Time to restate the arguments: education for citizenship back to the top of the agenda[1]

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Abstract

It is both 20 years since the impetus to develop education for citizenship in schools and the development of CiCe to champion this. In today's uncertain world, education for citizenship has not become less but more important. The results of European elections and the growth of both populist and far-right parties (including open neo-Nazis in parliaments), the challenge of openly neo-Nazi groups marching and organizing from Warsaw to Virginia, Brexit, the election of Trump, the continuing deaths of refugees in the Mediterranean, the developing fear of the 'other', and challenges to basic human rights have all begun to suggest society is fracturing. Whilst there are many positive developments around the world, these developments pose huge challenges to citizenship. In schools, the continuing development of a neoliberal over emphasis on international testing, such as PISA, and an agenda suggesting that rote learning and discipline are key to international testing success, has taken the focus away from democracy and citizenship. Whilst there has been and continues to be excellent learning and activity about citizenship and democracy, across Europe and wider there is research evidence to suggest that much of the impetus on citizenship education has stalled and been side-tracked -- it remains on the agenda of the school, but much further down the list of priorities. It has become harder for those of us committed to citizenship education to combat the imperatives of neoliberal education. Drawing on both large surveys and case study approaches, this paper looks at the dichotomy between the needs of a citizenship aware community, committed to human rights and the perceived needs of a competitive neoliberal economy. It further argues that we need to argue with policymakers, teachers, and student teachers to reaffirm society's support for education for citizenship.

Keywords

Citizenship, Values, Schools, Testing

Education for Citizenship is formally established on the curriculums of most countries throughout the world, but there is a paradox: never has it been more needed and never has it been under such pressure. Although there is rarely a single reason why people vote in national elections in a particular way, results such as the BREXIT vote in the UK (although a large majority of under 35s voted Remain) and the Trump victory in the USA and Bolsonaro in Brazil and support in many European countries for parties of the far or populist right, have made education for citizenship and democracy of greater importance. Many of these movements show a disinterest, distrust and indeed dislike of citizenship, human rights and liberal ideals. And, at present these groupings, collectively known as the alt-right, are growing: the AfD in Germany, the Swedish Democrats, The Front Nationale in France. Italy, Hungary and Austria now have governments in which people with fascist backgrounds participate and this trend is seen in many countries. Further, an increase in far-right extremist activities has been recorded in European countries and the United States. These activities show a rise of anti-Semitic, anti-immigration and Islamophobic violence, as well as anti-government attacks and assaults on political opponents, ethnic minorities and homosexuals. The rise in antisemitism, anti-Roma and islamophobia across Europe is particularly challenging for citizenship educators.

Although there is limited evidence as to the impact on young people's formal democratic long term participation, the mass participation in the Scottish independence referendum process in 2014, the very significant voter turnout, particularly in the 16-25 age group, the involvement in the process of many schools either debating the issues or holding mock referendums, the releasing of the genie of 16 and 17 year olds being allowed to vote and the recruitment of many young people by political parties all suggested that there was a significant citizenship involvement. This potential of youth participation was also seen in the clear involvement in young people in Greece against austerity in 2010-2014, in Spain through PODEMOS, in Ireland through People before Profits campaign and in USA through the galvanizing impact of the campaign to have Senator Bernie Saunders nominated by the Democrats for the 2016 presidential election, the mass campaigns for equal rights in the wake of the election of Donald Trump as President in 2016, mass protests at overtly racist agendas and a generalized outpouring across the world of youth concern for refugees and asylum seekers, particularly following reports of drownings in the Mediterranean.

The excitement generated some 20 years ago, as the citizenship momentum was developing, was because the central thrust of education for citizenship would ask some of the key questions surrounding our education system – what is education for? What is the role of the school in developing positive attitudes amongst young people? How can controversial issues be raised in the classroom? How do we develop critical citizens? Can democracy be learned in undemocratic structures? And student voice or student agency? These questions do not have definitive answers but one of the real bonuses of the discussion which took place around

education for citizenship was precisely that the focus was on the whole nature of education and exactly what should our education system be trying to develop in young people. At the same time, over the last 20 years, there has been an increasing emphasis on target setting, particularly concentrating on exam results and international tests such as PISA and TIMMS, which can tend to distort the nature of schooling and can mean that wider issues are relegated to the background; as teachers have concentrated on the exam targets, issues such as citizenship tend to get squeezed from the school day (Davies, 2000; Gillborn and Youdell, 2000; Cowan and Maitles, 2010), despite some welcome rhetoric from governments on the importance of citizenship and of instilling a respect for lifelong learning.

In recent interviews with headteachers in the West of Scotland, for example, it was stark how little schooling had changed over the last decades for those able students in senior school – their timetable was completely dominated by academic subjects and exam preparation. And, exam preparation consisted mainly in rote learning activities. Further, with high stakes testing now being introduced for even very young children (in Scotland, as young as 4/5 years), the dictates of PISA testing regimes may impact even on play based learning. It remains critical to the appraisal of teachers how well their students perform in the national examinations. Nonetheless, over the last 20 years there has been much good practice and some negative experiences, some of it highlighted in this article.

Citizenship & Europe

Citizenship is a compulsory element in most democracies throughout Europe, North America and the Pacific (Crick, 2000; Ostler & Starkey, 2005; Print, 2007; Kiwan, 2008). Research suggests that political education in schools in western democracies emphasises political institutions, rights and responsibilities of citizens, debates on current issues and moralism in various combinations (Borhaug, 2008). The largest international survey so far is the ICCS/IEA study (Schulz *et al.*, 2010) involved some 140,000 students (about 14 years of age) and 62,000 teachers in 38 countries. In terms of content areas, the topics that the ICCS countries most frequently nominated as a major emphasis in civic and citizenship education were human rights (25 countries), understanding different cultures and ethnic groups (23 countries), the environment (23 countries), parliamentary and governmental systems (22 countries), and voting and elections (20 countries). Topics less frequently nominated as a major emphasis were communications studies (14 countries), legal systems and courts (13 countries), the economy and economics (12 countries), regional institutions and organisations (12 countries), and resolving conflict (11 countries). Only five countries nominated voluntary groups as a major emphasis. However, another finding of note is the significant decrease in civic content knowledge scores between 2000 and 2010 in a number

of countries that had comparable data from both civic education surveys: only one country had a statistically significant increase in civic content knowledge among lower secondary students over that decade. This is a bit worrying as the decade was meant to be one permeated by education for citizenship and in that context, we might have expected an increase in this kind of knowledge and understanding.

Impediments notwithstanding, students were far more likely to report school-based civic participation than involvement in activities or organisations outside of school. On average, across participating countries, 76 percent of ICCS students reported having voted in school elections and 61 percent reported voluntary participation in school activities. About 40 percent of students said that they had been actively involved in debates, taken part in decision-making about how their school was run, taken part in school assembly discussions, or been candidates for class representative or the school parliament/council. Involvement in groups helping the community and in charity collections was the most frequent form of participation among lower secondary school students across the ICCS countries. On average, about a third of students reported that they had been involved in this way in the past. The extent to which students engaged in these activities across countries varied considerably, which may be due to cultural differences. For example, the percentage of students reporting participation in groups collecting money for a social cause ranged from a very low 8 percent in Korea to 60 percent in Belgium (Flemish). However, a study such as this needs to be tempered with an examination of the specifics of the countries. There is a coherent experience in the research into the practice of education for citizenship across the globe

In USA there is a well established 'civics programme' in schools with direct instruction about democracy, political institutions, rights and responsibilities. Hahn (1999) and Torney-Purta (1999) found that the focus was on facts and vocabulary rather than on skills and controversial issues and that US youth had a general but not detailed understanding of government and political process. Print (2007) points out that even the most ardent advocates of citizenship education comment that in recent years it has failed in the USA. However, Hahn (1998) refers to the fact that in the US many teachers make deliberate efforts to have students follow the news and have class discussions which can lead to enhanced student understanding of current affairs and political issues. Whilst Manning and Edwards (2014) found some evidence of a correlation between volunteering in high school and voter registration, they tempered it with a conclusion that civic education courses played no statistically significant role in voting. Lin (2015) is far less confident that increased citizenship learning is being developed in USA. Whilst there are some strong examples, such as the Student Voice programme, evaluations of which suggest increased student interest in politics with increased school participation opportunities, it is not widespread. Further, Lin found that there were wide discrepancies in terms of citizenship learning opportunities, with more being found in schools in areas of middle and higher income. Levinson

(2010) calls this a civic empowerment gap and is problematic. What or if the impact of President Trump and the newly empowered alt-Right will have a longer term impact is not yet clear; but Trump is key supporter of increased formal exams and throughout his presidential campaign, he repeatedly disparaged what he saw as America's failing school system, citing the 2015 PISA results.

In Norway, Borhaug, (2008) describes the timetabled political education national curriculum, which aims to encourage students to be critical of political and social structures and learn how they can influence democracy through various forms of political participation. In his study of upper secondary schools, he concludes that voting was the most thoroughly taught form of political participation. He describes the importance of the mock elections in schools running in tandem with Norwegian elections where all the political parties send representatives to schools to present their parties' policies to students. Results of the mock elections receive extensive media education and on debate and discussion of issues highlighted in the media, he points out that little attention is given to other forms of participation e.g. pressure groups, petition, writing to newspapers, direct action etc. Additionally issues of human rights, tolerance, freedom of faith and expression were not systematically taught.

Print (2007) points out that Australia's national citizenship education programme with its extensive and well-prepared curriculum materials could at best be described as marginally successful in raising levels of democratic engagement in a country where voting is compulsory. In spite of the programme 50% of students surveyed in the 2004-7 Youth Electoral Study felt that they lacked the knowledge to understand party politics and key issues.

In England, citizenship education has been compulsory, assessed and inspected since 2002. However, authors such as Breslin (2000) and Ostler and Starkey (2005) expressed concerns that assessment and citizenship education do not sit well together. The Crick Report (QCA, 1998) set out three strands: social and moral responsibility; community involvement and political literacy with learning outcomes in skills, aptitudes, knowledge and understanding for all key stages (QCA, 1998).

However Lister *et al.* (2001) point out that apart from a few exceptions in general schools have made little contribution to the development of political literacy. Kiwan (2008) highlights the fact that schemes of work to develop participatory skills are not sufficient because they fail to address issues of inequality, which can lead to disempowerment and lack of motivation to participate. A further shortfall is highlighted by Ostler and Starkey (2000a) and 2005) who state that commitment to human rights and the skills for challenging racism, which are essential attributes of a politically literate citizen are not addressed. In addition, the Conservative Government has decided that the subject called Citizenship should be removed from the timetable and a whole school permeation model adopted, but there are worries that this would lead to citizenship being downgraded in the eyes of students, parents and teachers. And, from 2017 is

promised or threatened depending on your view a scenario where within a decade all schools in England will be academies or free schools; this will mean that schools set their own agenda and there will be no need for citizenship in the curriculum.

In Wales there is a statutory curriculum of citizenship with clear learning outcomes at key stages with the emphasis that pupils become literate in political and economic realms, for example by Key Stage 3 pupils are expected to understand issues relating to democracy in Wales, know the rights and responsibilities of a young citizen and how representatives are elected and what their roles are (Philips, 2000). In The Republic of Ireland Civic Social and Political Education is a certified subject. There is a similar concept based subject in Northern Ireland (Hammond and Looney, 2000).

In Scotland, Maitles (2000) points out that with the advent of the Scottish Parliament political education in schools became an important goal for politicians, a point echoed by LTS (2002, p. 6) who state the importance of 'the ability to understand and participate in the democratic process'. In Scotland, citizenship is explicit in the Responsible Citizenship capacity of Curriculum for Excellence, (Scottish Executive 2004). Knowledge, skills and values are to permeate the curriculum rather than be taught as a separate subject. However, Torney-Purta *et al.* (1999) point to a general dissatisfaction with cross-curricular approaches where citizenship issues are to be discussed by every teacher but are the responsibility of no teacher.

However, one of the ironies of education for citizenship over the last few years is that the attempt to develop a healthy respect for issues such as integrity, honesty, self-sacrifice and compassion is problematic at a time when these very virtues are under critique at the very highest levels of the institutions of the state. If our young people do not perceive our politicians, bankers, police and media as having these qualities, then there are problems for education for citizenship programmes. The sometimes demonization of young people and complex issues around war, immigration and asylum seeking means that education for citizenship is paradoxically both more difficult and more essential.

How much can be expected of schools?

Academics and commentators continue to question the motives behind the introduction of citizenship education. Yet, most would agree with Hahn (1998 and 1999) and Print (2007), who believe that it is the responsibility of schools to teach about democracy and prepare students to be effective democratic citizens. Kerr and Cleaver (2004) point out that many teachers view citizenship education as a politically fashioned quick fix. Writing about civic education in Greece, Makrinioti and Solomon (1999) pointed out that it is vulnerable to political and social conditioning and can be used as a way to promote political propaganda, a point echoed by Hahn (1998). Rooney, (2007) takes this issue further urging us to be

wary of citizenship education which he argues can be viewed as a programme of behaviour modification and that it is not the responsibility of teachers and schools to solve political and social problems or issues of low voter turnout and political apathy. Indeed he points out that citizenship education has thus far failed to reconnect young people to the political system or improve participation rates, although in circumstances where voting seems to make a difference (referendums for example), there is evidence across Europe of a wider involvement of young people..

Several authors (Lister *et al.*, 2001; Whiteley, 2005; Kiwan 2008) highlight the fact that there is no empirical evidence of a direct correlation between citizenship education and formal political participation. Indeed David Kerr, interviewed by Kiwan (2008) stated that it would be difficult to measure the effect of citizenship education programmes on political participation. However, it could be that citizenship education is still in its relative infancy or perhaps developmental phase and not enough evidence is yet available. Nonetheless, it is to be hoped that students who have been through education for citizenship programmes, will have the skills to take decisions around their choices in terms of participation or indeed whether they wish to participate; that non-involvement will be informed abstention.

Whiteley (2005) points out that the expected improvement in civic engagement with the introduction of citizenship education is offset by other factors including the widespread feeling that governments do not deliver on promises. There are many factors out with the school that influence political engagement, such as the influence of family and peer group (Kennedy, 2007). Political engagement and efficacy is also dependent on levels of education, intelligence, exposure to media, socio-economic class and the hidden curriculum of the school (Hahn, 1998; Torney-Purta, 1999; Lister *et al.*, 2001; Kerr *et al.*, 2004; Whiteley, 2005; Print, 2007; Kiwan, 2008).

Further, whilst there is general agreement as to the desire to have a politically aware citizenry, it must be noted that there is no universal agreement as to the value of citizenship, political literacy, activism or pupil voice in schools *per se* (Lundy, 2007; Whitty and Wisby, 2007; Thornberg, 2008). Rooney (2008), for example, argues that to believe that these kinds of initiatives can be developed in the current school system undermines the very nature of education and makes teachers responsible for the ills of society.

Single Issue Politics and Young People

One of the main drivers behind the introduction of education for citizenship is the perceived lack of interest and involvement of young people in public and political life (Kerr and Cleaver, 2004; Benton *et al.*, 2008) and low election turnout figures for 18-24 year olds (Maitles, 2005; Rooney, 2007; Kiwan, 2008). Another factor is the fear for the state of democracy and the decline in trust of politicians and

institution of government (Whiteley, 2005). However, rising engagement with single-issue politics such as the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, world poverty, environmental and animal welfare issues, would appear to suggest that young people in western democracies although alienated from formal politics and voting are active and interested in single-issue campaigning politics where they can see results from their actions (Cornwall and Coelho, 2007; Dahlgren, 2013; Hahn, 1998; Lister *et al.*, 2001; Maitles, 2005; Schulz, 2010; Torney-Purta *et al.* 1999;).

Kiwan (2008) cites research by Pattie *et al.* in 2004, which found that individualistic participation is common, challenging assertions that people are politically apathetic. Many schools have responded to this through the establishment of eco-schools committees, fair trade groups and a focus on development education programmes. However, media images in a global age also allow children to become exposed to many more controversial social, political and humanitarian issues than ever before, and evidence has illustrated that pupils are keen to discuss such issues and that a programme on citizenship education needs to respond to this (Maitles and Deuchar, 2004).

World events such as support for asylum seekers and refugees campaigns have led to many primary and secondary-aged pupils becoming actively engaged in community fundraising and awareness campaigns around the alleviation and elimination of poverty in the developing world. Some schools have established forums to respond to pupils' strong views about the need to wage a war against poverty and to enable them to reflect critically upon social and political developments in the media (Dahlgren, 2013; Deuchar, 2004).

Indeed, although a positive driver towards education for citizenship stems from attempts to promote democratic citizenship, human and participation rights at local, national and global level - rights which are enshrined in international convention such as the United Nations Rights of the Child and the Human Rights Act (Ostler and Starkey, 2000(b); Spencer, 2000; Verhellen, 2000; Kerr and Cleaver, 2004; Benton *et al.*, 2008) -- Print (2007) points out that such involvement is single issue can be episodic and should be treated with caution. Additionally there are concerns that democracies have invested more resources into education while experiencing a decline in participation, and there is a logic that better educated people might be more distrustful of politicians and decide not to vote or join political parties (Rooney, 2007). Further, we must be aware that many schools see charity activities per se as a way of developing global citizenship. And even within this, there can be a lack of any understanding as to how the money is used and rarely any discussion around the causes of poverty.

Holden and Minty (2011) in their study of some 200 school students in England found that the students could name a charity or discuss charity work or ecological work they had been involved in, but had little understanding of the broader issues, such as the complex reasons behind world problems. Further, that they saw this as the key element that the school encouraged in terms of citizenship; nearly all discussions were on personal choice (fair trade, no littering) rather than

any real discussion on poverty or wider ecological issues. The ICCS/IEA study of some 62,000 teachers in 38 countries found that the highest percentages of teachers viewed "promoting knowledge of citizens' rights and responsibilities" as the most important aim of education for citizenship was found in Bulgaria, Chile, the Czech Republic, the Dominican Republic, Estonia, Guatemala, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Malta, Mexico, Paraguay, Poland, the Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation, the Slovak Republic, and Thailand. In contrast, in Cyprus, Finland, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Slovenia, Spain, and Sweden, the highest percentages were found for 'promoting students' critical and independent thinking.' The aim most frequently chosen by most teachers in Chinese Taipei and Colombia was 'developing students' skills and competencies in conflict resolution.' Only minorities of teachers viewed 'supporting the development of effective strategies for the fight against racism and xenophobia' and 'preparing students for future political participation' as among the most important objectives of civic and citizenship education.

Democracy and pupil rights

Inside the school, there is the thorny issue of whether one only learns about democracy or also lives it. If we take the 'living' model, then there are implications for our schools and indeed for society as a whole. Firstly, there is the difficult issue of whether democratic ideas and values can be effectively developed in the fundamentally undemocratic, indeed authoritarian, structure of the current typical high school (Arnstine, 1995; Puolimatka 1995; Levin, 1998, Maitles, 2010), where many teachers, never mind pupils, feel that they have little real say in the running of the school.

For schools, it means there should be proper forums for discussion, consultation and decision-making involving pupils and Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the rights of the child states that young people should be consulted on issues that affect them. However, the experience of school councils is not yet particularly hopeful and is discussed below. Further, the issue of democracy in the classroom is rarely raised, never mind implemented, in the school setting. Finally, in terms of rights, the whole issue of inequalities in society and their impact on the educational attainment and aspiration of school students must be taken into account, as outlined below.

Pupil Councils, democracy and citizenship

'Active citizenship' has attracted the interest of researchers particularly in relation to increased student participation and the promotion of schools as democratic institutions (Harber, 2002; Kerr and Cleaver, 2004). It had been hoped that the advent of Pupil Councils would enable pupils to gain an enhanced understanding of the principles of democracy and their roles as active citizens, however, they do

point out that in many schools too few pupils are involved. Kerr *et al.* (2004) in their citizenship education longitudinal case study found that only 12% of pupils had been involved in pupil councils. Additionally Cruddas (2007) and Kennedy (2007) point out that there is little opportunity for disadvantaged and marginalised students to participate and thus many voices go unheard, are sidelined or ignored because they are outside the norm.

Several authors (Davies, 2000; Lister *et al.* 2001; Cruddas, 2007; Kennedy, 2007; Lundy, 2007; Print, 2007) highlight that students view pupil councils as ineffective and tokenistic. Cruddas (2007, p. 482) describes them as 'a form of benevolent paternalism'. Lundy (2007) states that such tokenistic opportunities to participate can be counterproductive because student voice is often not taken seriously due to the scepticism of adult concerns about giving students more control. These authors point out that students do not value pupil councils because the school appears not to value them. Concerns raised by students are that teachers predetermine issues they are allowed to influence, student voice is not communicated to those who have ultimate influence over decision-making and consequently nothing ever changes. To sum up, the key critique is that the councils give the pupils voice but not agency.

Participation and Attainment

Hannam (2001) attempted to examine the impact of more democratic structures and participation in schools on measurable indices in schools. A sample of 16 schools were identified on a set of criteria as being more than usually 'student participative' and 12 agreed to participate in the study. Headteachers, other senior managers, teachers and 237 pupils were interviewed and senior managers and the students also completed questionnaires. The overwhelming view of headteachers and other senior managers was that student participation enhanced pupil self-esteem, motivation, willingness to engage with learning, attendance rates and attainment at GCSE. Teachers in these 12 schools echoed this and added that working with these pupils was a major source of job satisfaction. The pupils regarded motivation, ownership, independence, trust, time management and responsibility as being of particular importance. Both teachers and pupils talked of improved relationships.

So far, the evidence has been anecdotal and based on experience and feelings. Yet, when compared to 'like' schools (using the QCA/OFSTED free school meal bands), the overall rates of exclusion was significantly lower, attendance was higher and there were consistently better than expected attainment at all levels of GCSE; indeed, the gap between these 12 schools and their 'like' schools tended to increase year on year. The small-scale nature of the survey warns us from over generalizing and there is a need for significantly expanded international research. But the premise seems sound – schools that encourage democracy and participation 'perform' better in every indice, including attainment.

A 2015 study by the Children and Young People's Commissioner for Scotland (Mannion et al, 2015) found that seven secondary schools in areas of multiple deprivation had higher than expected levels of attainment. Further investigation established that: in these seven schools, across all arenas of school life, pupils had substantial opportunities to formally and informally take part in a variety of meaningful activities, to take responsibility for events, make contributions to school life and have their views considered in matters that affected them! This participative ethos was closely bound up for learners in *'creating a sense of belonging at school, and bringing a rights-based dimension to educational experience.'* It would appear that where schools invest in creating opportunities for true participation, dividends can include increased motivation to learn and improved attainment for learners.

Even if this overstates the case, there are clearly some advantages to this approach. So, why is it not more widespread, indeed the norm? For the individual teacher, it takes courage, skill and confidence to develop active learning and genuine participation and we need to explore the whole area of both the initial training and continuing professional development of teachers. Further, there is the anxieties of parents, who tend to judge a school by its exam results solely and believe that a traditional rote learning, direct teaching strategy leads to 'good' exam outcomes. This is further exacerbated by politicians and inspectorates suggesting that active learning is chaotic and might not work. And, there is also a conditioned expectation by many pupils of being directed rather than becoming independent learners.

Yet, the problem is that many teachers feel vulnerable, overburdened and disempowered. One of the teacher interviewees in Gale and Densmore (2003) commented that once a policy comes out it is discussed at senior policy committees, discussed at high school senior/middle management levels and when it gets to the class teacher, most say 'I don't want to know about the politics, just tell me what to do'; they thus get 'someone else's way of interpreting that policy into their classroom'. Gale and Densmore go on to argue that there are three factors at work explaining this crisis of professionalism.

Firstly, educators' isolation from each other, so that there is, in their opinion, too much 'competitive individualism' and too little shared discussion; secondly, the closing down of serious debate, in terms of the belief that classroom teachers can influence that debate. It is fuelled by both work and time intensification; thirdly, and a result of the first two, there is a 'reduction in meaningful work' and teachers' and teacher educators' expertise is frequently dismissed and areas of education and working through issues and, perhaps, problems are appropriated by management.

Testing

There is a problem of over-concentration on exam targets as the central (sometimes it seems to be sole) measure of school and this impacts, generally negatively, on the education for citizenship proposals. Of all the market reforms enthusiastically introduced by the Conservative governments and taken on board by New Labour, testing and league tables were to be the most divisive. The 1988 Education Reform Act introduced compulsory testing at 7, 11, 14 and 16. Because of the obvious and increasing stress levels on children, (Birkett, 2001; Davies and Brember, 1997, 1999), teachers and many parents opposed this kind of testing both in Scotland and England/Wales but piecemeal introduction was achieved, Scotland introducing testing for4/5 year olds in 2016, despite opposition from parents groups, teacher unions and most educationists. It is noticeable, although not taken on board by policy makers, that major surveys over many years of pupil opinion identifies exams and testing as being part of the problem of 'bad' schooling (Blishen, 1967; Burke and Grosvenor, 2003). Young people in our schools seem to understand how an over concentration on exams can lead to rote, shallow learning.

Linked to the testing was league tables, introduced in 1993 as an 'aid' to parental choice. For most families, of course, it is no such thing; the higher ranked schools are usually private, specialist, grammar or comprehensives (usually oversubscribed) in middle class areas. Some commentators go as far as to maintain that this is a new form of segregation, as race, ethnicity and class become ever more the factors in determining the school one attends (Gale and Densmore, 2003; Gewirtz et al, 1995; Whitty et al, 1998). Besides, the league tables are themselves so flawed that even governments use them with some trepidation and their use has been effectively discontinued in Wales and Scotland from 2003, although they are still published in the media. The nature of raw data tables can hide much more than they show, particularly if the evidence of the links between social inequality and educational attainment outlined below is valid. Quite simply, the effort by government to measure a person's ability by exam performance is quite meaningless; getting good 'A', GCSEs or 'Highers' is generally less a sign of school outstanding excellence and achievement and more the good luck of being born to parents who are relatively well off.

Yet, the unfortunate consequence is that money follows the 'successful' schools in the league tables, as parents are keen to get their kids, where feasible, into these schools. This leads to the development of over-subscribed schools close to 'sink' schools.

The agenda set out by the league tables lead to Gillborn and Youdell (2001) describing a 'triage' system operating in schools. Triage is a system used in hospital casualty departments to prioritise those patients who need urgent or immediate attention, as opposed to those whose case is not urgent or, indeed, those who are beyond meaningful help. In schools, it can lead to a situation of

concentrating on those underachievers at the margin of the 'good' grades, with whom some effort can lead to improved grades. The other groups, the 'safe' and those 'without hope', can be left with little attention - effectively their education is being rationed as schools become desperate to get pupils into the 'good' grades. Gillborn and Youdell (2001:198-199) conclude that throughout the study of their schools

the importance of GCSE grades A-C has continually surfaced. They are the key performance indicators for schools, subject departments, individual teachers and pupils…the proportion of final year pupils attaining five or more higher grade passes remains largely unchallenged as the central criterion of success or failure…an A-C economy has developed , such that higher grade passes have become the supreme driving force for policy and practice at the school level…secondary schools are increasingly geared to maximising their performance in relation to the 'bottom line', whatever the cost elsewhere. In the A-C economy, the needs of the school, so far as the league tables are concerned, have come to define the needs of the pupils.

The concentration on exam targets also affects virtually any attempt to develop better-rounded people. Thus, initiatives (however limited) such as education for citizenship are always couched in terms of their impact on school targets and, indeed, often arguments are heard that these initiatives are a waste of time as they do not help the school, or the teachers, make their targets. Gillborn and Youdell (2001:199) comment that '…our case study schools have responded by interrogating virtually every aspect of school life for the possible contribution to the all-consuming need to improve the proportion of pupils reaching the benchmark level of five or more higher grade passes.' MacBeath (2004) argues that this kind of school evaluation and approach can lead to a culture where profoundly undemocratic, rote learning schools with 'good' exam passes can be gauged as effective, as the measure of success is usually passes in maths, language and science.

We must keep in mind that education for citizenship is still in its relative infancy and, indeed, the debate as to its direction and effectiveness even younger. Even when teachers are convinced of its value, the perceived needs of the curriculum, the constant flux of reform and the lack of time available can conspire to ensure that it is not well done and the pupils get more cynical about democracy, citizenship education and the motives of educators. In the words of one of Chamberlin's (2003) interviewees, 'education for citizenship? Only if you haven't got a life!'.

Hearts and minds

Initial training of new teachers and the continuing professional development of existing teachers needs to concentrate on winning hearts and minds to education for citizenship. Whilst education for citizenship is now a part of the curriculum in

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initial teacher education programmes, there is no evidence that it plays more than just a relatively cursory part, with many students able to avoid deep discussion or thought on the subject. It needs to permeate the curriculum of initial teacher education and be developed enthusiastically by tutors, particularly as student teachers and those on the probationary year are exposed to some cynical views. Maitles and Cowan (2010) in an analysis of primary probationers found that, whilst there is much interesting work developing, particularly in areas relating to pupil rights, eco areas, pupil councils (and consultation) and community involvement, dependent on the role of leadership in the school, there can be a key problem in that other priorities can force out citizenship initiatives.

If student teachers are the future, the evidence from experienced classroom teachers suggests that there is a need for significant continuing professional learning in the area. Ruddock and Flutter (2004) maintain that teachers lack confidence about handling aspects of citizenship education, and as Dunkin *et al.* (1998) show in their (admittedly tiny) study of four teachers who opted into a pilot study implementing an experimental unit of work on education for citizenship, *'particular controversial content is likely to be excluded, especially if teachers lack confidence in their own mastery of that content'*. This means that there is a need for both day courses in the universities or the localities on education for citizenship and modules on this built into undergraduate student teacher and masters programmes.

The implementation and impact of education for citizenship initiatives depends on whether one sees the glass as half-full or half empty. This book has suggested that there is excellent work going on to develop young people's interest, knowledge, skills and dispositions in areas of citizenship and democracy; yet it is very limited, indeed rare, to find examples of genuine democracy based on children's human rights. It is a matter of hearts and minds. No amount of hectoring and/or government instructions can counter this; as Bernard Crick, the person who has most lobbied for education for citizenship in schools, put it 'teachers need to have a sense of mission… to grasp the fullness of its moral and social aims' (Crick, 2000, p. 2).

There is still much to be positive about. We need to do more research into the effectiveness of citizenship in the development of positive values. However, it is also clear that we have to keep some kind of realistic perspective on the influence of education for citizenship or any kind of other civic or political education. Education for citizenship throws up the central questions as to what sort of education we want. However, whilst there are clear benefits from education for citizenship programmes, we must be clear that no programme of education can neither guarantee democratic participation nor an acceptance of societal norms. Other factors, particularly socio-economic ones, impact strongly, particularly where it is perceived that governments have let down the aspirations of the population. It is time to reaffirm that education for citizenship is still a key priority for our education systems.

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