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One country, many cultures: does Holocaust education have an impact on pupils' citizenship values and attitudes?

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Background

The problematic nature of defining Holocaust education is described by Gundare and Batelaan (2003) in terms of its dependence on the country in question, on that country's history of anti-Semitism and on the extent of collaboration or resistance during World War Two. This explains their statement that 'Holocaust education is not, and should not be, the same everywhere (p.151-152). Scotland's involvement in World War Two is not recognised as a significant part of Scottish history as such, yet its contribution included taking in Eastern European refugees and children who had come to the UK on the Kindertransports, and the active service of Scottish soldiers which included liberating Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. Furthermore, one Scot, Sister Jane Haining, has been recognised as a Righteous Amongst the Nations for helping Jewish children during the Holocaust.

The requirement for alternative factors to be included in determining the nature of Holocaust education arises in countries which, like Scotland, played a less direct role in World War Two and have no official record of anti-Semitism. These countries' commitment to social justice and anti-racism in all its forms is another possible factor that requires consideration.

Holocaust education in Scottish schools can be defined as a combination of the historical features akin to Gundare and Batelaan (2003) and of the contemporary features which are of particular relevance to citizenship education. School-based Holocaust education in Scotland, does not exclusively focus on the Scottish perspective but uses citizens who are Holocaust survivors as valuable human resources. Recent Holocaust curricular materials that have been freely distributed by the Scottish governmental body (the Scottish Executive) are based on the testimony of Jewish Holocaust survivors who have lived in Scotland for most of their adult lives (LTS 2000, 2002a). The content of these curricular materials share a strong focus on the areas of knowledge and understanding relevant to the development of active and responsible citizenship. These materials were commissioned as a direct response to the introduction of national Holocaust Memorial Day in 2001, which among its objectives included promoting 'a democratic and tolerant society, free of the evils of prejudice, racism and other forms of bigotry'; opposing 'racism, anti-Semitism, victimisation and genocide' and supporting 'the ideals of peace, justice, and community for all' (Salmons, 2003, p140). This demonstrates Scotland's strong commitment to social justice and anti-racism, although unlike England and Wales, Holocaust education is not mandatory in the Scottish secondary curriculum.

Further evidence of Scotland's commitment to anti-racism is the country's ongoing 'One Scotland: Many Cultures' campaign started in 2002 which embraces a multicultural Scotland and aims to eliminate racism in Scotland. Incidents such as the firebombing of

the Pakistan Association Mosque in Edinburgh in October 2001, the petrol bombing of the Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation Synagogue in October 2002 and the stabbing of Iranian refugee Masood Gomroki in December 2002 show that extreme forms of racism persist in the newly devolved Scotland. Statistics showing that more than 260 people in Scotland have been charged for crimes aggravated by religious hatred within a ten month period highlight the extent of religious bigotry in Scotland (MacLeod, 2004). The recent abduction, torture and murder of Glasgow schoolboy Kriss Donald in March, 2004 is alleged to be linked to racism between white and Scottish Asian youths. A report commissioned by Glasgow City Council (*Herald*, 2004) suggests a worrying increase in reported racist incidents, both verbal and physical, in schools; even more worryingly, the most common age group of the perpetrators was 9-12.

'Values and Citizenship' is currently one of the Scottish Executive's five national educational priorities. This involves teaching pupils 'respect for self and one another and their interdependence with other members of their neighbourhood and society' and 'of the duties and responsibilities of citizenship in a democratic society' (Standards in Scotland's Schools Act, 2000). The Scottish framework for citizenship education for pupils aged 3 to 18 years, is set out in the discussion paper *Education for Citizenship in Scotland* (LTS, 2002b). As in England and Wales, citizenship education in Scotland is an entitlement for all pupils at all stages. However, it is not taught as a separate curricular area or subject but permeates the primary and secondary curricula through a cross-curricular approach. The requirement for schools to audit their teaching of citizenship education by reviewing their existing practice (LTS 2002c, LTS 2002d) and the introduction of a school self-evaluation guide to evaluate the quality of citizenship education in schools (HMIE, 2003) has raised the profile of Education for Citizenship.

Teaching about the Holocaust provides a suitable context for attainment in the following key areas which are specified in proposals for Education for Citizenship in Scotland

- the legal and human rights and responsibilities of citizens, individually and collectively in a democratic society
- barriers to full opportunity to exercise citizenship arising from socio-economic circumstances, prejudice and discrimination
- the diversity of identities - religious, ethnic, cultural, regional, national - within Scotland, across the UK and world-wide, and the need for mutual respect, tolerance and understanding
- the ability to respond in imaginative ways to social, moral and political situations and challenges, for example developing a personal response to a topical moral issue
- the ability to consider and empathise with the experience and perspective of others.

(Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2002b, pp. 32 and 34)

The contribution of Holocaust education to citizenship in the primary school includes developing pupils' understanding of justice, stereotyping and discrimination (Short and Carrington, 1991; Maitles and Cowan, 1999; Cowan and Maitles, 2002) and provides opportunities for developing positive values of empathy, awareness of antiracism, and an understanding that the individual can make a difference.

Previous research in secondary schools (Carrington and Short, 1997; Brown and Davies, 1998; Short *et al* 1998; Davies, 2000; Hector, 2000; Totten, 2000; Ben-Peretz, 2003; Schweber, 2003) provides evidence that Holocaust education can make a significant contribution to citizenship in developing pupils' awareness of human rights issues and genocides, the concepts of stereotyping and scapegoating and the exercise of power in local, national and global contexts. Landau (1989) asserts that Holocaust teaching 'perhaps more effectively than any other subject, has the power to sensitise them [pupils] to the dangers of indifference, intolerance, racism and the dehumanisation of others'.

As the education for citizenship and democracy proposals are developed in schools, these areas of content become central to pupils' understanding of living in a multicultural, multi-ethnic, democratic society.

Research methodology

To investigate the value of Holocaust education, the authors have devised a longitudinal strategy which examines whether there are 'immediate' and 'lasting' effects on the attitudes and dispositions of pupils that result from its teaching. This will provide empirical evidence of the contribution of Holocaust education in developing attitudes relating to citizenship.

We examined the attitudes of a total of 99 Primary 7 pupils, (aged 11-12 years: equivalent to half way through Key Stage 2,) from two primary schools, before and after they studied the Holocaust (November 2003 and March 2004) and we present below some evidence relating to this. We have the funding from SEED (Scottish Executive Education Department) to follow this group of pupils into the secondary school, where we will be able to 'test' their attitudes and opinions compared to both their previous responses and to their Secondary 1 (aged 12-13 years: Key Stage 3 equivalent) peer group from primaries where the Holocaust was not studied. This stage of the longitudinal study has the potential for suggesting whether there is a lasting impact from this type of learning. In the words of Magnuson *et al.* (1991, p.111), 'the development of individuals cannot be adequately and effectively investigated without using a longitudinal strategy'.

Yet there are problems with this kind of panel/cohort study, as outlined by (amongst many others) Mason and Bramble, 1978; Cohen and Manion, 1989; Gall *et al*, 1996; Ruddock and McIntyre, 1998; Gay and Airasian, 2000. Chief amongst these for this study are firstly, that subjects can 'learn' about the test and, even although they respond anonymously, might give what they perceive as the politically correct answer; and secondly, the class teacher may have an influence which can lead to distortions.

While the desire to give a politically correct answer cannot be entirely ruled out, questionnaires have been designed to obtain honest answers and cross-referenced questions can eliminate those who have not taken it seriously. The questionnaires were given to the pupils in November 2003 and March 2004 (and projected for January 2005) which is in longitudinal terms a brief timescale and should alleviate some of the worries

of longitudinal research. The administering of the questionnaires by the research assistant resulted in the class teachers having few opportunities to influence their pupils. Both head teachers gave feedback on the content of the draft questionnaire, contributing to its final form and ensuring pupils' understanding of the questions.

In order to avoid aspects of familiarity, to move beyond the multicultural areas most often used in the studies on this area, and to explore issues such as attitudes towards Gypsy Travellers (nine in total in the schools), we chose a small rural local authority some 30 miles from Glasgow.

The sample was chosen in collaboration with the local authority, who identified two primary schools in the area that taught the Holocaust as part of the World War 2 topic in Primary 7. A further advantage was that all these pupils will go to the same local secondary school and this should avoid significant drop-out of the sample. Both these primaries are non-denominational, have mixed socio-economic catchment areas, are predominantly white and neither has any Jewish pupils.

Results

Pleasingly, in almost every category there was an 'improvement' in pupils' understanding and values/opinions relating to the issues examined between November 2003 (prior to studying the Holocaust) and March 2004 (after studying the Holocaust).

In terms of general understanding, the following table (Table 1) shows the perceived improvement:

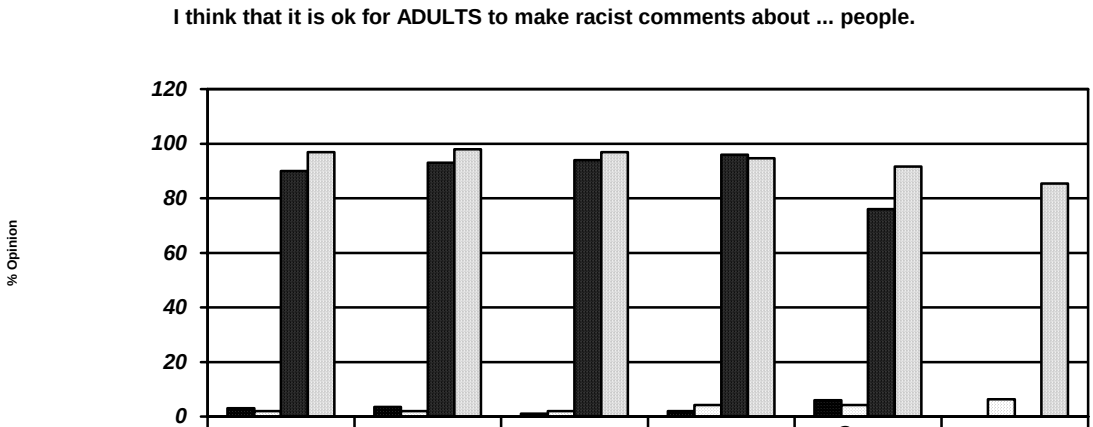
Table 1

		November 2003 %	March 2004 %
1.	Do you know what HUMAN RIGHTS are?		
	• Yes	93	95
	• No	7	4
2.	Do you know what RACISM is?		
	• Yes	86	98
	• No	14	2
3.	Do you know what a RACIST is?		
	• Yes	84	98
	• No	16	2
4.	Do you know what a REFUGEE is?		
	• Yes	67	73.7
	• No	33	26.3
5.	Do you know what a GYPSY TRAVELLER is?		
	• Yes	59	83.8
	• No	41	16.2
6.	Do you know what the HOLOCAUST is?		
	• Yes	47	96
	• No	53	4
7.	Do you know what TRIAL-BY-JURY is?		
	• Yes	44	50.5
	• No	56	49.5
8.	Do you know what ANTI-SEMITISM is?		
	• Yes		28.3
	• No		71.7
9.	Do you know what GENOCIDE is?		
	• Yes		19.2
	• No		80.8

Whilst we might expect there to be significant extra understanding in terms of the Holocaust (q.6), there is also a perceived large increase in terms of understanding racism, refugees and Gypsy Travellers. Interestingly, although we didn't ask q.8 in the first questionnaire, there is a lack of understanding of anti-Semitism. In an earlier work (Cowan and Maitles, 2000), we noted that teachers were teaching the Holocaust without either specifically mentioning or explaining the words anti-Semitism but were using racism instead as a general description of the genocide. It is also possible that the meaning of anti-Semitism, i.e. hatred towards Jews, was presented in simple language without explicit reference to the term 'anti-Semitism'. This perhaps explains this finding, although it should be noted that it is explicitly included in the primary teaching pack (LTS, 2000). Breaking down the results between the schools, we find that for this question the figures were that only 3.6% in one school but 38% in the other knew what anti-Semitism was. As a next step, we are planning to interview the teachers and the reasons may be clarified then.

In terms of their values/attitudes, the following tables break down and compare answers. Pupils were asked about their opinions on adults' rights to make racist comments (Figure 1):

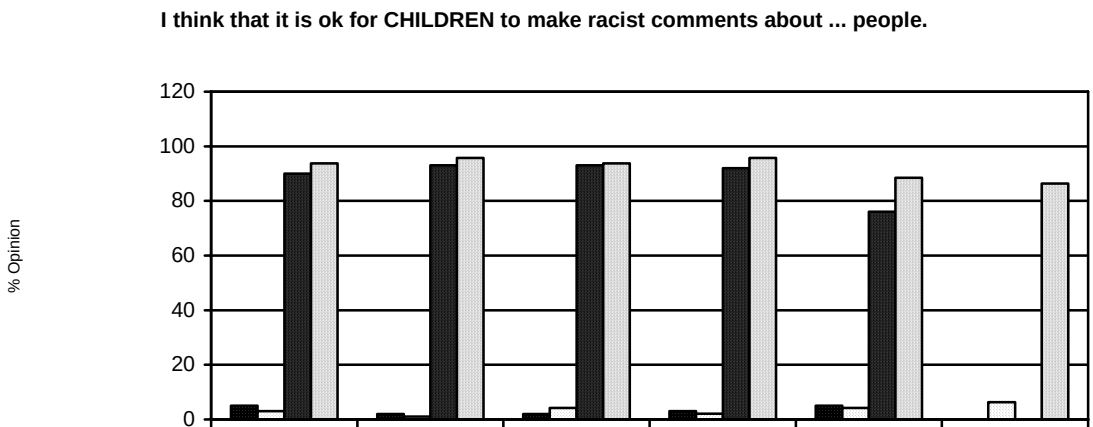
Figure 1



	Jews	Blacks	Chinese	Asian	Gypsy Travellers	Refugees
Agree 2003	3	3.5	1	2	6	
Agree 2004	2	2	2	4.2	4.2	6.3
Disagree 2003	90	93	94	96	76	
Disagree 2004	96.9	98	96.9	94.7	91.6	85.4

In every category there is a more progressive attitude. Even in the column which charts attitudes towards Asians, in which slightly less did disagree with the statement, this is balanced by the fact that more agreed with it. Figure 2 explores the same point but this time about themselves.

Figure 2



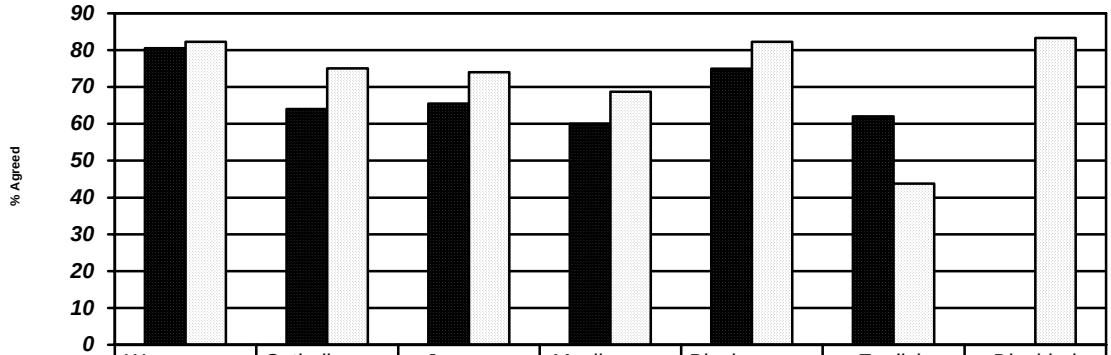
	Jews	Blacks	Chinese	Asian	Gypsy Travellers	Refugees
Agree 2003	5	2	2	3	5	
Agree 2004	3.1	1.1	4.2	2.1	4.2	6.3
Disagree 2003	90	93	93	92	76	
Disagree 2004	93.8	95.8	93.8	95.8	88.5	86.4

Again, in virtually every category there are less agreeing and more disagreeing. This is perhaps particularly heartening regarding attitudes towards Gypsy Travellers and refugees, two groups who have had a particularly difficult press recently from both media and government.

A further area we tried to gauge was pupils' attitudes towards having ethnic minorities, English or disabled people as representatives. Figure 3 shows responses to this:

Figure 3

I think that I would be just as likely to vote for a … as a … for the Scottish Parliament.

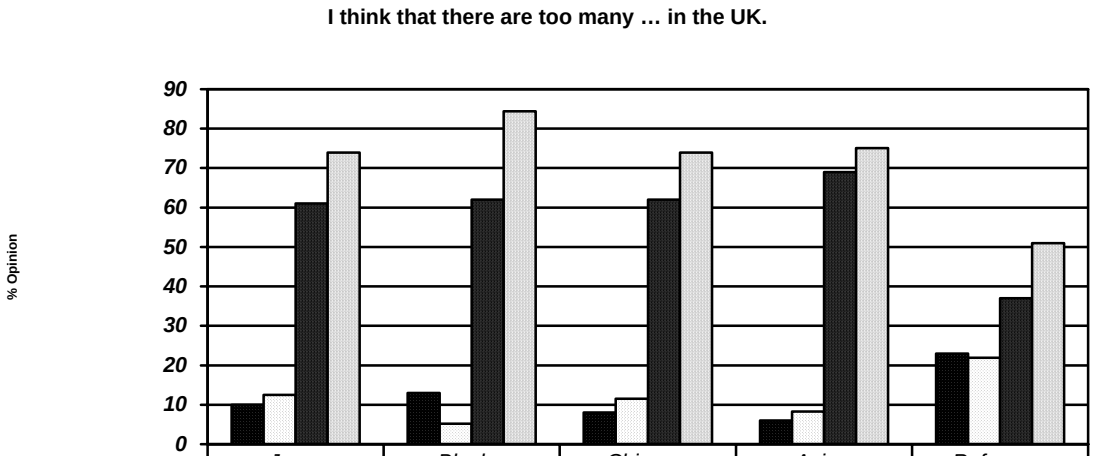


	Woman as a Man	Catholic as a Protestant	Jew as a Christian	Muslim as a Christian	Black person as a White	English person as a	Disabled person as an
■ 2003	80.5	64	65.5	60	75	62	
□ 2004	82.3	75.1	74	68.7	82.3	43.8	83.3

The children showed commendable respect for minorities representing them and in all categories (except 1) there was some improvement over the position they held before they learned about the Holocaust. The category which showed a decline was not (as we might have expected, taking into account media coverage and the peculiarities of sectarianism in Central Scotland) Catholic or Muslim but English. This suggests that anti-English feeling (probably for a variety of complex reasons ranging from imperial history and domination, through *Braveheart* to the non-stop coverage of England's rugby world cup victory) has a resonance amongst young people in Scotland.

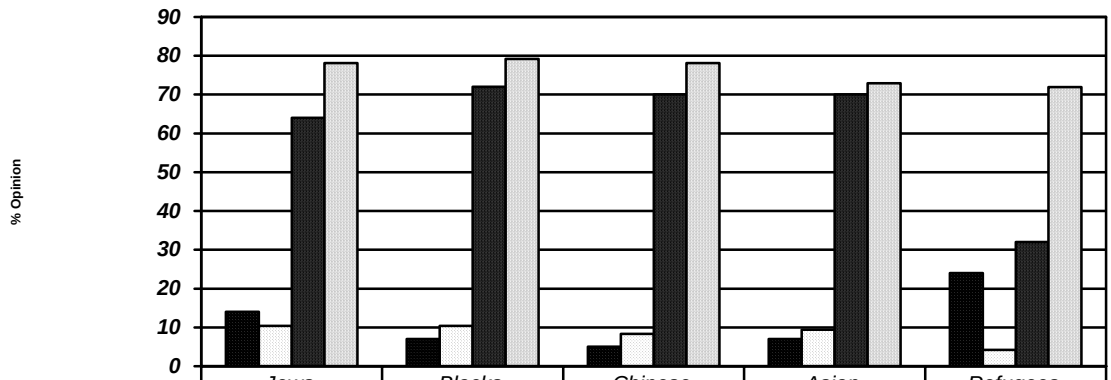
A further area investigated was the pupils' opinions and perceptions of the numbers of ethnic minority people in both Britain as a whole and Scotland in particular (Figures 4 and 5).

Figure 4



	Jews	Blacks	Chinese	Asian	Refugees
Agree 2003	10	13	8	6	23
Agree 2004	12.5	5.2	11.5	8.3	21.9
Disagree 2003	61	62	62	69	37
Disagree 2004	73.9	84.4	73.9	75.1	51

Figure 5



	Jews	Blacks	Chinese	Asian	Refugees
Agree 2003	14	7	5	7	24
Agree 2004	10.4	10.4	8.3	9.4	4.2
Disagree 2003	64	72	70	70	32
Disagree 2004	78.1	79.2	78.1	72.9	71.9

There are welcome improvements again in virtually every category. Of particular interest is the difference in perception that the children have of refugees in the UK and Scotland. There are potentially a number of explanations of this, ranging from their own experience to the different stances that the British Government (harder) is taking towards refugees and asylum seekers as compared to the Scottish Executive (more welcoming).

Conclusions

It is important not to assume too much from the first stage of this study. There is evidence that pupils' knowledge and values/attitudes improved (excepting pupils' attitudes towards English people) due to their learning about the Holocaust. At the very least, numbers of pupils who put 'don't know' for questionnaire 1 came off the fence in

questionnaire 2 and came down in favour of tolerance and understanding. Yet, surprisingly few (only 28.3% overall) knew (or thought they knew) what anti-Semitism was. Analysis of the ways in which teachers in our schools put the Holocaust into the context of citizenship is likely to contribute to an understanding of this. For example, did teachers teach the Holocaust as a specific topic linked to genocide or as an example of racism per se? In terms of our general aims, the first stage of our research suggests that there are some significant immediate benefits of learning about the Holocaust: the longer-lasting effects are yet to be ascertained and await the results from our third questionnaire in spring 2005.

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