

Four questions from England about the compatibility of citizenship education to modern schooling

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Introduction

Citizenship Education was introduced into the English secondary school curriculum in 2002 following the publication of the report of the Advisory Group on Citizenship (Crick report) in 1998 (QCA, 1998). The aim of the group, as stated in the report, was to achieve:

'no less than a change in the political culture of this country both nationally and locally: for people to think of themselves as active citizens, willing, able and equipped to have an influence in public life and with the critical capacities to weigh evidence before speaking and acting; to build on and to extend radically to young people the best in existing traditions of community involvement and public service, and to make them individually confident in finding new forms of involvement and action among themselves.'

(QCA, 1998, p. 7)

In order for this change in the political culture to be achieved, the report made specific recommendations in relation to the teaching methodologies, the role of the school in the community and the role of the students in the school. More specifically, the report suggested teaching practices which promote 'active learning'; whole school approaches which 'engage pupils in discussion and consultation about all aspects of school life'; the implementation of a curriculum which is relevant to students' interests and experiences; and the construction of a school ethos which is 'consistent with the aim and purpose of Citizenship Education and which affirms and extends the development of pupils into active citizens' (ibid, pp. 35-7). Bearing in mind the numerous descriptions of schools as authoritarian institutions (for example Alderson, 1999; Harber, 2004), we could claim that the Crick report has advocated a shift in the culture of the school as a vehicle for the change in the political culture of the country.

Perhaps it is due to this advocacy for a 'cultural' change that the publication of the Crick report was followed by both enthusiastic support and strong scepticism. Part of this scepticism had its roots in the specific conditions which describe or determine the modern

school discourse and the roles of the members of its community. Davies (1999, p. 135), notes that the new curriculum had to deal with the challenges of achieving this change 'without overburdening teachers' and developing a discourse of active engagement without justifying any concerns about being indoctrinating. At the same time Frazer described teachers in England as lacking 'ideas about the nature of politics, the nature of governance and the institutions of democracy' (Frazer, 1999, p. 18). A year later, Derricot claimed: 'there is no doubt that the obligation to provide Citizenship Education will be seen as an unwelcome burden of an already stretched teaching force' (2000, p. 39). Besides, just two years before the publication of the Crick report, Carr and Harnett reminded us that: 'England has no tradition in asking the right questions about citizenship at the level of serious political discussion' and claimed that 'vacuous rhetoric continues to replace the hard task of re-examining educational provision in the light of the requirements of a fully democratic society' (1996, p. 78).

Considering the recognition 'that the ethos, organisation, structures and daily practices of schools ... have a significant impact on the effectiveness of Citizenship Education' (QCA, 1998, p. 36), the above claims had raised questions about the capacity of English secondary schools to accommodate the ethos and promote the 'cultural change' advocated by the Crick report (Kakos, 2008).

Ten years after the introduction of Citizenship Education and despite the progress that has been achieved in terms of the recognition of the importance and of the educational benefits of the subject (see Keating et al., 2009), the cultural change advocated by its introduction and the embedment of its educational practices in the ethos of the schools are yet to be achieved (Kakos, in press). Besides, the signs from the ongoing Curriculum Review seem to allow little optimism about the future of Citizenship as a statutory subject. In this chapter I will look in the literature in order to revisit the educational zeitgeist of the ten years of the subject's implementation and I will claim that there are at least four sets of key questions which should have been seriously considered before any realistic expectations from citizenship education were drawn. I will claim that these questions need to be considered before any similar educational initiative is designed and implemented in countries with similar to English political and educational conditions.

The individualistic discourse of education

Lankshear has argued that 'Education, socialisation, training, apprenticeship and enculturation are among the terms we use to refer to processes by which individuals are

initiated into the discourses of their identity formations' (Lankshear, 1997, p.17). Schools provide the environment in which discourses are formed and promoted while individuals' interactions within this environment bring together and redefine their primary discourses, which have been shaped prior to individuals' engagement in schooling. As Arthur and Davison claimed, 'schools are discourse communities. The language, values, ways of being and membership of various facets of the school, whether by staff or pupils, define and are defined by individuals' engagement with discourses' (2000, p.18). This view suggests that the redefinition of discourses is not strictly related to specific aims that schools set regarding the promotion of certain values, attitudes, beliefs or ways of thinking but with processes that 'are rarely, if ever, made explicit' (Arthur and Davison, 2000, p.18). However, even if it is not always possible to reveal the processes that determine their formation, we can shape an idea about the function of these discourses by studying the life in the institutions in which these are underpinned. Furthermore, it is possible to examine these discourses in relation to the values or attitudes that we want to enhance to individuals through their engagement in the school life and possibly examine readjustments that may be needed in order for these institutions to serve the desired purpose.

'The school is fundamentally an agency of socialization which exerts pressures on those involved to accept its social values as their own. Engagement with learning will result ...from an induction into "educated discourse", success in which will determine future acquisition of social "goods": for example, particular employment paths, higher education, power, status, wealth and so on' (Arthur and Davison, 2000, p. 19). This view which can strongly remind one of a 'bargain culture' (Lawson, 2001) is, according to the writers, promoting a culture of individualism. This view is in agreement with Hargreaves' claim regarding the promotion of this culture at the expense of the development of 'team spirit', 'esprit de corps' and 'loyalty to the school'. Without rejecting this culture, Hargreaves notices that 'an excessive and exclusive attention to individual needs jeopardizes those of the society' (Hargreaves, 1982, p. 34-35).

The statement sounds as a warning to anyone engaged with the implementation of Citizenship Education. With aims such as the development of a sense of a responsibility towards the community and of active citizenship, the programme brought values that might not have been easy for schools to incorporate in their practices and indeed in their curriculum. It introduced, in other words, a meta-level discourse which seems incompatible to the schools' secondary discourse. Active citizenship particularly, is a product of 'critical awareness of alternative discourses' (Arthur and Davison, 2000, p. 19) which allows the possibility of choice among discourses. This critical awareness can only be built through the active engagement of individuals' with the diversity of discourses brought into the community by other individual i.e. the active engagement of individuals with each other which constructs

the sense of 'community' and not by any 'bargaining' between individuals/consumers of education who select or reject discourses and constructed and offered by educational providers. The educational goods of active citizenship depend on the sense of 'community' and lie exactly on the individuals' engagement with it as this engagement is 'the essence of powerful social literacy. It is also the essence of the education of free citizens' (Arthur and Davison, 2000, p. 19).

The 'business – like' school

Pring has placed the discussion about choice, individualism and educational discourse on a different basis. In the article 'Political Education: relevance of the humanities' (1999), he presented the view of education as a 'quality circle' which offers a 'product' ready for consumption. He claimed that the pressure to 'raise standards' places schools in a production line in which the government is the one that defines the product, inspects and assesses its quality, informs and empowers the 'customers' i.e. parents. He argued that in this idea of 'quality circle,' 'there is a coherent set of ideas which are of a political nature and which transform not simply how education should be organised but also what we understand by education. In 1999 Pring had already argued that such a changed understanding would inevitably affect the purpose and understanding of specific programmes, in particular those of political education' (Pring, 1999, p. 73).

Pring recognised that in the years just before the introduction of citizenship education a shift in the educational discourse had taken place. This shift had the potential to redefine all aspects of schooling, especially the relationships of the individuals engaged in it. The new language with terms such as 'cost effectiveness' and 'value for money' which have been used by OFSTED (the Government's school inspection agency) and other official bodies have been indicative of this new discourse. 'The shift in the language of education ...brings with it a shift in how we see the relationships between teacher and learner, and between teachers and those who organise the education system –indeed, how we perceive the political framework within which teachers are asked to relate to their pupils and to what are now referred to as stakeholders' (Pring, 1999, p.74-75).

Pring's claim raises a number of issues which are of importance for citizenship education. One of these relates to the changes that the shift in the educational discourse causes to the teachers' roles. According to Pring, when placed in this 'quality circle,' teachers appear to have to promote a product –or at least effectively deliver it, since the product has already been decided by the government' (ibid, p.74). Resulting from this, there is the separation between ends of education to the means reaching those ends. As Pring mentions, this has certain implications to the educational discourse: '...it has removed from

educational discourse, and thus from those thinking professionally about educational matters, what has traditionally been at the very heart of education, namely, deliberation over the values worth pursuing, the sort of society we should be endeavouring to create, the personal qualities and understandings which should be developed' (ibid, p.74). This has further implications on the way teachers understand and act in their role, the way authority is applied in schools and of course to the relationship between teachers and students.

Pring has not been alone in detecting the 'shift in the language of education'. Apple has effectively described the processes of 'conservative modernization' and the effects of marketisation of education (Apple, 2000; 2001). Ball has also discussed the role of the market and has identified market, managerialism and performativity as the three policy technologies driving the modern education reform. Quoting Rose (1989), and effectively echoing Pring's views, Ball points out that 'education reform brings about change in our subjective existence and our relations one with another' (Ball, 2003, p. 217). Ball is concerned about how this reform affects 'one's social identity' and focuses on the role of performativity to study 'the subjectivities of change and changing subjectivities which are threatened or required or brought about by it' (Ball, 2003, p. 217). His definition of performativity is apocalyptic of the processes behind this shift of subjectivities:

'Performativity is a technology, a culture and a mode of regulation that employs judgements, comparisons and displays as means of incentive, control, attrition and change - based on rewards and sanctions (both material and symbolic). The performances (of individual subjects and organisations) serve as measures of productivity or output, or displays of 'quality', or 'moments' of promotion and inspection. As such they stand for, encapsulate or represent the worth, quality and value of an individual or organisation within a field of judgement.' (Ball, 2003, p.216)

Regarding the implementation of citizenship education, the discourse brought in by performativity and a 'business-like' educational reality seems, according to Pring, to create a rather problematic environment. Political education in democracy he had noticed, has the role to 'nurture in young people not only the instrumental knowledge and skills by which they might achieve certain political ends, but also the understandings and capacities for deliberating about those ends themselves' (ibid, p.84). In other words, in order to have a political education 'in democracy' as Lister solicited (Lister, 1981) its aims need to be part of the discussion, of the political debate that we expect students to be engaged in. A citizenship education programme formed 'in business terms, based on 'tightly defined outcomes' and performances of measurable 'productivity' is, as Morrell has argued 'an agent of the worst sort of conservatism' and is incompatible to the 'active citizenship' that is claimed to be

pursued by it (Morrell, 1964; Quoted in Pring, 1999, p.85). It could be claimed therefore that in order for the meta-level discourse of citizenship education to be compatible to schools' discourse, they both need to become incompatible to the nature and aims of the truly democratic political education.

A final issue which is raised by Pring's thoughts on the adoption of a business-like educational discourse relates to students' participation. The predefinition of the outcomes and the control over the content and aims of an education programme, especially when they do not take place within the educational environment but are imposed by the government, can result in the loss of the programme's potential to initiate students' 'willingness and ability to participate in decision-making, to value freedom, to choose between alternatives and to value fairness as a basis for making and judging decisions' (QCA, 1998, p.57). Furthermore, such discourse can be responsible for engaging students into a 'bargain culture' as described by Lawson, in which active participation refers to the means for the acquisition of specific 'goods' (i.e. academic success). Pring has been doubtful about whether Citizenship Education can promote participation under these conditions: 'it is difficult to see how political education, even under the guise of 'citizenship', might prepare young people to participate in a democratic form of life where the prevailing and controlling management model of education militates against that form of life' (1999, p.79).

Citizenship education in the school programme

A number of other issues had been raised concerning the incorporation of citizenship education in the school programme.

The first of these issues is related to teachers' views of the programme and the support that are prepared to give to its implementation. Evidence drawn from studies conducted either before or soon after the introduction of the subject such as the one undertaken by Holden (Holden, 1998) or from the first Cross-Sectional Survey of the NFER Longitudinal Study (Kerr et al, 2003) efficiently justified an early concern regarding teachers' enthusiasm about taking on the new challenges of Citizenship Education (Menter and Walker 2000, p.107), based on the 'diminished autonomy' and the government's 'increasing incursion into [teachers'] areas of professional decision-making' (ibid, p.106). This view validates Pring's scepticism regarding the success of the programme when reducing teachers' role to 'product promoters'. Davies' relevant pessimism on the other hand was based on the priorities that schools are expected to make under the pressure of an educational policy which is concentrated on raising standards in Numeracy and Literacy (Davies, 1999, p.130). The report of the Advisory Group for Citizenship Education was clear on the issue: 'Whilst issues of the broader curriculum lie outside the remit of the group, we would want to stress that our

recommendations should not be at the expense of other subjects nor lead to any narrowing of the curriculum' (QCA, 1998, p. 24). Furthermore, there is no doubt that the overload of responsibilities that teachers had undertaken, an issue that is addressed in a plethora of documents that have been produced by teachers' professional bodies (i.e. NUT and NASUWT), could also have had a negative effect on their attitudes towards governments' initiatives –including the introduction of Citizenship Education. The experience from previous attempts that have made in England for a programme of citizenship education suggests that all these could have more apparent effects in schools which choose to implement citizenship education as a cross-curricular subject (see for example the largely ignored plan for a cross-curricular citizenship programme suggested by the National Curriculum council in 1990).

Closely related to the above issue is the concern regarding the way that schools handle the recommendation for a balance between the informative aspect of citizenship and the cultivation of students' relevant skills and attitudes. In 2000 Arthur and Davison validated this concern pointing out that the National Curriculum 'remains dominated by cognate subject areas without any real attempt to articulate the values and beliefs which they help form in young people' (Arthur and Davison, 2000, p.21). The findings from the 2003 NFER Cross-Sectional survey had already offered support to these concerns: 'Teacher and college tutors reported that the most common teacher and learning approaches for students were listening whilst the teacher/tutor talks, taking notes and working from textbooks and worksheets' (op. cit., p.42). The survey also addressed the issue of students' assessment which under these conditions can be easily overlooked. The relevant findings were rather impressive: 83 per cent of teachers in the survey said they did not assess students in citizenship education (ibid, p.102), while in the few schools that had developed assessment policies, written tasks and essays were among the most common strategies (ibid, p.54). Schools' preference of traditional methods of assessment may not necessarily be an issue of concern by itself, but it could possibly indicate an emphasis on the knowledge in expense of the other aspects and outcomes that citizenship education pursues.

Another area of concern regarding the place of citizenship in the school curriculum is related to the methodologies that teachers implement in Citizenship classrooms and to the classroom climate. Harwood, investigating the implementation of the 'World Studies' project, had noticed that "'active learning' classroom methods can be difficult to manage and the role and behaviour of the teacher seems to be a critical variable" (Harwood, 1997, p. 67-68). The same issue is addressed by the OFSTED in its 2005 report for Citizenship which noticed that in 'weaker citizenship lessons' pupils were 'off task and even disruptive'. The report includes also descriptions of lessons in which teachers 'were over-directive, for example with pupils

coping from the board' (OFSTED, 2005). Harwood claimed that participation, disruption and teachers' control are all interrelated since the difficulty of the management of the class in which discussions are taking place often leads teachers to the adoption of over-directive methodologies: 'when faced with the challenge of having to control discussion in large groups, teachers resort to more traditional question – answer or recitation strategies' (op. cit, p.87-88). Reid and Whittingham have related the difficulty of the management of a class in which students are engaged with the debate regarding students' conception of teachers' role: 'Pupils are socialised during their years of schooling into accepting that a "proper" classroom and teacher bears the stamp of a particular order and particular style of verbal authority - and any deviation from this might be seen as a sign of weakness' (Reid and Whittingham, 1984, p.9). Under this perspective, the recommendations for the creation of a climate in the Citizenship Education classroom 'in which all pupils are free from any fear of expressing reasonable points of view' (QCA, 1998, p.58) should be examined in relation to the conceptions that students and teachers have of their role in the school community.

A final issue that will be addressed here is drawn from the implementation of whole-school approaches which constitutes an essential part of Citizenship Education's learning process. 'Through such climate and practices', is noticed in Crick report, 'schools provide implicit and explicit messages which can have a considerable influence, both positive and negative, on pupils' learning and development' (QCA, 1998, p.36). The relevant literature has provided more than a few descriptions of the English schools which can justify concerns regarding the quality of the messages that are provided to students through the ethos of their educational environment. Indicative of the climate are the findings from Holden's study which indicate that 'the dominant approach [is] to maintain the status quo within the schools with a focus on caring and supporting others, rather than encouraging children to question, challenge and to raise concerns of their own' (Holden, 1999, p.148). Alderson, on the other hand, a year the publication of the Crick report described a situation which did not seem to justify much optimism: 'In [English] schools pupils are regimented and involuntarily subjected to mass routines to a greater degree than they will be at any other time of life, unless they are in prison' (Alderson, 1999, p.138). In contradiction to the above description, nearly all schools' leaders and the vast majority of the staff in the 2003 NFER survey 'indicated, perhaps unsurprisingly, that the ethos and values of their school were generally positive', that there were good relationships between the staff and the students and that the students had a positive attitude towards the school (op. cit., p.37). More than half of the students though 'agreed that students have little say in how their schools are organised and run, and just over a quarter agreed that students are often consulted about the development of school policies' (ibid, p.97). Bearing in mind that the whole-school approaches were expected 'to

create a feeling [to students] that it is “our school” (QCA, 1998, p.36) the indications from the above studies had already raised an early alarm.

Conclusions

During the ten years of implementation of the current citizenship education programme in England significant progress has been achieved in terms of its recognisability by the school community. Within, however, an educational reality dictated by performativity and marketisation, the struggle of the subject for time and status is ongoing (Keating et al., 2009) and the embedment of its discourse into school life seems increasingly unlikely (Kakos, in press).

Concerns about the viability of Citizenship Education had been expressed even before its introduction as a statutory subject in the English curriculum and during the early years of its implementation. Some located these difficulties in the ‘anti-political culture’ and ‘the widespread doubts about political education’ in Britain which were too strong for ‘the coalition for citizenship education in schools’ to break (Fraser, 2000, p. 99) while others raised the issue of parents’ support towards the subject (Holden, 2004). This chapter, instigated by the increasing uncertainty about the future of the subject after the ongoing Curriculum Review in England, attempted to revisit some of the questions posed by those who had suggested that the greatest challenge for citizenship lie in the way that the subject was to be received by those assigned with the responsibility to implement it and its compatibility to educational discourse constructed within English schools. By doing so and by associating these questions with the ongoing battle for the embedment of the subject to the educational experience offered by schools I have tried to show that the introduction of citizenship education in England has not been based only on Crick’s revolutionary vision (Blunkett, 2008) but equally also on the disregard of some old warnings about the strength of the schools’ resistance to change (Waller, 1961).

For a programme which has been gaining support from an increasing number of westernised democracies with no entirely dissimilar educational systems (Davies and Issitt, 2005; Torney-Purta 2007, Leenders et al, 2008), the issues that are raised in this chapter and the lessons that have been learned from the English experience should be of great significance. Summarising these issues I suggest that the design and implementation of a programme for citizenship education should respond to at least four sets of key questions:

1. The question about contextual coherence, community and individualism:

What is the position of Citizenship Education in an individualistic educational discourse?
How does it affect this discourse and to which extent is it affected by it? What

opportunities exist for those participating in the programme to question and challenge this educational discourse? What possibilities are there for Citizenship Education to become a carrier of an educational concept which allows individuals to engage in meaningful discussions and develop a critical view of their environment and how likely is it to act as a part of the 'production' of a 'business-like' school in which individuals are taking the roles of the 'promoters' and the 'consumers'?

2. The question of relevance and flexibility:

How can a Citizenship Education programme allow individuals to bring their aspirations, social concepts and questions drawn from their life outside the school environment into the school? Can schools 'open up' due to citizenship education or are they too inflexible and too strongly attached to certain social and cultural groups' expectations and aspirations?

3. The question about attitudes:

What are the teachers' attitudes towards the introduction of the subject? How likely is it to consider it as an addition to their work and to the school programmes' overload and as an indication of their 'diminished autonomy instead of a task rooted in the nature of their profession? If it can be perceived as an essential element of their professional role, which aspect of this role is it likely to be associated with? Is it likely to become an area available for active exploration which will reveal values and inspire behaviours or will most likely be viewed as a subject from which only relevant knowledge has to be drawn and 'delivered' to the students?

4. The question about participatory pedagogy:

How are the 'inconveniences of participation' (Crick and Porter, 1978) handled by the teachers and the schools? What is the actual meaning that students' active participation acquires when this is reinforced in the classroom and by the school community? How is this viewed by teachers and students?

Interestingly, references to most of the issues raised by these questions can be detected in the pages of the report of the Advisory Group for Citizenship. In it, however, these seem to be associated with the methods that the schools need to adopt and with the changes that the subject was set to bring to modern schooling in England leading eventually to the overhaul of the English political culture. If Crick's major expectation is not to be fulfilled, this might be because the answer to the above questions, the changes in schooling advocated

by Crick and the transformation of the political culture should possibly be considered not as the objectives of citizenship education but the prerequisite for the programme to succeed.

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