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Formally equal, but not really: The second stage of an ongoing study into English school students' perceptions of 'the Citizen'

Abstract

This paper presents a discussion based primarily upon the findings of the second stage of on-going research into school students' perceptions of 'the Citizen'. The first stage was an analysis of images in textbooks intended for GCSE Citizenship Studies students aged 14-16, the second stage – a year later – involved interviews with A Level Citizenship Studies students aged 16-18 and with teachers of Citizenship. It was found that the images present a particular and unrepresentative image of 'being British', a part of which students appear to absorb into their own perceptions, irrespective of their personal experiences. The homogeneity of responses, across class, ethnicity, gender and professional role struck the researcher as notable, and similarities and differences are examined. The images represent a highly selective and distorted version of the reality of being English, one which promotes a false consciousness and acceptance of the status quo; uncovering whether or to what extent that version of reality is accepted by those involved is the purpose of this study. Responses in interviews showed that neither the students nor their teachers subscribed to the message behind the images, and that they had their own versions of the reality of 'the Citizen'.

Key words: **Citizen Class Ethnicity Gender Students Teachers**

Introduction

This paper follows on from recent research (XX 2014) into school representations of 'the citizen' that discussed the images presented in Citizenship Education textbooks aimed at 14-16 year olds in England. It is summarised here in conjunction with the second stage of

the research: interviews with 'A' level (the examination for school students 16-18) Citizenship Studies¹ students and teachers (XX&YY 2016). Based on these studies, there is an examination of the apparent deficit in schools in England of understanding who citizens are.

In order to understand what citizenship really means, it is necessary to understand and interpret formal citizenship rights and responsibilities in relation to individuals' social and cultural conditions. Marx and Engels wrote over 160 years ago that, "if you assume a particular civil society . . . you will get particular political conditions" (Marx and Engels, 1973, p. 660), from which it must follow that any society riven with divisions (such as of class, ethnicity and gender) will present political conditions which reflect such divisions. It is also the case that there is potentially a significant space between *what is* (the real) and *what is perceived* (the formal); that inequality exists cannot be taken to mean that everyone is aware of that inequality.

In this research, self and social concepts of citizenship were examined in particular relation to gender, ethnicity and class. There are further socially constructed categories not explicitly addressed in this paper; for example, sexuality and disability are also important aspects of and influenced by people's conditions, and insight into these is therefore also needed for a more complete understanding of the meaning of citizenship. The next stage of the research will therefore extend the scope of constructed categories to be considered, and utilise Yural-Davis' (2011) intersectional approach to discussion and analysis of simultaneous belongings .

¹ The subject will not be available for examination at this level after summer 2017. Advanced [A] levels are the examinations at the end of secondary school and form the basis of evidence of suitability for higher education and/or employment.

The initial data were derived from analysis of the illustrations in five textbooks aimed at those young people taking public examination courses for 16 year olds in Citizenship Education² – of whom there were 23,779 in 2016. The main substance of this paper develops from those data and from subsequent interviews with three focus groups of Citizenship Education students working at Advanced Level, and individual interviews with their teachers. The data from the first stage gives some context to the interviews; a more substantial account of that research is available elsewhere (XX 2014). While the subject has been a discrete statutory part of England’s National Curriculum since 2002, examination is not compulsory and it is frequently the case that schools do not observe the minimum statutory requirements (Keating et al 2010; Leighton 2012, 2013; Ofsted 2006, 2010). It is also to be noted that the National Curriculum for Citizenship has gone through various iterations (QCA 2002, 2007, 2010; Department for Education 2013a) since the books were published.

The interviews, however, showed a diversity of opinion and insight at odds with the images presented in the textbooks. While it would be possible to state that this reflected the teachers’ views, particularly bearing in mind that the textbooks are not universally used, this diversity of opinion and insight was not wholly a reflection of the teachers’ positions. More probably, but as yet tentatively, more appropriate conclusions would be that students of Citizenship Education are a) influenced by a range of factors, not just books and teachers; b) able to think independently and have their own insights into the nature of society; c) living experiences not considered by textbooks or teachers (or academics).

² The General Certificates in Education (GCSEs) are subject specific examinations taken at the end of compulsory schooling in England.

The context presented here relates to the textbooks in Citizenship Education in England in that, while widely available, they are not widely used by specialist teachers. This leads to a brief comment on the 'official' status of the content of the textbooks scrutinised. The research methods for the second stage of research, which this article represents, are then outlined and the results presented and discussed. The primary conclusions are that an 'assimilationist model', which the textbooks proffer and which appears to be the perception approved of by the state, is largely rejected by students and teachers.

Context

Specialist teachers of Citizenship Education are encouraged, during their pre-service education, to ensure that learning is tailored to their pupils' interests and experiences (Leighton 2012) – something which no one text book can achieve. There are fewer than 3000 such specialist teachers in England and almost 7000 secondary schools, including 3268 which have a statutory obligation to follow the National Curriculum and, therefore, to provide Citizenship Education. This clearly illustrates that most children in England's secondary schools do not have the benefit of specialist subject teaching in their Citizenship Education lessons, particularly as some have more than one specialist, some specialists in Citizenship Education teach other subjects, and some specialist Citizenship teachers have left the teaching profession. This might in part be explained by Citizenship Education being one of only two National Curriculum subjects for which there is no bursary for those enrolling on pre-service qualification courses. As shown above, recent government inspections of Citizenship Education have criticised, amongst other things, the lack of expertise of many non-specialist teachers, and the lack of support provided for them when asserting that 32% of citizenship lessons are not good enough because "teachers' subject knowledge and expertise led to only limited and superficial learning." (Ofsted 2013, p5)

There also exists a considerable bank of images, data and activities available through the internet that teachers can use and manipulate to determine the perceptions and ideas they wish to develop as part of Citizenship Education. Freire's observation that 'a deed, a gesture, a poem, a painting, a song, a book are always wrapped in thick wrappers. They have been touched by manifold *whys*' (2006, p10) reminds us that the images deployed by teachers of citizenship – whether specialist, convert, volunteer or coerced – carry messages not always immediately obvious but none the less influential. The first stage of this research considered those images found in textbooks. The second stage, the main focus of this article, investigated the images held by students, derived from whichever sources their teachers have deployed and from sources other than those presented formally in school.

According to Ofsted, in those schools where the quality of Citizenship Education was deemed less than good (32%),

Provision . . . was characterised by insufficient teaching time, teachers' lack of subject expertise and a lack of systems that could identify and address important weaknesses. Such schools did not recognise that non-specialist teachers often require support to develop their skills and expertise in teaching citizenship; in these schools, teachers had not received the necessary training and support to deliver more challenging aspects of the curriculum (Ofsted 2013, p4)

The books were chosen as representing a collective image designated by the Department for Children, Families and Schools (as it was known when they were published, now the Department for Education), delineated by the examination boards, and projected by schools, to pupils in the 14-16 age range, of what it means to be English. The textbooks

were produced to support the learning required to meet the demands of the GCSE examination in Citizenship Education taken as an option by 23,779 young people in 2016. The specifications of all such public examinations have to be approved by a state agency. That the specifications were so approved, and that the textbooks were in turn approved by the examination boards, clearly implies approval by the state of the general thrust of these books.

Summary of findings from textbook analysis ³

While there are clear and positive role models in relation to gender and to minority ethnic group membership, these are considerably outnumbered by inaccurate or 'aspirational' images rather than reflecting statistical reality. For example, the only reference to HIV Aids in any of the textbooks is illustrated with a black woman and child. Yet, in England 66% of all those with AIDS/HIV in 2001 were white and 62% male, and the incidence of AIDS/HIV transference from mother to child was consistently in the region of <1% in the first decade of the 21st Century, far less than the incidence of transference through homosexual (65%) or heterosexual (32%) sexual activity.

The textbooks' representation of black men and crime, by singling out one particular historical event⁴, wholly ignores that young black men are statistically more likely to be stopped and harassed by police officers, or assaulted by people they know, than to be murdered by strangers (Bowling and Phillips, 2007). Images of employment did not discriminate between occupations and ethnic groups. However, non-whites are more likely to be unemployed than whites (ONS 2005, p5), while there is a higher proportion of

³ See Leighton 2014

⁴ the murder of Stephen Lawrence, in South London, in 1993.

British Chinese and British Indian 'professionals' than there are of British white professionals.

Women were not invisible in the textbooks but, in a proportion of roughly 8:1, they were relatively obscured. Men were shown much more often, in a greater number of roles which were also generally of higher social status. That both women and men were shown as criminals, athletes, footballers and borrowers might be construed as some recognition of gender equality. There are no images which explicitly represent social class, as if there are differences in employment but these do not result in significant difference in social experience. The absence of such images could be interpreted to imply that the 'official' version of life in Britain is that social class does not exist to any significant extent.

Method

Data were collected through engagement with focus group interviews of school pupils aged 17-18 and individual interviews of teachers; opportunity samples of schools were used, partly for convenience and partly due to parallel research being conducted in Sweden⁵ with which it was intended to compare data and analysis and so similar methods and samples were required. In accordance with Griffiths (1998) there is recognition that it is extremely unlikely that another researcher (or, if I were to repeat the study, that I) would make exactly the same inquiries of exactly the same sample and get exactly the same answers to be analysed in exactly the same way to produce exactly the same results. Of greater importance than replicability was that there is validity, that what has been identified, analysed and discussed gives an insight into young people's perceptions of 'the Citizen' in England.

⁵ The two studies, from England and Sweden, have been brought together in a more substantial form in XX and YY (2017)

The sample comprised 26 learners and 4 teachers, not large enough to be representative but still usefully indicative. Three of the schools were state schools with the other coming from the independent sector. The state schools were all schools where Citizenship Education is an established curriculum subject taught as an examination option, while the independent school has a long established Citizenship programme but not a public examination course. Independent schools in England have a statutory requirement to provide a 'broad and balanced' curriculum, but they are not bound by the National Curriculum.

The class (based on school profiles), gender, and ethnic composition of the sample was

| | | |
|-------|---------------|--------------------|
| Girls | Middle Class | Black English = 1 |
| Girls | Middle Class | White English = 4 |
| Girls | Working Class | White English = 11 |
| Boys | Working Class | Asian/English = 1 |
| Boys | Working class | White English = 8 |

Individual interviews were with two male and two female teachers. Two of the teachers were of pupils interviewed while two were not.

The teachers and students were asked about their experiences and opinions regarding Citizenship Education and the nature of citizenship. The following core questions formed the basis of the focus group interviews:

- What knowledge and skills does a citizen need in a democracy and how is the meaning of citizenship connected to gender, class and ethnicity?
- How are freedom of speech, freedom of religion, and other personal liberties affected by the citizen's gender, class and ethnicity, according to the respondents?

- What are teachers' and students' experiences of Citizenship Education and how does school pay attention to citizens' conditions based on gender, class and ethnicity?

Results from interviews

All students explicitly mentioned the need to become involved in society, to know how to listen to and understand news and current affairs rather than be passive recipients of one institutional version of events. They considered it important that schools enable knowledge and understanding of pressure groups, extending the notion of 'political' beyond party definitions and party activities. There was also general agreement that a full understanding of rights and responsibilities would be beneficial as this was an area considered to be confused and confusing.

One group of students stressed a need for a greater sense of the individual's sense of and place in society. They were aware of Margret Thatcher's alleged dictum that "there is no such thing as society. There are individual men and women, and there are families" proposed during a speech in Bruges in 1988 (before they were born); she was being critical of a perceived entitlement culture but became popularly understood as an advocacy of absolute individuality, an advocacy of individualism and selfishness which the students did not interpret as representative of their local community but perhaps of the country at large. Two white working class female students made a point about which there was again general agreement:

Student 1: Citizenship and being a citizen aren't the same thing.

Interviewer: Can you clarify that? What do you mean?

Student 1: Citizenship is active

Student 2: Yeah. Citizenship is the active part; a citizen is just someone who lives somewhere.

Paradoxically, this is very close to what Mrs Thatcher might have meant⁶.

As to social differentiation, a white working class male observed that “Notionally we’re all equal, except the Queen. Men are paid more and dominate social roles – equality in law but not in fact.” This ‘legal but not real’ perception of equality as citizens was a recurring theme in all focus group sessions.

Across all student respondents there was therefore general agreement that to be a citizen is to be a member of a community, but that citizenship goes further to imply some form of active involvement. Ethnicity was seen as a potentially differentiating factor to the extent that a white Briton or a black African might define it differently in detail, but the principle is the same. There was a perception that many politicians continued to push an anti-immigration agenda, ignoring – from the students’ perspective – that “some people need a safe place”. The perception was also prevalent that England was ‘still not’ an equal country for all ethnic groups, that institutional racism continued to be experienced. While legislation can and does help, this was considered to be effective only to a limited extent; for example, legislation cannot change attitudes. Ethnicity as not seen as a limiting factor in itself – there was no suggestion that members of any ethnic groups were somehow less able to be active and constructive citizens.

⁶ See Woman’s Own magazine interview transcript at <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/106689>.

With regard to gender and citizenship, there was no dissent from the opinion expressed by one male student:

Student 3: elected representatives have generally always [*sic*] been male. Women might feel excluded. Plaid Cymru, SNP, Greens⁷ have women leaders and are left-leaning parties. They have grown as outsiders in their gender, region, and politics. The media portrayal of them is minimal and vindictive.

Other than this, there was general consensus that women and men enjoy equality in most aspects of public life. There was some awareness that women's average income was less than men's, ascribed to the different jobs people do, yet no feeling that women are systemically prevented from achieving those better paid posts. That imbalance was ascribed to either lack of ambition for some women or their families of origin, or men feeling safer replacing themselves with other men. As well as changing attitudes, there was a perception that women lose out in employment because of parenting responsibilities, that there was a need for parental leave as well as maternal. In common with perceptions of ethnicity in relation to the status of the citizen, gender as seen to be equal in the eyes of the law but not in the reality of day-to-day interactions. The views thus expressed are much closer to social reality than the images to which the students had been exposed in their textbooks.

Social class was again seen as having less of a role in determining citizenship and social involvement than in the past, but there was certainty that it was still a relevant (if confused) concept. The interviewer did not offer a definition of class and, while students clearly held their own concepts, these were not explicitly stated or examined. The notion

⁷ Three of the minority parties in the UK Parliament.

put forward was that class mattered less than income, opportunity and culture, which is clearly problematic and begs the question, “what is class, if not defined by income, opportunity and culture?” Students referred to the ‘Chav’⁸ image promoted by television programmes in particular as well as throughout the mass media more generally, citing television programmes such as the Jeremy Kyle Show, Big Brother, and Benefits Street as examples of holding the poorer and less articulate up to ridicule. There was a perception of both an underclass and of a society experiencing embourgeoisement, where there is a large middle mass, a small group with the bulk of wealth and power, and a small group detached from society and from opportunities for social involvement. The observation that “region matters as well” was given in relation to a notional preponderance of civic power resting within the M25 orbital motorway [London and its immediate environment] and that, the further away from London people lived, the less opportunity they had to exercise influence in public life.

Respondents were also asked whether there was such a thing as a ‘typical British person’. While some suggestions were forthcoming - patriotic, balding, white male, in his 40s, drinks tea and eats a full English breakfast - these features were recognised as stereotypical. This was a question which prompted one focus group to have a heated discussion regarding the correct way to make a cup of tea, which struck the interviewer as a stereotypically English issue⁹. It was agreed in every case that Britain is too multicultural and regionally diverse for a generic image to have any validity.

There was a consistent theme that teachers and academics are out of touch, raised by three of the focus groups. This was typified by one male student’s response.

⁸ A widely used derogatory term for members of the underclass; Nayak (2006, p813) suggests that it is used to “distinguish the ‘rough’ from the ‘respectable’ working class” and issues of income rather than social class.

⁹ When the researcher presented an early draft of findings to a group of post-graduate students in England, it was the issue of making teas which stimulated the most heated discussion. There is insufficient data for a reliable conclusion as to whether this reflects the centrality of tea making to the English psyche or a lack of attention holding skills on the part of the researcher.

Interviewer: Do you feel enough attention is given to social differences in the Citizenship Education National Curriculum?

Student 4: [The National Curriculum] is set up by people like you [middle-aged, white, male researcher]. We don't worry about these things; we're not racist, we're not sexist.

He and his fellow students argued that there were more important things to worry about than constructions such as class, ethnicity and gender, and that education should focus on what matters now rather than what used to matter.

Teachers

For teachers there was a perceived need that citizens should be both media smart and politically literate, that citizens – particularly young citizens – need an understanding of the political system and how to access political processes to their advantage. One male teacher expressed the opinion that

Teacher 1: social class appears to have disappeared from discussion, even though its influence clearly remains.

This, he felt, could be most clearly seen in popular TV programmes such as 'Benefits Street' (where the lives of people who claimed welfare benefits from the state were under constant scrutiny), 'Jeremy Kyle' (in which people were brought face to face with family members or acquaintances to resolve bitter disputes such as inter-household sexual dalliances), and others which – he believed – were leading society inexorably towards a

Hunger Games'¹⁰ mentality reminiscent of Juvenal's 'panem et circenses', (bread and circuses), and Herbert Marcuse's 'Happy Consciousness'.

Teacher 1: The media are not only distracting attention away from social inequality and social issues, they are creating entertainment from others' difficulties.

This media exploitation of class voyeurism was perceived by him as much stronger than any possible comparable gender or ethnically-based distorting emphasis, in part because class is less openly discussed and because there is a prevailing opposition to – or at least diminution of – gender and ethnically based discrimination (both legally and culturally).

None of the other teachers offered class as a significant focus for citizenship. Those teachers considered economic opportunity and cultural attitudes to be more significant than an undefined notion of 'social class'. All the teachers raised issues of taxation and voting systems as being important for citizens. How taxes are raised and where the expenditure is were deemed useful ways to both politically and economically educate citizens, particularly as it allowed teachers to address myths regarding benefit levels without being considered biased in their teaching. As well as the UK's general use of First Past The Post, it was considered important that citizens have some grasp of the principles of proportional representation, not least because various forms of this are used in Scottish Parliamentary, Welsh and Northern Irish Assembly, and European Union, elections. All were agreed that one regularly successful strategy had been to run mock elections in school, exposing learners to Marshall's notions of both Civil and Political Citizenship.

¹⁰ A popular USA film based on a series of books by Suzanne Collins. Two young people from each district in the fictional country of Panem are selected by lottery to participate in the annual Hunger Games where they try to eliminate their competitors while the citizens are required to watch the televised games.

Experienced specialists considered it most important to identify and challenge social inequality and mobility barriers. Social class was perceived as still present but a less significant barrier than in the past; students were perceived as class aware, perhaps more sensitive to issues of poverty and income than to sociological definitions of employment class. One teacher commented on the media exploitation of class voyeurism, particularly in relation to 'reality' TV shows such as Big Brother, while one male teacher expressed the view – subsequently reiterated by one of the female teachers, that parental ignorance or bias in relation to each of class, ethnicity and gender was a greater influence than could be countered by school. Identity politics did not appear to be an issue.

There was unanimity that textbooks were fairly useless. Some gender representations were seen to exaggerate or over compensate for reality, while the teachers considered that they should offer realistic rather than aspirational images. Teachers showed awareness that issues of gender and ethnicity were less significant for students now than in the past; while it was considered still important that these categories were raised by the National Curriculum and in textbooks, there was a consensus that the emphasis should be on detail rather than broad generalisation. The two female teachers raised that sexuality is still ignored in the National Curriculum, which appears based on an assumption of universal heterosexuality. They considered that their prime needs in developing citizens were for more preparation time and more curriculum space. All the teachers made their own resources rather than resort to textbooks whenever possible.

The books considered in the first stage of this study uniformly present what Banks (2004) terms an 'assimilationist model', similar to that which underpinned Parks' (1926) 'Immigrant/Host Model'. They also fit what Gramsci (1985) described as a dominant hegemony. When we scrutinise those images to which students are required to relate and

upon which they are required to reflect, we find that they represent a highly selective and distorted version of the reality of being English which promotes a false consciousness and acceptance of the status quo.

The interviews, however, showed a diversity of opinion and insight at odds with the images presented in the textbooks. While it might be tempting to conclude that this reflected the teachers' views, particularly bearing in mind that the textbooks are not universally used and that many teaching materials are developed personally or collectively by teachers, this diversity of opinion and insight was not wholly a reflection of the teachers' positions found in this study. More probably, but as yet tentatively, more appropriate conclusions would be that students of Citizenship Education are

- a) influenced by a range of factors, not just books and teachers;
- b) able to think independently and have their own insights into the nature of society;
- c) living experiences not considered by textbooks or teachers (or academics).

There was considerable homogeneity of responses within each of the groups, although not as much between them. That homogeneity was such that it is possible to summarise the perceptions of each sub-sample and to offer comparisons and contrasts. One issue on which there was unanimity between all interviewees was that law and reality don't always coincide. The most notable observation throughout all the interviews was that a significant disparity between legislation and daily life was regularly identified, a perception that social reality did not present the rule of law as a lived experience. This has particular significance in the light of subsequent government policy being to promote 'Fundamental British Values' which are given as the Rule of Law, Tolerance, Democracy, and Respect for the beliefs of others..

There was awareness amongst the students that the law does not allow discrimination, yet women's and men's mean salaries are very different, with some mention of 'the glass ceiling'. While not articulated by the teachers, this writer assumes some teacher influence here as 'glass ceiling' is not otherwise an every day phrase in young people's lexicon.

It was common to both groups that gender and ethnicity are no longer seen as significant barriers to civic membership nor to an individual's social or economic wellbeing. In relation to social class there was a greater diversity of opinion, in part due to the lack of clarity among students in what they considered the meaning of social class to be. Teachers appeared to have a clearer sense of class but were not significantly more persuaded that it was a major factor in citizenship.

The multicultural nature of British society was another element about which there was consensus. Not only in the nature of that society but also that it was a situation to be welcomed and one which was largely accepted and celebrated.

Further agreement can be seen in perceptions of what is lacking in Citizenship Education. The students felt that the curriculum was outdated and that their teachers were therefore also out of touch, on the assumption that teachers have some influence over curriculum content; they do not. The teachers agreed with the students, being very specific in saying that there needed to be much more about voting systems specifically and political structures more generally, and that the young needed to be more aware and better informed about systems of taxation than the National Curriculum required.

This was a surprising observation, given that the Citizenship National Curriculum for Key Stage 3 (11-14 year olds) explicitly requires that

Pupils should be taught about

- the development of the political system of democratic government in the United Kingdom, including the roles of citizens, Parliament and the monarch
- the operation of Parliament, including voting and elections, and the role of political parties (DfE 2013)

This requirement is repeated for Key Stage 4 (14-16 year olds), with the expectation of more depth and detail, and with the addition of “income and expenditure, credit and debt, insurance, savings and pensions, financial products and services, and how public money is raised and spent” (DfE 2013). One can only conclude that the teachers have not read the National Curriculum guidelines or that the political and economic aspects of it have been downplayed. It is also worth noting that all schools have to provide a programme of Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education (PSHEE). While this does not have specific guidance, it seems an appropriate locus for economic issues such as taxation.

Female teachers emphasised gender issues more strongly than their male counterparts, whereas there was no such identifiable separation amongst the students. One female teacher, in extending her perception of social inequality to include sexuality and other determinants of social identity such as region, age, and dis/ability, raised points not identified by other teachers nor by the students. It was consistently proposed by both categories of interviewees that there was no practical way of separating the social reality of any of these factors as people experience their places in all three categories simultaneously. This perception is addressed by Yural-Davis (2011) and her discussion of intersectionality as an approach which both recognises and allows analysis of people's

membership of multiple communities of identity. However, the students did not express much interest in identity politics, perceiving concern with gender, ethnicity and class as outmoded and not openly considering the other factors mentioned above..

Students and teachers agreed that there is no such thing as a typical British person any more than there is a typical any sort of person. All interviewees were clear in regarding the UK as a multi-cultural society and that all members of society were British, irrespective of any whatever other groups with which they also identified. They were aware of racism, regarding it as behaviour of a minority. Teachers in particular argued that there is no set of common yet unique British values, despite there being an official set of 'Fundamental British Values laid down by the government. This is another aspect of responses where Yural-Davis' (2011) work on intersectionality can give insight and understanding, in recognising that someone can identify as British while also identifying as European and/or Asian and/or Muslim and/or Jewish and/or Christian, as well as by skin colour, location, social class, gender, sexuality etc.

Social class, while a concept rarely clarified and certainly not uniformly understood, was none the less seen as exerting an influence on the extent to which civic and social participation is possible. Not all teachers showed an awareness of 'class' and the students tended to use synonyms, often suggesting it was class culture rather than systemic inequality which made it more difficult for some than others to get involved. Their awareness of their own class, for example, had not several of them from planning to become more involved in political and other community activities. All the students involved in Citizenship Education as a Key Stage 5 (17-18 year olds) subject intended to

either become or continue to be politically active to varying degrees, whereas only two of those not so involved shared that intention.

There was also agreement across the interviewees that to be a citizen is to be a member of a society, actively or passively, but that to hold citizenship is to be active. It is this notion of active involvement – whether within one or more groups or in society as a whole – which, for students and teachers, defines citizenship. Active involvement, for them, was more significant than any socially or biologically determined label of culture, gender, class etc.

Conclusions

While all conclusions are offered tentatively as this study is yet to be completed, it is reasonable to conclude that students of Citizenship Education in England are influenced by a range of factors, not just books and teachers, as their attitudes and opinions do not reflect wholesale those offered either by their textbooks in earlier years, nor those of their teachers. Illich observed that “most people acquire their knowledge outside school” (1971, p20) and these data appear to support that.

From this and supported by the range of responses, it can also be seen that young people are perfectly able to think independently and have their own insights into the nature of society. In particular, an awareness that there is a social justice deficit for many citizens, that there appears to be equality in law but there is less evidence of equality in daily life and life opportunities: that there is *formal* equality but not *real* equality. While there was much consensus between them, and significant agreement with their teachers, responses were not uniform or provided in rote. This also indicates a third conclusion,

that the students were living experiences not considered by textbooks nor by teachers and academics. It follows from this that, to gain insight into what matters to young people and to ascertain how best to provide for them an education which meets their needs now and for the future, we need to have a shift in mind-set. Rather than providing *for*, we need to start providing *with*, in line with Goodman's recommendation that, "since schooling undertakes to be compulsory, must it not continually review its claim to be useful?" (1975, p19) – in this case, useful to students rather than to those who dominate society.

That teachers have some influence on their students is none the less clear. There are nuanced differences and, at times, significant contrasts, but the language used by many student interviewees reflected the language of the teachers e.g. terms such as ethnicity and glass ceiling being used in appropriate contexts and with clear understanding. It is also apparent that some teachers (all of this small sample) have a lack of a detailed familiarity with and understanding of the National Curriculum for Citizenship Education in England, and other recent policies. They identified areas they thought should be taught which were already in the required curriculum, and seemed unaware of, for example, the Fundamental British Values which have been at the core of the National Curriculum for three years. Whether this has come about due to lack of time, or lack of professionalism or lack of direction from school management, was not investigated. Given the dedication the teachers show to their students in spending time preparing learning materials and providing extra-curricular support, it is unlikely that they lack professionalism; this leads to the conclusion that school managers need to provide more information, direction and time to teachers of Citizenship for them to meet the needs and aspirations of their students.

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