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The development of citizenship attitudes and values

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Introduction

Citizenship education is difficult and the development of citizenship attitudes and values is even more difficult. Information-based courses on citizenship reduce the ability of student teachers to gain awareness of what really happens in their schools, because they give them the illusion that they have acquired the knowledge, and in doing so accomplished their duty without having the perspective of having worked with students. It is well known that teachers theoretically accept everything they find in books and in European Union documents, but that their attitudes and actions remain stable and attached to their previous traditional learning and social settings.

The aim of this paper is twofold: to present the aims, the process and the products of a postgraduate module on citizenship, which included workshops on the development of attitudes and values towards self and others, and to discuss and propose good practices on citizenship education.

Educational background

Until 1995 schools in Cyprus had a homogeneous population, consisting mainly of Greek Cypriots. This situation changed gradually with the enrolment, especially at primary schools, of students from East Europe, dominated by the Greek Russian population, and students from Asian countries, the children of working immigrants. The homogeneous society became multicultural, a change that found schools unprepared to apply a new learning environment in which all students would experience equality.

It is also important to note that centuries of foreign rule in Cyprus (Turkish (1570-1870); British (1878-1960)), as well as the long unresolved political problem of Cyprus, cultivated a stable national mission for education, which has been encouraged by the divided role attributed to education by the 1960 Zurich Constitution of the Independent Cyprus (Koutselini, 1997). The still unresolved political problem does not allow Cypriots to proceed to a deeper-European oriented understanding of the right of different cultures to maintain their identities without the feeling of a threaten nationality by the foreigners.

Teaching methodology

The assumption underlying the curriculum development of the postgraduate course 'Citizenship Education in schools' at the Department of Education of the University of Cyprus is that after self-directed research and experiences from the perspective of self and others, teachers realise the changes they have to undertake in order to ensure a positive learning and social environment for all students, European, and non-European citizens.

If student teachers have the opportunity to share knowledge, feelings and experiences around given tasks (equality and inequality in my classroom at elementary and secondary schools; teachers´ attitudes towards self and others in the school) they will get an awareness of self and the perspectives of others. Scenarios, teaching, workshops and action research are considered to be good means of teaching in higher education aiming at developing positive attitudes and cultivating citizenship values.

One module of the course is entitled 'Attitudes and values towards self and others', and aims to develop citizenship attitudes and values leading to action towards equality at schools. In 2004 there were 25 students: ten secondary school teachers (5 females and 5 males) and fifteen primary school teachers (11 females and 4 males), with teaching experience ranging from 5 to 12 years. The Course on Citizenship contained four modules: 'Respect for Human rights', 'Conflict resolution', 'Discrimination- equality', and 'Living Democracy'. The modules aim at the research-based development of attitudes, through processes of workshops and action research in the schools and classrooms, undertaken by the participants and discussed during the workshops in the classroom. Diaries were kept by the participants as a self-reflective tool on attitudes, actions and happenings during the course, and as a means of discourse development during the workshops.

The teaching methodology was based on workshops with a series of activities and cooperative learning in the university classroom and action in schools. The effectiveness of workshop teaching depends on their structure and the supporting activities as well in the interaction during workshops of the learning setting with the real life situations.

A structure responding to this need, enabling students to take part in the process of learning-getting, was the following:

a. **Pre-perceptions of the participants:** At a first stage the pre-perceptions of participants are gathered through discussion and exposition of their opinions in the issue under consideration, for example 'What happens in my school regarding Bulling'

   Reflective constructive teaching and learning is built on the investigation and exposition of the learner's naïve perceptions, experiences and misconceptions, a process which allows matching teaching goals and activities to the real needs of the students. Site research and the teachers understanding of the cognition and feelings of students is the starting point of the teaching-learning process, which ensures communication, construction of knowledge and development of attitudes and values.

b. **Assignment:** Participants are assigned in cooperative groups to gather information about what really happens in their schools. They develop a checklist with 12-15 items concerning the issue under consideration which they distribute in their schools.

   The comparison between beliefs, pre-conceptions, and opinions and the real situation prepares students to be engaged in the process of the reconstruction of these beliefs and pre-perceptions. Usually learners are shocked by the results of their investigation. Astonishment and shock promote the interest for engagement and action.

c. **Presentations and reflections:** Analysis and presentation of the results. Self-reflection on Diaries, and reflections during the plenary discussion.

   Diary-keeping by the participants was used as a tool for self-reflection on their knowledge, attitudes, actions and happenings during the course and the school work as well as means of discourse development during the workshops.

d. **Cooperative Group Work:** for problem solving, based on real life scenarios of the results of checklist investigation in the school classroom.

e. **Planning Action Research at schools in cooperative groups.** The development of real school life scenarios, and decisions about the action research at schools.

f. **Action at schools and self- reflection.** Scenarios based on teaching and reflections in diaries.

g. **Plenary discussion on actions and reflections.** Decisions of second round of actions.

h. **Group Reports on their work.**

i. **Measuring of perceptions** of the participants through structured questionnaires.

Workshops on Discrimination

One implication of the above approach on 'Discrimination at schools' is now discussed in one session.

Aim and duration

The workshops on discrimination lasted four weeks, three hours per week in the university classroom, with additional work in schools and classrooms in primary and secondary education. The *aim* of the workshop was to change the attitudes and values of teachers and students towards 'discrimination at schools'. The *objectives* were defined as following:

–   to be able to apply the abstract concept of equality and discrimination to real life scenarios

–   to identify when discrimination has taken place in any given situation at schools

–   to experience the discrimination in school incidents

–   to undertake action for changing attitudes and values towards discrimination in their schools

Description of activities

First, the teachers in the postgraduate classroom were asked in a plenary session 'Does discrimination exist in your classroom at schools?'

Their first reactions were restrained, and they hesitated to answer positively. The conclusion was that it might exist in a limited way, and there might be implicit discrimination, but that the school and they did their best to avoid it.

Then teachers were asked to brainstorm the term 'discrimination'. All types of stereotyping and prejudices appeared: racial racism, gender discrimination, achievement discrimination, clothing discrimination, socio-cultural discrimination were all agreed forms of discrimination. Bulling and discrimination based on personal characteristics were not identified.

Handouts on existing kinds of discrimination were distributed and teachers were asked to develop a checklist of three to four main categories, with 10- 12 items in each category,

for students of primary and secondary education aiming to gather information about discrimination at schools.

Sample statements from the checklist of the primary education:

- I want as my best friend …
- I want to eat in the restaurant with …
- I want to share my camping tent with …
- I want to play with …
- I want to entertain …

- a high achiever
- a very fat boy/girl
- a handsome boy/girl
- a rich boy/girl
- a troublemaker
- the boy /girl that my teacher seems not to like
- the boy/ girl that my parents seem not to like
- a black boy/girl
- an Asian boy/ girl
- a strong –powerful boy/girl
- a rich boy/girl
- a boy/girl from Europe
- a boy/girl from Greece
- An American boy
- A Turkish
- A Turkish -Cypriot
- An Armenian boy/girl
- A non Christian boy/girl
- the boy/girl with the most friends in the classroom
- the president of the students´ Council
- the protagonist in the school theatre
- a good football/handball player
- a music instrument player
- a good dressed boy/girl
- a non Greek speaker
- a physically weak boy/girl
- a boy/girl with special needs

Teachers distributed the checklist to 85 students in schools in three different towns, in the grades 3, 4, 5, and 6 of primary school (ages 8 to 11).

Teachers reflected on the results of the analysis in their diaries and in plenary discussion. As assignment they used sites for carrying out personal research into the topic.

In a second stage they experienced realistic scenarios based on their findings, and continuously, they discussed in groups action in their schools based on scenario- teaching.

Scenario-teaching: Scenarios were based on real-life incidents derived from the checklist. Teachers work in cooperative learning in order to analyse information and to identify solutions to problematic situations.

Examples of scenarios:

Scenario 1: Presentation of pictures of bullying and discrimination based on personal characteristics in the school grouns. What are the different kinds of bullying and discrimination? How are students affected by discrimination? What should you do as teacher in your school?

Scenario 2. You are the teacher of the 5th classroom responsible for the elections of the school council. You ask for nominations of candidates and you realize that every year the same students undertake the roles of the five members of the Student Council. Analyze the cases based on the results of the checklists in your school. One Asian student of your classroom asks you to help him next year to be nominated and elected for the Council. How is that possible to be done?

Scenario 3. You are the in the school sports ground and watch students playing volley-ball. One student is sitting aside silent, watching the game. The ball is directed to his head and the boys of the team are yielding and laughing. In the next face of the game the team´s leader calls the silent boy: 'Dumb, watch your head' and he throws the ball. What kind of discrimination is appeared? What other forms could it have? How could that happen to the 'leader' of the team, and to you? Write a scenario with you as protagonist.

Optional activity: Create a computer simulation showing the phenomenon and discuss ways to use it in the classroom.

Outcomes of the workshops

The results of the checklists indicated that students' preferences are affected by **power**, **leadership**, **high achievement**, **good looking**, **richness**, **gender similarity**, **origin**, and **colour**. Boys are affected mostly by power, leadership, richness, origin and gender similarity and girls by high achievement, good looking and origin. Teachers' and parents preferences affect extensively students' preferences and their behaviour seems to become a model for students.

Origin is a source of discrimination based on diverse criteria. 'Others' from Europe (especially from Greece) and USA are very well accepted. Asian 'others' and non Christians are not rejected, but they come last in the preferences. The results of the checklists have not presented in this paper in details because the focus of the discussion is on the structure and the results of workshop-teaching.

Extracts of teachers´ diaries indicated that they were shocked from the results of the checklists:

> *I know theories and declarations against discrimination, but I have been absorbed by teaching and learning of the subject matter so that I did not realize what in final analysis affected the equal opportunities of learning in classrooms with different students.*

Students did not help me to understand what really affected their preferences and behaviours because, I think, they do not also understand what happens to them despite the fact that they deeply experience inequality and discrimination. We, the teachers, build their self image and the image of the others – as the theory says – not by what we are doing, but by what we omit to do. *We leave out what children experience as members of the school and classroom community and we reproduce stereotypes, and prejudices of the society.*

One teacher recorded the following student's comment during discussion on bullying:

Things just happen and it is not easy to change them

Teachers' comment that it is a negative side-effect of school life that schools leave students to internalize such a pathetic philosophy of life. The hidden curriculum, according to Meighan (1986), can be defined as 'all the other things that are learnt during schooling in addition to the official curriculum' (p 66). Most of the time the hidden curriculum is produced unintentionally: a realisation of the nature of the hidden curriculum by teachers is the first step to limit its results.

The extracts from the teachers' diaries indicated that they had succeeded in uncovering the hidden curriculum; they promised to themselves to become better teachers and to act as leaders in their schools by helping their colleagues to get awareness of what students experience beyond the curriculum and the indented teaching learning.

The Action Research lasted six weeks and has been applied in individual classrooms. In one case Action research was undertaken by the whole school, because the head of the school showed special interest on what the deputy head, who participated in the workshops, presented. In the final analysis, changing the school ethos and learning environment is the most important goal of the citizenship workshops; teachers participating in the workshops and Action research indicated that they had the attitudes and knowledge to move towards this.

Conclusion

Citizenship education appears easy in theory, but is very difficult in praxis (Ross 2000). Workshops based on actions in schools and real–life scenarios seem to be a good way of practicing the cultivation of values and of changing attitudes. The interlink between university classrooms, school real life and teaching becomes a powerful tool in the hands of teachers in all levels of education that helps teachers at schools to move on from theories to action, from knowledge to feeling and praxis.

Cooperation with the community and the family is demanding, since prejudices and discrimination originate from life outside the school and are reproduced in the community of the classroom and the school. It is well known (Davies *et al*., 1999) that deeply embedded features of society cannot change through individual actions. Teachers in schools are not individuals but a very important pressure force, if they gain awareness of the power in their teaching.

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