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Citizenship education in the Irish curriculum: processes of teacher-child interaction in social learning

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Civic Social and Political Education (CSPE) in the Republic of Ireland is concerned with issues at personal, local, national and global levels, promoting the development of knowledge, concepts, skills, attitudes and values, supported by active learning methodologies with an emphasis on well structured discussion.[1] Learning requires individuals to progress towards self-development for autonomy, choice and responsibility across all spheres of experience.[2]

Aristotle's conception of what it is to be and to develop as a person over the whole of one's life is particularly relevant in citizenship education. It includes a quest for values, with each person seeking to reach beyond the self to create something of value, that is valued. It also involves developing as a person towards what Aristotle described as the 'excellences': perfecting a life, which is inescapably a struggle, and experience of failure as well as success. Within this context the most important ultimate virtue is that of deliberation, a life of questioning and enquiry committed to revising both beliefs and action; so that learning moves from being a means to an end to becoming the end in itself, the defining purpose creatively shaping the whole of a life.[3]

In order to make this a reality for all the unfolding of self depends upon developing the necessary social conditions, which can provide a sense of purpose within society both for the self and for others.[4] This is especially important in the 21st Century and these conditions can only be developed by creating arenas for public discourse. Sen makes the point that the conditions for a learning society are, in the last resort, fundamentally political - they require the creation of a polity, which provides the foundation for personal and collective empowerment.[5]

In a political tradition stemming from the Greek city states and the Roman republic, citizenship has meant involvement in public affairs by those who had the rights of citizens: namely the right to take part in public debate and, directly or indirectly, in shaping the laws and decisions of the state. In modern times democratic ideas shaped by both the American and French Revolutions led to the broadening of the franchise from a

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[1] *Issues, Opportunities and Challenges for Social, Political and Development Education in the Post-Primary Classroom,* Summary Report of Seminar Local and Global Issues in the Classroom, Marino Institute of Education, 22 May 1997, Appendix 7, p. 28.

[2] Ranson, S 'Education for Democracy' in Tomlinson, S, *Educational Reform and its consequences* (London, 1994), p.139.

[3] Held, D., *Political Theory and the Modern State,* (Oxford, 1989), quoted in Ranson, op. cit, p. 142.

[4] ibid.

[5] Sen, A., 'Individual Freedom as Social Commitment', in *New York Review of Books,* 14th June 1990, quoted in Ranson, op. cit, p. 145.

narrow citizen class of the educated and the property owners to a wider base. In the 20th century this broadened again to include female emancipation and a decrease in the voting age. Coupled with this was the development of the media and freedom of the press, which in turn opened up the processes of government to public scrutiny.[6]

There are many new contexts in the 21st century that face those involved in citizenship education. The proliferation of information technology, the dramatic advances in biotechnology, the restructuring of employment, the enormous growth in internal and external mobility in Europe, with the resulting linguistic and cultural diversity, open up a vast number of possibilities.[7] Coupled with this is the issue of human rights, which now need to be redefined for a multiracial, multiethnic and multicultural Europe.[8] The challenge for education at all levels in the 21st Century is to enable the public as citizens to contribute to the development of their own society. This is something to which citizenship education can make a positive and worthwhile contribution. In reference to civic education, David Hargreaves has made the point in *The Mosaic of Learning* that:

> Civic education is about the civic virtues and decent behaviour that adults wish to see in young people. But it is also more than this. Since Aristotle it has been accepted as an inherently political concept that raises questions about the sort of society we live in, how it has come to take its present form, the strengths and weaknesses of current political structures, and how improvements might be made…. Active citizens are as political as they are moral; moral sensibility derives in part from political understanding; political apathy spawns moral apathy.[9]

Issues surrounding Citizenship Education

John Beck has argued that the objective of educating for citizenship, as distinct from educating about citizenship, involves complex educational and practical difficulties which cannot be easily resolved.[10] T H Marshall, in his book entitled *Citizenship* published in the 1950s, defined three elements involved in citizenship: the civil, the political and the social. The novel element in Marshall's analysis was the social element.[11] He saw this as indispensable to what he regarded as the capacity of citizenship in modern welfare societies to generate a direct sense of community membership based on loyalty to a civilisation which he felt was a common possession. This is indeed a difficult challenge, particularly for those involved in education. Marshall's view requires societies to define and articulate what they mean by citizenship. Heater has made the point that the

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[6] *Education for citizenship and the teaching of democracy in schools,* Final Report of the Advisory Group on Citizenship 22 September 1998, (UK. Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, 1998), p. 9.

[7] ibid.

[8] Council of Europe CDCC Project, *Adult education and social change,* Final Conference Report, Strasbourg, 22-25 March 1993, p. 15.

[9] ibid.

[10] Beck, J 'Citizenship Education : problems and possibilities', in *Curriculum Studies,* Vol. 4, Number 3, 1996, p.349.

[11] ibid.

teacher cannot possibly be expected to prepare young people for adult life as citizens without a complete and agreed understanding of what that status entails.[12]   McLaughlin believes that the absence of agreement about public virtues and the common good, actually gives rise to the various disputes about citizenship and 'education for citizenship'. He goes on to argue that:

> If society is, through its schools, to educate for citizenship in a significant way, what is needed at the practical level is a wide ranging and informed national debate, to establish as far as possible a degree of agreement about the public virtues and the common good and about how citizenship and education for citizenship are to be understood.[13]

This is an important issue for all societies and education systems.

School has in the past been the place where an attempt was made to achieve the goals of a society in a structured way. As well as being used as a vehicle for social reform, an education system can also reproduce a society's status quo. Durkheim defined education as the influence by adult generations on those that are not yet ready for social life, and stated that its object was to arouse and develop in the child a certain number of physical, intellectual and moral states, which are demanded of him by the political society as a whole and the special milieu for which he is specifically destined.[14]

The experiences that children have at school affect their development towards adulthood. Education becomes an agent of social change, and in the process of responding to social change, becomes tied up with both the economic and the cultural system. Schools are seen as places where socialisation can be formalised. The Irish White Paper on Education *Charting Our Education Future*, published in 1995 stated:

> The state's role in education arises as part of its overall concern to achieve economic prosperity, social well-being and a good quality of life within a democratic structured society.[15]

In the past civics education in Ireland was nationally based, with a particular focus on the local community. In the primary, secondary and vocational sectors, civics education focused on nationalism and parochialism, with a strong emphasis on the Irish language and the maintenance of a Roman Catholic morality. The programme at these levels concentrated on the accumulation of knowledge about specific topics, structures and institutions. This remained the case until relatively recently.

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[12] Heater, D., *Citizenship: the civic ideal in world history, politics and education.* (Harlow : Longman, 1990), p.316, quoted in Beck, op.cit, p. 359.

[13] McLaughlin, T. H. 'Citizenship, diversity and education: a philosophical perspective', in *Journal of Moral Education,* Vol. 21 (3), pp.235-250, quoted in Beck, op.cit, p.360.

[14] Durkheim, E., *Education and Sociology,* (London, 1956), quoted in Boyle, D, *An examination of social, personal and health education through an investigation into the effectiveness of self esteem modules from social, personal and health education programmes currently in use in some second level schools in Ireland,* MA Educational Psychology, National University of Ireland, Dublin, 1996, p. 12.

[15] *Charting Our Education Future,* Ireland's White Paper on Education (Government of Ireland Publications, Dublin, 1995).

In the current Irish education system students follow the Junior Certificate Programme, which is a three-year programme in the initial years of post primary schooling. This programme was introduced into the Irish education system in 1989 and was first examined in 1992. It is based on the principles of breadth, balance, relevance and quality. In the final phase of compulsory schooling it is considered essential that every young person should have a wide range of educational experiences. The guidelines for the Programme issued by the Department of Education and Science advise that particular emphasis should be given to social and environmental education, science, technology and modern languages. The curriculum at this stage of education should be relevant to the immediate and prospective needs of the young person, in the context of the cultural, economic and social environment. Quality is a central component of this process. Coupled with this is the aspiration that every young person should be challenged to achieve the highest possible standards of excellence, with due regard to different aptitudes and abilities and to international comparisons.[16]

The official documentation issued by the Department of Education and Science states quite clearly that the curriculum should provide a wide range of educational experiences within a supportive and formative environment by drawing on the aesthetic and creative, ethical, linguistic, mathematical, physical, scientific and technological, social, environmental, political and spiritual domains.[17] Each Junior Certificate subject syllabus is presented for implementation within this general curriculum context.

Civic Social and Political Education

The current Civic, Social and Political Education programme replaced the Junior Cycle Civics syllabus. The old syllabus contained much good material but it had become outdated and had not developed to keep pace with a changing world. In 1990 the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) prepared a Junior Certificate Course in Civic Social and Political Education with resource materials and guidelines for teachers.[18] A pilot project was initiated in the period 1993-1996, jointly developed by the Department of Education and Science and the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment. The pilot project tried to establish a balance between those aspects of provision that catered for the personal and social development of students and those, which focussed more specifically on education for citizenship in a democratic society.[19]

In 1995 a draft strategy paper for the implementation of CSPE was published by the NCCA. This document made the point that CSPE was a major curricular innovation and consequently faced many challenges which included limited timetable provision for the area within schools and a non-existent teaching cohort for whom CSPE was their first teaching subject. The previous civics programme had failed in the past to establish itself within the curriculum in any meaningful way, and there was a serious lack of teaching and

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[16] ibid.

[17] *The Junior Certificate Aims and Principles*, (Department of Education and Science 1992).

[18] Hammond, J, *CSPE Pilot Project* presented to the NCCA and the Department of Education and Science 1996, p. 2.

[19] Hammond, op. cit, p. 3

learning resources specifically targeted at CSPE. Since 1997 all post primary schools offer CSPE to their first year students. The course is conducted around seven core concepts: democracy, rights and responsibilities, human dignity, interdependence, development, law and stewardship.[20] Active learning is a key aspect of the programme, and student learning should mirror the integrated occurrence of civic, social and political phenomena in society and life.

Active participatory citizenship is the central aim of CSPE. Students will only choose to become active participants in their communities if they feel a sense of attachment to them. The affective and cognitive dimensions of active citizenship are emphasised throughout the syllabus.[21] CSPE should be timetabled for approximately 70 hours over a three-year period, which works out at one 40-minute class period per week.

The programme consists of four units of study:
Unit 1 The Individual and Citizenship
Unit 2 The Community
Unit 3 The State-Ireland
Unit 4 Ireland and the World

The sequence of the four units of study are developmental, taking individual pupils as their starting points and then exploring the pupils' citizenship in the context of the communities in which they participate, their nation and the wider world.[22] The sequence of the four units of study are neither discrete nor mutually exclusive and, in practice, the implementation of the course should result in the overlapping of topics, ideas and concepts that are common to all units.

Aims

The CSPE programme aims to develop active citizens who have:

- A sense of belonging to the local, national, European and global community.
- A capacity to gain access to information and structures.
- An ability to fully participate in democratic society.

Post primary schools have traditionally focused on the acquisition of knowledge as the primary function of education. This has resulted from the heavy emphasis on didactic teaching in many schools, due to the pressure imposed by the examination system. The CSPE syllabus, while not denying a place for didactic education, places a greater emphasis on active and co-operatively structured learning situations in the classroom. This is a major challenge to teachers as it seeks new and innovative ways of dealing with material in the classroom. The ability to achieve the aims of the CSPE syllabus is

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[20] Mc Carthy, S., 'Rewarding Activity: Assessment and Certification of the Junior Certificate Course in Civic, Social and Political Education', in Hyland, A (ed.), *Innovations in Assessment in Irish Education*, (Education Department, UCC, 1998), p. 85.

[21] McCarthy, op. cit, p. 86.

[22] CSPE Subject Guidelines, Department of Education and Science.

dependent on the way the subject is treated within the school timetable and in the classroom.

Commentary on CSPE provision in the Junior Certificate Programme

Polan has argued that students will value something if they perceive that the institution values it through a serious commitment of time and resources.[23] When one examines the actual provision in schools for CSPE as a subject area an interesting picture emerges. In 1999 a report on the Junior Certificate *(The Junior Cycle Review: Progress Report: Issues and Options for Development)* analysed subject provision at Junior Cycle.[24] A total of 345 schools were selected in the sampling frame of which 239 responded to a questionnaire in which Principals of schools were asked about the number of subjects (including non-examination subjects) taken by first year and final year students taking the Junior Certificate Programme. In relation to CSPE the following data emerged:

Figure 1: Allocation of time to CSPE by Schools sampled

	First Year	Third Year
None	1.3 %	9.1%
One period per week.	93.8%	88.0%
Two periods per week.	4.8%	2.9%

Source: The Junior Cycle Review: Progress Report: Issues and Options for Development, 1999.

This data indicates a decrease in provision of CSPE as a subject between first and third year. This is very significant in the context of citizenship education. Students, maturing towards adulthood at 15/16 years of age, are receiving less citizenship education in their third year at a time when they are forming ideas about themselves and the world in which they live. The main reason for this is that many schools have overloaded timetables with some students taking 10 or 11 Junior Certificate subjects. Since the time devoted to CSPE decreases over the three years there is a danger that students will not be exposed to the wide range of issues or active learning experiences recommended in the syllabus guidelines. CSPE is the only subject at Junior Cycle which is examined at a single common level. This has led to debate about the provision for students less able to cope with the requirements of the programme. There is no CSPE programme on offer at Senior Cycle, so ideas and themes surrounding citizenship cannot be further developed as students move into the senior cycle of their education.

One of the difficulties in developing CSPE is the high turnover of teachers teaching the subject. During the academic year 1999-2000, the last year of national in-service training for the programme, 44 per cent of teachers who attended for in-service training were new to the subject.[25] This is linked to the fact that the subject is offered for only one period of 40 minutes per week.: as a result CSPE is used to cover shortages in teachers' timetables.

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[23] Polan, A J *Personal and Social Education: Citizenship and biography,* (London, 1991), p. 40.

[24] *The Junior Cycle Review,* Progress Report: Issues and Options for Development, (NCCA, 1999).

[25] Interview with Ms Mairin Wilson, National Inservice Coordinator, 26th April 00, 11am Education Department, National University of Ireland, Dublin.

A high turnover of teaching staff militates against good practice and disrupts continuity in the teaching of the subject. A large proportion of Higher Diploma in Education (pre-service) teachers are asked to teach the subject, while support at pre-service level for this subject is not strong in universities and teacher training colleges. These difficulties are also reflected in student performance in this subject area in the Junior Certificate examination held at the end of the third year of the programme.

Chief Examiner's Report on CSPE in the Junior Certificate Examinations in 1999

CSPE was examined for the first time at Junior Certificate Level in 1999. Although CSPE is now a mandatory course for all Junior Certificate candidates, this particular examination had a limited entry of 16,663 candidates, because following the three year Pilot Project (1993-1996) schools had the option of implementing this course with their first year candidates in September 1996. All schools have had to offer this course to first year candidates from September 1997 onwards. The first full cohort of candidates will therefore be taking this examination in June 2000.[26] Assessment is in two modes, a written terminal examination which accounts for 40 per cent (120 marks) of the final grade, and the presentation of either a Report on an Action Project or a Course Work Assessment Book, which accounts for 60 per cent (180 marks) of the final grade. The Department of Education and Science issued guidelines to schools which outlined the required format for the Report on the Action Project (RAP) and also for the Course Work Assessment Book (CWAB). The Report on an Action Project (RAP) or Course Work Assessment Book (CWAB) is produced by the candidate before the terminal written examination. Figure 2 gives the grades awarded in CSPE in the 1999 examination:

Figure 2: Grades awarded in CSPE in the Junior Certificate Examination 1999

	A	B	C	D	E	F	NG	Total
No of candidates	2,052	5,215	5,033	3,185	784	344	50	16,663
% of candidates	12.3	31.3	30.2	19.1	4.7	2.1	0.3	100

Source: Department of Education and Science, 1999. Republic of Ireland.

7.1 per cent of candidates taking the CSPE course at the end of their third year were not successful. Interestingly there were very few failures in the actual examination paper; those who were not successful had not completed an action project or a course work assessment book.[27]

The written examination paper

The examination paper was divided into three sections. Section 1 examined the candidates' understanding of basic knowledge and information, which they should have encountered during the CSPE course. The questions were short and required the insertion of missing words, the ticking of correct answers and the matching of the names of

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[26] *CSPE Chief Examiner's Report Junior Certificate Examinations 1999*, (Department of Education and Science, 2000), p. 1.

[27] ibid.

organisations with their specific functions. Section 2 was composed of stimulus-based questions, which addressed one or more of the seven course concepts. A stimulus such as a photograph, cartoon, diagram etc., was presented at the head of the question. In section 3 candidates had to complete an open-ended or essay type question. The Chief Examiner was impressed with the level of maturity and critical analysis which candidates applied to these questions commenting that:

> The general level of understanding and knowledge of national and international issues displayed by candidates in their answers belies the comment that is often made, that political issues are too complicated and beyond the general comprehension of thirteen to fifteen year old candidates.[28]

The paper was topical because it asked about refugees, candidate councils, local government, by-elections and European elections, issues that were very prominent either at the time of the examination itself or during the school year. The vast majority of candidates completed this element of the examination satisfactorily. Indeed the paper was significant in ensuring that a number of candidates, who scored less than 72 marks (40% or D) on the RAP or CWAB, reached a grade D or higher in the overall examination. This was not in line with the general expectation that the vast majority of candidates would receive a D grade or higher on their CWAB or RAP and that the written paper would help candidates receive a higher grade in their overall result. This expectation was based on the fact that 60 per cent of the final grade can be obtained from a CWAB or RAP, which is prepared in school outside formal examination conditions.[29] This indicates that students are very capable of performing in an examination setting but find other forms of assessment like the RAPs and CWABs much more difficult. This is noteworthy in the context of what CSPE as a subject is trying to achieve within the overall philosophical framework of the Junior Certificate Programme.

Report on Action Project / Course Work Assessment Book

Candidates must submit either a Course Work Assessment Book (CWAB) or Report on an Action Project (RAP) as part of their final assessment. This element of the assessment is designed to assess candidates' active involvement in the course. The Action Project component is a compulsory part of each of these modules. In a Report on an Action Project a candidate presents a detailed description of an Action Project, which s/he has undertaken. This report must be presented in accordance with the format and procedures outlined in the CSPE guidelines on Action Projects and their Assessment produced by the Department of Education and Science. These guidelines clearly outline what candidates should include and what they should avoid when completing these particular elements of the assessment.

The Chief Examiner reported that in a number of cases, candidates seemed to be altogether unaware of the guidelines.[30] In one particular case candidates from a school presented this particular element of their assessment on individual audiocassettes. What they presented was neither a CWAB nor RAP but a peculiar hybrid which proved difficult

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[28] *CSPE Chief Examiner's Report*, op. cit, p. 4.

[29] *CSPE Chief Examiner's Report,* op. cit, p. 5.

[30] ibid.

to mark. In one centre, all candidates used the same photocopied material as part of their RAPs, which they had received, apparently from the same source.[31] The Report states quite clearly that teachers of CSPE and their candidates should clearly understand that the Action Project referred to either in the CWAB or RAP should be based on one or more of the course concepts and should have a genuine action component. An Action Project is not the traditional project which most candidates and teachers are familiar with, i.e., a scrap book in which candidates either rewrite or place information primarily taken from printed materials that they have either sought and acquired or downloaded from the Internet on a particular topic.

Over 90 per cent of candidates presented a Report on an Action Project for assessment. For the students who experienced a didactic teaching approach in the classroom, who stuck rigidly to a textbook and who presented a report on a traditional project rather than on an action project, the CSPE experience was unrewarding and uninteresting. The majority of Reports were written on Action Projects appropriate to the CSPE course, but a significant number were not appropriate.

Attention to guidelines was notably absent from a large number of RAPs. The Report was divided into the following sections: the Introduction, which most candidates completed well but did badly when asked to provide a clear statement on the relevance of the Action Project to the CSPE course. The next section concerned Activities Undertaken. Part one of this section asked candidates to list and briefly describe the different activities undertaken during the course of the action project. Most candidates did this. Where a class Action Project was divided into different tasks and distributed amongst different groups in the class a number of candidates failed to briefly describe what the other groups had done. Part two of this section asked candidates to describe in detail what they in particular had done. Most of the answers to this part of the Report were poor. Part three asked them to identify and describe two particular skills and how they were applied. This was the weakest section of the whole report. Few candidates showed a capability in making the required explicit reference to skills.[32] This is extremely worrying in the context of the aims and philosophy underpinning the CSPE syllabus.

The Chief Examiner made a number of recommendations based on the analysis of performance in the subject. In summary it was advocated that teachers need to be encouraged to focus more on skills: to use the language of skills, and to inform candidates of the skills that they are implementing and developing. Candidates should be aware of the skills related to CSPE that they have acquired, developed and employed over the duration of the course and be able to make explicit reference to them. The Report also stated that teachers were misled by some of the commercial textbooks available for CSPE as some books have included topics, which are not on the course. The examination is based on the syllabus rather than on any textbook.[33]

Less than 10 per cent of candidates opted for the Course Work Assessment Book (CWAB). Some candidates produced CWABs that were scrappy and repetitive; it was obvious that these candidates had been left to fill in the CWAB on their own with little or

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[31] *CSPE Chief Examiner's Report,* op. cit, pp 8-10.

[32] *CSPE Chief Examiner's Report,* op. cit, p. 16.

[33] *CSPE Chief Examiner's Report,* op. cit, p. 17.

no direction and guidance. The section of the CWAB that candidates found the most difficult to complete was that relating to skills. Candidates were not aware of the particular skills relating to CSPE that they had developed and applied over the duration of the course. This is disappointing as the course is primarily concerned with the development of skills.[34]

However the ability to just clearly identify skills is not enough. As Holden and Clough have pointed out a pupil who is action-competent is one who can argue, can reflect critically and can relate his or her opinions and actions to a values framework. Without action-competence the pupil is in danger of engaging in participation at a superficial level.[35] These issues are vital to the successful development of citizenship education in the classroom.

Each day in schools, teachers struggle to engage adolescent students' attention. Many students find their schooling irrelevant to their lives.[36] During the last few decades curriculum adaptations to social conditions have, in the words of McNeil, swung between several orientations:

> Academic (development of the mind through subject matter); social meliorist (the use of the curriculum to improve society); social efficiency (school as preparation for a job); and student-centred (curriculum that offers students rich experiences).[37]

Killeavy, Collinson and Stephenson, in their research on the professional practices of exemplary secondary level teachers in England, Ireland and the United States, found that in making the curriculum relevant, the teachers appear to balance the four curriculum orientations. These teachers do, however, target two main orientations: the development of personal and societal values, and intellectual development.[38] Their study also reveals that exemplary teachers attached considerable importance to making the classroom experience of their students relevant to matters of a socio-cultural nature, both in the context of global issues such as human rights and the problems of developing countries, as well as matters of local, community and personal concern.[39] This approach is essential to the effective teaching of CSPE. As Holden and Clough have pointed out:

> The process of assisting children to become active citizens requires the teacher to keep a delicate balance between providing security and offering challenge.[40]

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[34] ibid.

[35] Holden, C and Clough, N, *Children as Citizens: Education for Participation*, (Jessica Kingsley Publications, London, 1998), p. 18.

[36] Hargreaves, A., Earl, L., & Ryan, J., *Schooling for change: Reinventing schooling for early adolescents,* (London : Falmer, 1996), p.145, quoted in Killeavy, M., Collinson, V., Stephenson, H. J., 'Making Curriculum Relevant to the Lives of Second Level Students: Teachers' Classroom Practices', Paper prepared for the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Assoiation, New Orleans, April 24-28 2000, p. 1.

[37] McNeil, J. D. *Curriculum : The teacher's initiative*, (2nd. Ed.) (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1999, pp.53-54, quoted in Killeavy, Collinson & Stephenson, op.cit, p.1

[38] Killeavy, M., Collinson, V., Stephenson, H. J.,op. cit, p.1.

[39] Killeavy, Collinson & Stephenson, op. cit, p. 4.

[40] Holden, and Clough, op. cit, p. 14.

They also argue that education for participation involves reflecting on values, assisting children to acquire the skills necessary for taking action and ultimately providing opportunities for them to become involved as active citizens.[41] Integral to the acquisition of skills is the acquisition of a values base from which to make one's decisions and responses.[42] Such an approach has implications for teachers and others who work with children. If children are to be educated to participate they will require a 'range of skills, including social skills, and skills of communication and judgement' and the opportunity to practise and develop these skills.[43] Holden and Clough further argue that:

> The introduction of such opportunities may require the management of a school to rethink its approach to pupil participation and may involve its teachers in a reassessment of their role. For teachers in the classroom this will require reflection in terms of the values they hold, the freedom and autonomy they give their pupils, and the choices they make within the curriculum.[44]

In-service provision for the course

The main focus of in-service support provision for teachers of CSPE in the Republic of Ireland is to make teachers aware of what is on the syllabus and encourage active learning methodology. In 1996 a single national Training Co-ordinator was appointed to direct CSPE support services. Six regional co-ordinators were appointed throughout the country and were responsible for 140 schools each. This was an onerous responsibility. The National Support team shadowed teachers through three years of teaching, providing in-service training for Units 1, 2, 3 and 4, following the model community, state and wider world.

Two types of in-service were provided: cluster in-service where each school nominated two members of staff to attend and it was intended that these representatives would in turn disseminate good practice to other members of staff, and that of school visits, where staff were given the opportunity to invite members of the support team to the schools. Over the three years of the programme each school had a visit.[45] It was decided that the final year of the support service would be dedicated to school visits, as this was considered more beneficial.[46] The in-service provision was effective in reaching schools, but it is not clear how effective the dissemination of the principles and practice advocated by the support team was for teachers teaching the subject in the schools. Ms. Wilson (a member of the National CPSE Support Team) felt that there was an urgent need to update teachers in new active teaching methodologies. She commented in an interview that:

> Teachers are used to the traditional terminal examination, students doing work outside this format is regarded as new and consequently difficult to cope with.[47]

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[41] ibid.

[42] ibid.

[43] Osler, A and Starkey, H, *Teacher Education and Human Rights,* (London, 1996), p. 27, quoted in Holden and Clough, op. cit, p. 16.

[44] ibid.

[45] Interview with Ms Mairin Wilson, op. cit.

[46] ibid

[47] ibid.

One of the main elements of CSPE is the promotion of democracy in the classroom and that the classes should be student led. The syllabus is not produced and designed to be taught in a consecutive way, which is the classroom and curricula experience of most teachers. Funding for the support service came from the European Social Fund and the In-career Development Unit of the Department of Education, and this in turn meant that the support service would run for only a fixed period terminating at the end of the 1999-2000 school year.

Methodology

Observations of two classes in CSPE provide an opportunity of observing in microcosm the issues that can emerge within this subject area in the classroom. The research for this paper cannot claim to be a general representation of what occurs in CSPE classes throughout the Republic of Ireland. Two schools were chosen for this research. The authors deliberately chose single-sex schools for a number of reasons - firstly to simplify matters, and secondly single-sex schools make up a high proportion of secondary-level schools in Ireland and consequently are relatively representative. A third point was that both schools shared commonalities in terms of location and status, and fourthly the authors were interested in investigating gender contrasts in terms of students' experiences of citizenship education.

Two young teachers were also chosen; one who had completed the Higher Diploma in Education pre-service training course and had experience in the classroom, and one who was nearing completion of the Higher Diploma in Education pre-service training course and had some teaching experience prior to taking the course. The authors were interested in comparing and contrasting the teaching methodologies employed by both teachers who were young, but at different stages of their teaching career.
It is important to state at the outset that there is no such thing as 'the description' of a classroom - there is no single best way to observe a classroom or aspects of classroom activity.[48] As Croll puts it:

> Like all reports in social science, descriptions of classrooms involve abstracting from the totality of the social world certain aspects thought to be relevant for particular investigatory purposes.[49]

Because of the inherent complexity of classroom life and the multiplicity of perspectives from which activities in any classroom may be viewed no single observational method can be said to be capable of capturing the totality of what occurs.

The authors videoed both classes and analysed their content. As part of the research the authors consulted with two national co-ordinators of the CSPE in-service support programme in the refinement of the tools of inquiry and for their views on what had occurred in the classrooms. The research focussed on the course content as reflected in the CSPE programme, the instructional methodology employed, classroom organisation, and pupils' social learning in the classroom. While Flanders Interaction Categories were specifically adapted for this research it was found that the nature of both classes was not

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[48] Croll, P *Systematic Classroom Observation* (London, 1986), p. 3.

[49] Croll, op. cit, p. 4.

conducive to this type of analysis. Consequently both classes were analysed using both videos as documents, focusing on the specific areas already outlined, while acknowledging the limitations of classroom observation as already indicated by Croll. For the purposes of this paper the classes will be labelled A and B.

Class A: Content

Class A was a mixed ability group of 16 girls in the third year of the Junior Cycle CSPE programme. They were aged between 15 and 16 years old. A young female teacher taught them. The class dealt with the issue of planning in a local community called the Liberties area of Dublin. The girls in the class were familiar with the Liberties area. Planning as an issue is a very difficult topic to deal with within a classroom context. This was an exercise suggested in the CSPE exemplar material provided in the CSPE guidelines and was not an actual issue in the local area. In the exemplar material teachers are advised to divide the students into six groups and assign an interest group from the case study to each of the five student groups: one representing local business, and others representing the local residents, the local historical association fighting to save an ancient wall, local politicians and the developers. The sixth group represents Dublin Corporation, which is responsible for planning in Dublin and who, as a group, would hear the case of the disputed site.

The guidelines recommend that the teacher and the group representing Dublin Corporation would run the hearing, that each group would be given five minutes to prepare for the hearing, and would have five minutes to present their argument for what should be done with the disputed site. The guidelines also recommend that if time remained at the end each group could be given one minute to comment on the points made by other groups.[50] The teacher is then advised that the group representing Dublin Corporation should be given five minutes to prepare themselves and then ten minutes to present their decision on what should happen to the site. It is further recommended that students should be given the opportunity through class discussion to question and comment on the decision of the Corporation. Alternatively the suggestion is made that to conclude the class, the teacher could list a range of options for the development of the site on the board and invite students to vote on the most suitable development. It is envisaged that this would involve a further class where the votes would be counted and the results reflected upon.[51] The remainder of the exemplar material on this topic gives background information to the teacher on planning in Dublin city.[52]

In Class A students formed into their groups and prepared their speeches, relying heavily on the material provided in the student handbook.[53] One member from each of the groups

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[50] *Civic, Social and Political Education Unit 2, Into the Community, Notes for Teachers,* p. 17.

[51] ibid.

[52] *Civic, Social and Political Education Unit 2, Into the Community, Notes for Teachers,* op. cit, pp 19-20.

[53] *Civic, Social and Political Education Unit 2, Into the Community: Exemplar Resource Material for Unit 2 of the Junior Certificate Course in Civic, Social and Political Education,* Section 4, Case Study 1: Development for who? The Liberties area of Dublin, pp 1-2.

read their speech from their scripts to the rest of the class. When that was completed some questions were addressed to the group representing Dublin Corporation, and that group then withdrew from the classroom to make a decision about the proposal. The class was conducted exactly along the lines suggested in the exemplar material. Some interesting viewpoints emerged in the delivery of the speeches that were not scripted in the exemplar materials. One student made the comment:

> People working in the offices will be able to go home and look out their windows at the nice view, people living here will not be able to do that.

In this comment we can see the student articulating a view that people from outside her community come there to work and leave afterwards. This is an interesting perception and reflects the reality that few local people in inner city Dublin are actually in employment in their local community.[54]

Those students who represented the business community put forward arguments about the creation of employment, and other views expressed in the exemplar material. Those students who represented the developers spoke about their plans to accommodate the historical wall that was located near the car park, providing jobs and the development of rooms in the building for the use of the local people in the area. The students in the local community group used the arguments put forward in the exemplar material that they wanted a community centre built in the area.

The group of students who represented Dublin Corporation considered all the views put forward and decided that offices would be built on the car park, while retaining the wall, that there would be an underground car park, that the community would get the community centre elsewhere and that the offices could provide work, and training for the local children.

These speeches were by and large very formalised in terms of language and were performance based, almost exclusively using the exemplar material. The most interesting interactions came towards the end of the class, while the students in the Dublin Corporation group were outside making a decision. However the exchanges were limited to only five or six students. Nevertheless some interesting viewpoints emerged. One student made the comment that:

> If you have rich people working in these offices and the cars that they are driving, it's only obvious that the crime rate will go up because people will be more tempted to take the cars.

This was an interesting comment that reflected a particular way of thinking that was not picked up on in the class by the teacher or other students. It reflects a reality in inner city life, but the question must be asked as to how this is dealt with in the context of a citizenship education class and what values need to be addressed in the context of this type of comment. This represents the inherent challenges that are present for teachers and pupils in CSPE classes. Another student made the point that:

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[54] *Integrated Services Process Interim Progress Report for Cabinet Committee on Social Inclusion,* (Department of Tourism, Sport and Recreation, July 1999).

> The businessmen going against the community, the businessmen have a better chance than the community, because they have more power and they have the money themselves.

This shows insight: it is reflective of the manner in which local businesses are regarded and how apart the student feels from these businesses. Another student reiterated this type of remark:

> Local businesses are not the community, they only have shops in the area. They don't have kids around the area on the streets and doing crime and all this. People in the local area don't have any jobs, don't have any education and they want to have something during the day to keep them occupied.

Both these comments by students indicate a sense of the distance that exists between local people and the businesses that operate in the community. Another student made the point in relation to the creation of employment in the area:

> If jobs are beside people then they will be home quicker for their children, instead of being stuck in an hour of traffic.

This reflects an awareness of the problem of traffic congestion that currently exists in inner-city Dublin and how it impacts upon people's domestic lives.

The comments made by the students in this class indicate a high level of social awareness, on their part. Issues of social class, equality, employment, control and the ownership of the means of production came through in their observations. However, none of their comments were used as a springboard for debate or discussion and no advice was given in relation to these types of issues in the exemplar material provided for teachers.

Process in Class A

Classroom organisation
The initial part of the class was a recall exercise on what students had completed the previous week in terms of their knowledge about development and planning issues. One of the significant aspects of CSPE is active methodology and that students are allowed to organise themselves. This did not happen during this particular class. The formal classroom arrangement of desks in rows remained in Class A. Nowhere in the guidelines issued to teachers were any suggestions made in relation to active teaching methodology. After observing the class one national CSPE support officer commented that the students should have been invited to decide what was the best way to organise the meeting, how people would arrive, and secondly students should have been encouraged to think more about the process.[55]

In the view of the national coordinator there was too much teacher control in this particular class, and in her opinion it would have worked better if the teacher had remained as an observer. Her comment:

> This task is an exercise in democracy, but there is no democracy in action.

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[55] National In-service Co-ordinator's analysis of the class.

One of the particular difficulties of using the exemplar material is that it remains a task to be completed by students. If a real local issue had been taken, then students would be able to participate much more easily and be more au-fait with the issues involved.

One of the interesting aspects of this class was the low level of student engagement. There was very little social interaction in the class between the pupils themselves. In their scripted arguments the students relied on the material in their handbooks, used other peoples' opinions and expressed very little of it in their own words. The fact that they used the speeches supplied in the exemplar material meant that the exercise was removed from their everyday use of language and experience. None of the groups used actual facts to support the arguments that they made in support of the viewpoint that they were offering to the meeting. It was very much a giving of information session, and none of the groups made an effort to define the problem of planning in a more broadminded way, as much of the emphasis was on defining aspects of the problem as outlined in the exemplar material. All of the students stayed within role for thirty minutes of the class. The use of scenarios was limited in the types of arguments that they made.

The latter part of the class was not as scripted and the level of awareness of issues was quite high. There was a different tone towards the end of the class where some students became more involved in the activity. This class highlights the real difficulties and challenges involved in the creation of a climate where students can actually engage with a wide range of issues. It is obvious from their comments that they had many views, and this is very positive. However their opinions were not challenged nor were they given a chance to explore them in more depth.

The role of the teacher in Class A

The teacher conducted the class exactly as outlined in the Teacher's Notes. If active teaching methodology forms a central core of the CSPE programme then this is not evident from the material that is issued to teachers. The guidelines did not provide advice as to how long should be devoted to discussion about issues, nor did it try to anticipate the range of views expressed by students. When given the opportunity these girls made some very interesting points that reflected attitudes and values that they currently hold. They were not given the opportunity within this exercise or the classroom experience based on the exercise to reflect on values or issues about which they had a number of viewpoints. The fact that the teacher had read the guidelines and adhered to them displayed a genuine interest on her part to realise the aims and principles of this programme within her classroom. However teachers trying to do this require continuous support in the development of a range of teaching methodologies that will make these experiences a reality for their students.

Class B: Content

Class B was a mixed-ability group of boys aged between 12 and 13 years of age in the first year of CSPE in the Junior Cycle Programme. A young female teacher who was nearing the completion of the Higher Diploma in Education pre-service training course taught the class. Class B dealt with the issue of Irishness and what it means to be Irish. This activity was in part adapted from activities suggested in a workbook entitled Exploring Cultural Values in the Community, which supports a module on Community and Culture, developed for the CSPE syllabus by Interculture Ireland and the CSPE

Support Service. An example of this class was also offered at in-service training by one of the national co-ordinators.

The concept of Irishness and what it means to be Irish is a difficult topic for any group to consider, whether children or adults. This is especially the case in view of the extraordinary changes that occurred in the educational, economic, social and political aspects of Irish life in the final quarter of the twentieth century.[56] In the light of these changes it is very positive that students at the ages of 12 or 13 years are exposed to this type of concept.

It is recommended in Exploring Cultural Values in the Community, that one class period of 40 minutes be devoted to the topic of Living in an Irish Community. Activity three of this book focuses on Being Irish - Image versus Reality. The aims of this activity are to introduce the concept of culture as 'way of life', through contrasting the students' images of the Irish way of life with the reality they experience within their local communities, and also to enable students to become aware of diversity within and between communities.[57] The book recommends that:

> The most important part of the following activities is the discussion that they generate, so allow adequate time for students to express their opinions and to ensure that discussion questions are worked through.[58]

A choice of three methodologies was offered for this activity. Class B participated in a variant of the third option, which was quite a concrete exercise. The teacher collected photographs from magazines and asked students in groups of three and four to choose the photos which they thought best represented life in Ireland today. Working in their groups they were then asked to answer three questions on a handout that was given to them. The questions were as follows:

- Do the photos you have been given really reflect what life is like in Ireland?
- What aspects of modern Ireland are missing?
- Make a list of the photographs that you would include that are truly representative of Ireland.

Students had to write their answers to these questions in the space provided on the handout. Two comments were:

> The photos represent part of Ireland, show people who are pretty rich and the weather was great, but it does not show the bad part of Ireland.

> Some do but it is mostly down the country where no one knows, like the hills and countryside, like, people might think it was somewhere else you wouldn't know.

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[56] Walshe, J., *A New Partnership in Education: From Consultation to Legislation in the Nineties,* (Institute of Public Administration, 1999), p. 1.

[57] *Exploring Cultural Values in the Community*, *A module on Community and Culture for Civic, Social and Political Education,* (Interculture Ireland and Civic, Social and Political Education Support Unit, 1999), p. 14.

[58] ibid.

Both these views highlight the perceptions that students have about their own particular community and how different it is to the countryside as was represented in the photographs. They showed very little awareness of the Irish countryside at all. It is also a reflection of the reality that economic development has centred primarily on the Dublin region, which is currently under pressure from the upsurge in commercial and business activity and the increase in population to serve this activity. By contrast rural and urban areas have lagged behind.[59] The students' comments highlighted the issue of the urban-rural divide and the challenge of how to deal with this issue in the context of citizenship education. There was an opportunity here for the student to reflect on his viewpoint, but he was not asked to expand upon his comments by either his peers or his teacher.

A number of interesting responses emerged in the class when they answered the question about aspects of modern Ireland that were missing from the photographs. One student commented:

> Doesn't show any cars, or technology, don't show pollution, homeless people or refugees.

This shows a keen awareness of some of the important issues affecting modern Ireland, such as economic development, environmental and cultural change. All of these issues provided opportunities for discussion and debate that were not taken. When asked to include their own choice of photographs some interesting answers emerged:

> Places such as Grafton Street, would show busking, begging, way of Irish life is mixed, show the beggars and rich people going into the shops and buying stuff.
> I'd put some pictures in showing poor families who need help that aren't getting help.

These answers indicated a high level of social awareness on the part of students in their own particular communities and highlighted their ability to articulate those issues which could have been developed more.

Process in Class B

Classroom organisation

Class B was divided into groups, but the arrangement of the desks provided a more interactive arrangement that in Class A. The space in the classroom was well utilised. There was good co-operation in the class between the teacher and pupils and between the pupils themselves. Students were directed throughout the class. There was a lot of teacher control in this class, in terms of keeping the students on task throughout. Students were given a handout, which explained each part of the class quite clearly, and different students each read out a part of the handout. In their groups they looked at the photographs and chose one each. The teacher visited each group in turn and as a result there was a lot of teacher-student interaction in the classroom. Control was maintained by the teacher moving around to each group where students justified their choice of picture to the teacher rather than to each other. Only a few students were asked to give reasons as to why they picked a particular photo. The national coordinator's comment was:

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[59] *Ireland: National Development Plan 2000-2006,* (Dublin, Government Publications, 2000), p. 9.

> More mobility could have been built into the group, more sharing in the group than there was, more could have been built into the lesson if they were rotated, more sharing of ideas about the notion of Irishness.

Some groups split up into pairs and one group went off task completely for a short period. Students did not respond to the answers given by their contemporaries but responded to the teacher, so the levels of social interaction between them as a class was quite low, even though there was social interaction within their own particular groups. When they were asked to fill out the answer to the questions on the work sheet they worked well with one another, and displayed high levels of co-operation.

In the last part of the class, students were asked to discuss the skills that they had learned, which is an important part of their Report on the Action Project part of the course. The teacher got the students to list the skills and wrote them on the board, and the students wrote them down into their copybooks. They came up with skills such as working together, deciding things, listening to other people and making decisions. However in reality the opportunities for them to practice these skills in the classroom were very few.

Role of the teacher in Class B

From the interaction between the teacher and students a high level of trust existed in this class that could have been used as a starting point to engage the class in discussion and debate about their views and ideas. The teacher conducted this class in a structured way, which was her experience in teacher training, and indicates the fact that there is little on offer by way of support to help student teachers to facilitate a more active student-led class.

The boys in this class made some interesting comments on what Irishness means. Their comments pointed to the many changes that have happened and are happening in Ireland, and indeed the changes that are happening in their own community. It was obvious that they had very little awareness of the rural community in Irish life, and that they associated the countryside with wealth. These were good insights expressed by students aged 12 or 13 years old, and it would have been interesting to see how they could have been explored more deeply. The teacher of the class was committed to the principles of CSPE, and indicated this by choosing a task that was recommended at in-service training and in the teacher's handbook that accompanied this particular module. The manner in which she conducted the class was exactly as she had been instructed during her teacher training, which was sequential in orientation.

Conclusions from this study

A number of interesting issues emerge from this study. The girls in Class A aged between 15 and 16 years engaged more with the topic and displayed a greater ability to develop ideas than the first year boys class. This would indicate a need for CSPE to be continued to be provided right up to third year of the Junior Certificate Programme and into Senior Cycle when students can engage and articulate their views in greater depth about a range of issues. In both classes students themselves presented opportunities for discussion, engagement and debate. In neither of the classes were these opportunities acted upon to facilitate participatory citizenship.

Both teachers in the study were young females who had researched and read the guidelines that were issued to them in relation to conducting these activities. By virtue of their preparation for their classes and by consulting the material available they displayed their commitment to CSPE as a subject. The teacher of Class A adhered to the guidelines strictly. The guidelines did not mention developing broad ranging discussion nor were any suggestions offered about active methodology, beyond an outline of the task to be completed. The teacher of Class B also followed the appropriate guidelines issued for the particular task that she chose. However as she was at pre service level she approached the class in a sequential manner, varying activities, and keeping the students on task but not developing discussion. This is in keeping with her experience of pre-service training, which emphasises that type of approach. In the context of working towards active methodology in the classroom, it is imperative that this issue is dealt with more thoroughly at the pre-service training level, in order to enhance the opportunities for students in the classroom to reflect on the meaning of citizenship.

The study bears out Beck's point that the objective of educating for citizenship, as distinct from educating about citizenship, involves complex educational and practical difficulties, which cannot be easily resolved. The question must be posed as to how much can be achieved in the space of one 40 minute class in CSPE each week. In this length of time there are few opportunities available to assist students to acquire skills necessary for taking action or indeed allowing them to become involved as active citizens. This is also reflected in student performance in the examination at the end of their CSPE course where they fared badly in the action project part of the assessment.

There were very few opportunities for students in either of the classes to develop as action competent, in terms of making arguments, reflecting critically and relating their opinions and actions to a values framework. However in current school situations this is extremely difficult to achieve and is something that needs to be supported at a whole school level right across the curriculum, not just within CSPE as a single subject.

The challenges for citizenship education in an Irish context are many and this area of education will require continued support in the future. However this can only be achieved in a context where there is continuous dialogue between all participants in the education system as to the best methods by which the aims and philosophy of citizenship education in Ireland can be realised.

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