic values of inclusion. Citizenship can be an exclusive status, usually linked to nationality. National citizenship is an often prized status that confers rights of settlement and of freedom to enter and leave the territory of a State. In the UK, many migrants who are residents may be denied the formal

status of citizenship until they satisfy certain conditions determined by the government, including possibly being required to pass a test of knowledge of 'life in the UK'.

These two traditions of citizenship and democracy and citizenship and nationality are the basis of much of the debate and discussion around the concept of citizenship today. Citizenship education was made a formal requirement of the national curriculum in England in 2002. Since there are many students in schools who are not British citizens, and education is itself a human right, there is a moral imperative for citizenship education to be based on a broader definition than national citizenship.

By understanding citizenship as a *feeling*, a *status* and a *practice* (Osler & Starkey, 2005) we can start to conceptualise citizenship in a way that is potentially universal rather than national. Citizenship is a feeling of belonging to a community, or more likely communities, what Parekh (2000) drawing on Etzioni (1995) refers to as 'a community of communities'. Each of these overlapping communities has its own identity and citizens will therefore have multiple identities. Citizenship is also a practice because there is an expectation that citizens recognise that they have responsibilities to others and that they should act accordingly. Citizens have status deriving from their nationality. However, they also have status as persons deriving from their entitlement to universal human rights.

The capacity to claim and exercise human rights is a hallmark of citizenship (Gardner, 1997) and in this respect children are citizens rather than future citizens. Since 1989 they have been entitled to universal rights under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. If it is predicated on the fundamental importance of universal human rights, citizenship in schools should have a global as well as a local and a national dimension. This position is non-controversial in England and it is written into the national programme of study. Citizenship education based on an awareness of the universality of human rights and an acceptance and celebration of diversity has been characterised as education for *cosmopolitan* citizenship (Osler & Starkey, 2003, 2005).

However, this position appears to be contested at the time of writing in October 2006, since the DfES has set up a review panel to consider the possibility of increasing consideration of 'modern British cultural and social history' within the citizenship programme. There are clearly pressures from some quarters within government for citizenship education in England to be explicitly framed as education for national citizenship.

There are many arguments against a citizenship education that seeks to prioritise a national as opposed to a cosmopolitan perspective. One is that it would be to invent an approach to education that died out with empire. Whilst some nations promote the national flag and other symbols of nationhood through education, there has been no recent tradition of flag flying and the singing of a national anthem in schools in England.

Thus, almost as soon as it has been introduced, citizenship education, not unexpectedly, is a site of struggle and controversy. This is to be expected in a healthy liberal democracy.

As well as the nature and aims of the subject, practical issues concerning the delivery of the citizenship in schools have also generated discussion. Following the proposals contained in the report of the Citizenship Advisory Group (QCA 1998) the Department for Education

and Employment (DfEE) and the Qualification and Curriculum Authority (QCA) produced a programme of study that secondary schools were required to cover from September 2002 (DfEE & QCA, 1999). The corresponding guidance for primary schools is non-statutory. This was followed by some exemplary material in the form of schemes of work (QCA & DfES, 2001, 2002).

The programmes of study are intended to develop students' knowledge in a range of topics. These include human rights, the legal system, the diversity of British society and the role of the media. As well as knowledge, the programme of study aims to develop two sets of skills: participation; and enquiry and communication. The introduction of a new curriculum subject presented schools in England with several challenges, such as: developing a suitable 'delivery model'; adapting an already busy timetable; addressing the training needs of staff; and assessing students' progress in a suitable way. The ongoing evaluations of the subject from the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) (2005a,b, 2006) and from National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) (Kerr *et al.* 2004, Cleaver *et al.*, 2005, Ireland *et al.*, 2006) have shown that schools have adapted to these challenges in a number of different ways and with varying degrees of success.

The citizenship programme of study was deliberately constructed to be less prescriptive than other curriculum subjects. A 'light touch' approach was taken allowing schools flexibility in implementation (Crick 2000: 9). However Ofsted soon started to note that some schools (and some inspectors) had misinterpreted the light touch curriculum to the extent that learning experiences were being classed as citizenship when clearly they were not (Ofsted, 2003). It seemed that the light touch nature of the curriculum had led to additional problems of definition concerning the subject.

One of the practical challenges facing schools is how to respond to the 'active' element of the citizenship programme of study. The citizenship education in England is largely premised, on Crick and Lister's conception of political literacy (1978). They viewed the politically literate as not only having the cognitive skills to understand the issue of the day, but also the skills to act and the desire to make a difference. The QCA translated this concept into the national curriculum by requiring schools to provide opportunities for pupils to: 'negotiate, decide and take part responsibly in both school and community based activities' (QCA 1999: 14).

Providing such opportunities raises questions of how it is best done. Schools are free to decide on the extent to which this can be addressed within a fifty minute lesson. Schools increasingly recognise the need for complementary approaches. These include extra curricular activities; establishing community links; promoting elements of democracy through school councils and giving attention to the way the whole school makes decisions. This 'active' element of the subject, designed to link classroom learning with processes of change in the world outside, has prompted Ofsted, amongst others, to pose the question: 'Citizenship: a subject or 'more than a subject'?' (Ofsted, 2006:10). That the school inspection service poses such a question publicly is itself revealing of on-going uncertainties about the scope and definition of the subject in schools.

This issue of definition is not just a concern for schools. The two major evaluators of the subject in schools, Ofsted and the NFER, take slightly differing approaches to the active citizenship element. Ofsted views the subject as primarily a classroom based entity whereas the NFER see the vision being realised, in part, at a whole school level (Ofsted, 2006).

We can see from this brief exploration that citizenship education is a contested notion, both in terms of its aims and content, but also in relation to its interpretation and implementation in schools. The collection of papers in the journal reflects some of these theoretical and practical debates.

The first article poses some challenging questions. Liam Gearon invites us to consider the role of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in relation to citizenship education. Teachers of citizenship are encouraged to engage with the voluntary sector, which is a source of materials, speakers, websites and which provides opportunities for students to engage with the world beyond school. A partnership of schools and NGOs is therefore likely to be a necessary and desirable dimension of the provision of citizenship education. That said, Gearon points out that there are few safeguards for schools in this partnership. Are we right to assume that by its very existence an NGO has aims and intentions that are necessarily identical to those of schools? What guarantee do schools have that NGOs are benign partners? The question has not previously been posed.

James Wood writes as a senior manager in school committed to citizenship education. He considers how active citizenship can be promoted and lists a number of forms this can take, including involvement with NGOs. He gives an account of the some issues involved in providing a programme of active citizenship in schools, exploring some of the questions highlighted above, in particular the different definitions of active citizenship and how these can be translated into school practice.

John Holmes follows the theme of active citizenship and participation by examining research that concludes that student participation above and beyond its intrinsic value can also lead to greater students' motivation and improvements in learning. He draws on Maslow's hierarchy of needs to underpin his analysis of the evidence.

The fourth article provides the international and comparative dimension to this collection of papers. Bassel Akar suggests that there are some universal humanistic and democratic principles that provide the procedural values that enable controversy to be managed constructively in a school environment. He set out to interrogate teachers in Lebanon, before the war of summer 2006, to ascertain the extent to which they recognised and worked with such procedural values. Not surprisingly, although teachers acknowledged humanistic principles, their practice in the classroom did not always correspond to these beliefs. Whilst promoting universal values, they were also working within a national understanding of the law and strong local traditions emphasising duties and obedience rather than rights. In these conditions the scope for democratic dialogue was relatively limited.

Louisa Neuberger contributes a lively evocation of her classroom experience. She argues for the benefits of the conviviality associated with the blending and mutual exchange of cultural references and manifestations that she experienced in multicultural London schools. She identifies roles for teachers that include taking an interest in the out of school activities of their students. The creation of an environment in which real sharing of experiences can occur is both a necessity and a challenge. At a time when the concept of multiculturalism is under attack in Britain, this article provides an entertaining and convincing counter.

The final two articles address an issue that is at the heart of the development of citizenship education. Dan Amias provides a well-illustrated account of how his practice in assessing citizenship developed during his PGCE year. In particular he explores how an assessment for learning approach can be applied to a citizenship context. Mary Richardson asks the more fundamental questions of why and how to assess citizenship.

Together, these articles provide evidence of the current state of citizenship education in England, as well as a glimpse at developments in Lebanon. They raise questions about the direction of policy and include many pointers to successful practice.

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