


Essay

Training Teachers for and through Citizenship: Learning from Citizenship Experiences

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Abstract: This article illustrates how one university-based initial teacher education (ITE) course sought to develop links with civil society organisations to develop meaningful active citizenship education. The purpose of the project was to enhance citizenship education for ITE students preparing to become secondary school teachers. The article discusses recent developments in theorising teacher education 3.0 to ensure teachers are empowered to engage with a wide range of social and political challenges affecting young people and their communities. It then describes a small project that involved university staff and students in a local community organising project, bringing together a range of local community groups to work together for social justice. The article explores how student teachers working within that community organising group developed an increasingly politicised view of their role—as public sector workers in a politicised policy landscape; as potential agents for the promotion of democracy; and as political actors in their own right. The article concludes that these insights into practice illustrate the potential for a broader conception of teacher education, involving civil society partners beyond schools and universities.

Keywords: citizenship education; community organising; experiential learning; initial teacher education; teacher preparation

1. Introduction

1.1. Citizenship Education in Schools and Teacher Education

Citizenship education has been a national curriculum subject for 11–16 year olds in England since 2002. However, the low status of the subject (compared to other, more established curriculum subjects), the shortage of trained specialist teachers, and recent government ambivalence have meant that it is in a relatively weak position [1]. Nevertheless, there is a national curriculum programme of study for the subject and an examination in Citizenship Studies for (some) 16 year olds at the end of their secondary schooling, and each year a small number of teachers are trained as subject specialist teachers [2]. The curriculum establishes the aspiration that all young people should “experience and evaluate different ways that citizens can act together to solve problems and contribute to society” [3]. This presents a distinctive challenge for citizenship teachers as it requires them to develop pedagogic strategies that support young people to engage in, and learn from, real active citizenship activity [4]. This article discusses an experience in one university, where specialist citizenship teachers were being trained. It describes the context in which the work developed, outlines the activities student teachers engaged in, and identifies some of the potential benefits from adopting this approach. Significantly for this Special Edition, the article explores how initial teacher education (ITE) may usefully incorporate engagement with citizens and citizenship educators / facilitators beyond universities and schools.

1.2. Towards a New Paradigm for Citizenship and Teacher Education

A new discourse is developing around the notion of Teacher Development 3.0 in the United States and more recently in Europe and the UK that could, in time, encourage the inclusion of community-based learning in ITE programmes. Teacher Development 3.0 is conceived of as a response to the weaknesses of university-based 1.0 programmes and the challenger, non-university based 2.0 programmes such as Teach First in the UK and Match Education, Relay Graduate School of Education, High Tech High and Teach for America in the US. Kretchmar and Zeichner have suggested 1.0 programmes are defined by a pedagogical focus on learner-centred approaches, the privileging of academic knowledge over practitioner knowledge and a belief in holistic assessment forms [5] (p. 418). Independent 2.0 programmes have been established by private and charitable organisations as a response to what they perceive as a failure of 1.0 programmes to improve educational outcomes for children. These have been established in areas of high deprivation and they often pitch themselves as saviour organizations that believe in “no excuses” schooling.

Common in these 2.0 programmes is the emphasis on the technical act of teaching to deliver measurable performance and attainment outcomes for children; practitioner knowledge is therefore privileged over academic theory. Relay suggest their model “emphasizes the teaching and instructional leadership skills that have the greatest impact on student learning” [6] and Match Education’s Sposato Graduate School of Education claim they “create unusually effective rookie teachers and school leaders for low-income students” [7]. These programmes make use of models such as Doug Lemov’s highly influential *Teach Like a Champion* that emphasise the development of performance skills in the act of teaching [8].

In placing emphasis on the acquisition of a toolkit of techniques, student teachers may have few opportunities to learn, consider and reflect critically on broader questions about teaching and education in general. Where, for instance, is the space to challenge assumptions present in current curriculum or assessment design? Where are they encouraged to think deeply about the teacher’s role in society, especially since schools are ever more seen as a site to cure socio-economic inequality? Where do they consider their own biographies and how these might impact on their own developing teacher identity? And importantly, where might they learn how to recognise and respond to the diversity of local children in their schools? For Kretchmar and Zeichner:

The focus on tools without attention to the relational and sociocultural elements of teaching does not provide teacher candidates with sufficient understanding of the multidimensionality of learners required to appropriately select teaching methods [5] (p. 424).

Those proposing 3.0 programmes of ITE demand more than a third way blend of traditional holistic 1.0 and reformist technocratic 2.0 programmes. Instead, they believe there is a need to transform ITE so that teaching better meets the needs of children in an increasingly complex world. Global challenges such as climate change, migration, increasingly diverse communities and the effect of technological advances on work will impact societies. These transformations and their likely effect on populations will require high quality educational responses, most of which cannot be easily measured.

Teacher Education Exchange is a group of teachers, school leaders, teacher educators and researchers in the UK who support a move toward a 3.0 model. This group perceives an imperative for change emerging from recent political developments at home and abroad:

We are facing complex and divisive questions about who we are as a nation and who we want to become, post-Brexit. Globally, many economically developed countries are becoming more isolationist and trying to deal with polarising reactions from sections of their populations who do not believe their individual interests are being served by the status quo. Diversity in schools is a fact and it is a strength: it needs to be become an asset from which to extend a new civic discourse and voice about who we want to become as a society and a nation [9] (p. 14).

For Kretchmar and Zeichner, a 3.0 transformation necessitates a reconsideration of the connection between the structure and content of teacher education and the communities in which student teachers will practice. They advocate programmes that “prepare community teachers to work in solidarity with community and families . . . grounded in school and community expertise” [5] (pp. 427–428). In creating programmes that draw from community expertise, emphasise context and develop deep understanding in student teachers of the communities in which they teach, teacher education becomes part of wider social justice movements. Such an approach moves beyond simplistic mantras about celebrating diversity and engages seriously with the lived experiences of diverse communities.

So, proponents of 3.0 programmes see a need to educate highly proficient teachers who appreciate they have a role in supporting democracy and tackling inequality through practice that is responsive to the context of their communities. To do this, Zeichner, Payne and Brayko argue for a democratic epistemology of ITE that respects the knowledge contributions practitioners, academics and community members [10] (p. 125). Tokenistic approaches, such as inviting a community leader or activist in for an occasional workshop in a programme that has been created without their contribution would do little to move practice in ITE forward in the way proposed. Instead, participation in programme design by these wider groups would genuinely support the development of a new inclusive culture and shared programme ownership. At the same time as 3.0 programmes encourage teachers to engage with community partners, they also recognise the importance of reflecting on one’s own values and positionality, in order to search for alignment between one’s own identity, sense of purpose and values, and the kinds of professional activities one prioritises [11].

In 3.0 programmes, emphasis is given to the importance of place-based learning in ITE, including the opportunity to analyse the history, demographic nature and structural inequalities existing in the places where student teachers teach. Kretchmar and Zeichner [5], drawing on Zygmunt and Clark [12], provide an example of such place-based learning in Ball State University, where student teachers are immersed in an African-American neighbourhood and engage in courses held in a local community centre around the history, culture and neighbourhood narratives. They also pair students with mentors who support the students’ participation in a range of community activities during their teaching placements. Arguably this provides student teachers with an opportunity to adapt teaching to the reality of their learners’ experiences rather than their pre-conceptions and “situates their work amid related struggles for justice” [5] (pp. 428–429).

Warren and Mapp [13] make a strong case for community organising as an essential element in driving public school improvements in deprived communities. In doing so they also share a 3.0 outlook in which the engagement of teachers in their communities is an imperative for effective practice. In their book, *A Match on Dry Grass: Community Organising as a Catalyst for School Reform*, they provide a range of examples across the USA where effective community organising has developed the necessary collective leadership to drive reform through close relationships between educators, families and communities. In turn, this relationship building has impacted on the “instructional core” of schools because, while it is recognised that teachers’ pedagogic practice and subject knowledge are important, so too are relationships. Through richer relationships with students and their families and communities, teachers can make appropriate adaptations and connections with students’ lives in their teaching [13] (pp. 253–4).

2. Context—A Case Study of One Teacher Education Programme

2.1. *Developing a Course Philosophy to Promote Citizenship Education*

The 3.0 emphasis on student teachers learning from community engagement and seeing their practice as part of a wider struggle for social justice resonates with a project developed at London Metropolitan University. The project was undertaken within a specialist ITE programme preparing teachers of citizenship education in secondary schools (teaching 11–16 year olds). In England, the curriculum emphasis on learning through active citizenship experiences encourages teachers to

treat young people as citizens now, rather than seeing education solely as preparation for adulthood. The project we reflect on below aimed to provide the student teachers with an experience of active citizenship in a community organising network, and a directly linked opportunity to facilitate young people's own active citizenship projects in schools. The project thus aimed to enhance the student teachers' own experience of active citizenship and their ability to facilitate active citizenship for students in schools.

In order to set the scene for this specific project it is useful to sketch in some background about the ITE course. In the course the team of lecturers had committed to implement Michael Fullan's vision of the teacher as change agent [14]. Fullan argued that one must remain aware that teaching is at its core a moral profession, and that to enact one's moral commitment one must also prepare to become an agent of change. Fullan's model requires teachers to go beyond the narrow idea of technical competence in their work, and to commit to collaboration and inquiry as ways to create the capacity to build new knowledge within the profession. He also argues that teachers must become conscious of their vision for education, as this will provide them with the stability and certainty to judge the changing context and policy agendas. This resonates with Korthagen's [11] for deep "core reflection" which he relates to Kim and Greene's [15] account of how teachers align their personal and professional identities in order to achieve authenticity. The group of teacher educators at London Metropolitan felt that establishing their course along these lines required them to articulate a moral agenda for their work—it seemed impossible to engage with this approach without doing so. The starting point was the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the vision of education that flows from a commitment to this document. This provided the course with a normative framework which was based on the commonly referred to three principles of the UNCRC—Provision, Participation and Protection [16]. In reflecting on how these translated for student teachers we focused on processes of exclusion and inclusion in relation to provision rights; strategies for promoting student voice and consultation in relation to participation; and how to create a psychologically safe classroom, in relation to protection rights. This was taught explicitly through lectures and seminars, integrated into course documentation, and also informed a variety of projects, for example, before student teachers taught secondary students on their school placements (practicum), they were all taught by secondary students about what they wanted from a good lesson, to illustrate the importance of attending to student voice. Our approach was intended to introduce student teachers to experiences and debates, rather than promote such principles uncritically. Through these mechanisms the lecturers sought to establish a course which encouraged student teachers to resist narrow technicist views of teachers as mere subject experts, and instead to see themselves as professionals with a moral duty to challenge inequalities and injustices and to promote a broader realisation of children's rights [16,17].

Against this backdrop of taking teachers' broader moral role into account in the construction of the course, a number of lecturers also decided to become more directly involved in the local community where the university was based. This was felt to be especially important for the citizenship course, where community action was an explicit feature of the curriculum. The university's teacher education department signed up as a member institution of a local community organising network, Shoreditch Citizens. The following paragraphs outline the broad tradition of community organising before saying something about the particular appeal of this local group.

2.2. Connecting the Course to Community Organising Networks

Saul Alinsky developed his model of community organising primarily in Chicago during the 1930s. Alinsky's model has been influential in the development of community organising in the United States, with his training institute, the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF), becoming one of the key organising networks in the US [13] (p. 16). Alinsky's model of community organisation is based on attempting to empower working-class people, through developing their collective capacity to effect change. This is achieved through the building of "People's Organisations"; essentially networks of local and faith-based groups that respond to common issues through varying forms of action.

Alinsky's model can be seen to embody some key principles, broadly summarised as:

- The development of a more direct form of democracy that facilitates the participation of the masses in decision making and real power.
- An on-going process of dialogue between cross-community groups to identify problems and possible solutions in endeavours to bring about change.
- The facilitation of "native leadership", drawn from across the different groups represented, but guided by the will of the people.
- The deployment of effective (and somewhat professional) community organizers who can support and guide communities in establishing "People's Organisations" which mobilise a mass of people and encourage ever growing participation by people. This reflects the view that effective power flows from strength in numbers.

Through community organising, Alinsky saw benefits for the poor and wider society alike. Community organising develops the skills of democratic participation that Alinsky saw as an important end in itself, irrespective of the issues that may affect communities in different ways:

After all, the real democratic program is a democratically minded people—a healthy, active, participating, interested, self-confident people who, through their participation and interest, become informed, educated and above all develop faith in themselves, their fellow men and the future [18] (p. 55).

Developing political literacy through mass participation could be motivating and intellectually, socially and economically rewarding. Alinsky argued that People's Organisations should become a medium of political education, but this situation could only be achieved if people could see the relevance of learning about the issues in the context of their own lives [18] (p. 165). Political literacy should be achieved through action and would develop a cycle of knowledge, skills and dispositional development that would help communities to achieve power and change.

Shoreditch Citizens was founded in 2010 and is part of Citizens UK, a national network of community organisations based upon the Alinskyite model. Shoreditch Citizens has trained community leaders from each of its member groups to organise a series of campaigns to improve the local area in areas such as poor housing, crime and unemployment. Shoreditch is a small area in north London, close to the university, which has high rates of unemployment, poor housing, child poverty and crime, and low rates of educational achievement. In recent years the cheap housing stock and commercial space, coupled with the area's proximity to the City of London, has led to a rapid growth in bars, restaurants and boutique shops. This has not solved the social problems for local families, and although the influx of new money has led to a degree of gentrification and business investment, this often seems to have happened around the established community rather than with them or for them.

The Teacher Education Department at London Metropolitan University joined as a member organisation alongside residents' associations, churches, mosques and several local schools and colleges. As part of our membership, a number of the staff and citizenship student teachers participated in the following activities:

- Attended local organisation meetings and public assembly meetings, fulfilling their commitment to mobilise support from our community.
- Attended training workshops to prepare them as community leaders.
- Joined actions / meetings to work on specific campaigns, including direct participation in a citizens' action outside of the local council offices to demand better services for residents in poor quality housing.
- Staff with expertise in citizenship education worked alongside local schools to develop related curriculum programmes to embed the work of Shoreditch Citizens in the schools.

Staff aimed to integrate these activities into the student teachers' experience of their course, not treat them as an extra bolt-on activity. One way to do this was to ensure that the experience and

learning were captured in a formal assignment, so that students had time and incentive to reflect on the experiences, and so that they could gain credits for this valuable work. The course programme included a school-based research project, which led to Masters level credits, and which was designed to be used flexibly by students to explore issues of interest to them and / or of relevance to their school settings. This provided a formal location for this project and encouraged the students to think about this as a form of experiential education, where their experience spanned their roles as citizens and citizenship educators. In addition to their regular actions within the group, some of the student teachers were placed in two schools, which were also members of the Shoreditch Citizens network, for their teaching placements. This led to two additional activities. First, student teachers were placed in Shoreditch schools to work with school students as they developed their own active citizenship projects. Second, teachers from Shoreditch Citizens schools also made contributions to the teacher education lecture programme at the university.

This provided a particularly rich learning experience because the activity itself was inherently political, and because the student teachers could experience a range of roles—at times they were operating as teachers with a set of fairly traditional expectations about roles, authority and curriculum structures, but at other times they were acting alongside school students as peers. The rest of this article draws on conversations with the student teachers and a review of their assignments to reflect on the insights emerging from this work.

2.3. Constructing a Case Study

This article did not arise from a pre-planned research project, rather it has emerged from our reflections on informal conversations with the student teachers, their evaluations, and the assignments they completed. The authors were both lecturers at the university, one was the course leader for the citizenship programme, and both participated in the Shoreditch Citizens network activities and taught on the ITE programme. There were 15 student teachers on the citizenship programme, all of whom participated in the community organising activities, but only four were able to have direct experience of teaching in a school that was a full member of Shoreditch Citizens. Therefore, although our reflections on the project were informed by all the students, in the discussion below we draw on the assignments of the four students who taught for three months in a member school as they had more sustained opportunities to teach students within the context of Shoreditch Citizens. The following discussion is therefore offered as a professional reflection based on these experiences and, as such, seeks to provide a “vicarious experience” [19] for others contemplating how to promote citizenship within the confines of an ITE programme. Given that reflection is an essential element of experiential learning [11], we draw on several opportunities for reflection that were available to the students. First, the students on placement met with staff several times to discuss the placement and to reflect on issues arising. These meetings consisted of formal staff visits to the placement schools to reflect on progress and challenges, as well as less formal conversations whilst all members attended Shoreditch Citizens meetings and public events. Students were also required to record reflections in their weekly files during the school placement and to complete an assignment in which they reflected on their placement experience, in relation to the relevant literature and London Citizen training. Finally, these students were also able to share their thoughts about the placement at the end of their training year, in the final course evaluation, which encouraged students to identify strengths and areas for development in relation to their training experiences.

3. Findings

The notion of community is central to any conception of community organising, and it is also central to the earlier definition of ITE 3.0, but that does not mean it is amenable to easy definition. In the context of this project, students and staff conceived of themselves as members of the university community and the Shoreditch Citizens network; they also discussed their professional identities within a broader community of practice and student teachers began to appreciate their roles within the

school communities where they taught and in the broader communities the schools served. Community in these senses slips between an imagined polity, a professional network, a neighbourhood, an ethnic, cultural, religious or class bond, and a deliberate project to build social capital between people so they come to see themselves in community with others. The rest of this article considers three aspects of the student teachers' experiences, first their emerging sense of themselves as actors in the political landscape of social policy; second their engagement with the democratic role of citizenship education; and third their sense of themselves as political actors in the micro-politics of school. These combine to create a sense of the impact of this small project, and to illustrate the potential of such community-based collaborations.

3.1. *The Teacher as a Political Agent in a Politicised Educational Landscape*

Sometimes ITE projects such as this are framed as service learning projects and the challenge is to ensure the service experience contributes to a greater *political* understanding, rather than merely being an interesting opportunity to help others [20]. The assignments produced by these student teachers illustrate how these activities enabled them to engage critically and creatively with policy. Their reflections create the distinct impression that being a citizenship teacher, committed to a transformational and maximal notion of citizenship [21,22], provides them with a lens through which to interpret policy. The student teachers are engaging in critical reinterpretations and re-representations of policy to maintain a coherent sense of themselves as citizenship education professionals.

At the time of the project there was much talk of the government's Big Society agenda, which provided a broader context in which to understand the role of citizenship education. The Big Society project had implications for a range of public services and revolved around the central idea that civil society should take on a more active role in providing for a range of social needs, which would allow a diminished role for the (inefficient) state, and create a greater sense of social solidarity and mutual responsibility. On a positive reading, this policy aimed to generate new capacity for citizen action through cooperative and community organisations but it was seen by critics as conservative cover for budget cuts and a diminution of the state [23]. It clearly had implications for how the government (and the student teachers) came to see the role of citizenship education.

One student teacher, David, identified this as an opportunity:

It could be said that for the Big Society to succeed at a local level, then citizenship education would be vital. Not only does the Big Society have links with active citizenship, but it can also be said to have links to the concept of community cohesion, which is part of one of the key concepts on the citizenship programme of study [the national curriculum] (David).

However, the students' responses were not entirely opportunistic, seizing the policy as a justification for their subject. Charlotte, for example, engaged more critically, identifying the possibility that the Big Society could be:

Merely a tokenistic promotion of communitarian visions . . . [which] may fall short of its ambitious aims to transform people to change their society (Charlotte).

Reflecting the broader political debates about this policy initiative, Charlotte went on to point out that the government's advocacy of the Big Society in the place of Big Government, may be a cover for cuts.

However, these critical engagements with the policy context went beyond mere scepticism that a centre-right party would genuinely embrace communitarian ideas, and students explored the ideas embodied in the notion of the Big Society in further detail. Charlotte discussed a book by a Conservative Member of Parliament Jesse Norman [24] which attempted to identify a Conservative philosophical tradition in which the Big Society could be rooted. She cited Edmund Burke's (1790) [25] description of the "little platoons" in society, which maintain an ordered civil society, and related this idea to the community and faith groups she had encountered through Shoreditch Citizens. This was valuable in

that it showed how confidently she was able to use competing philosophical accounts of her experiences to explore the complementary dimensions within what are often seen as contrasting philosophical traditions (in this case contrasting Burke and Alinsky and finding common ground).

The students began to develop a personal vision of themselves as citizenship teachers which was informed by a political sense of the role and the nature of citizenship education, not just by narrow notions of personal commitment or teacher professionalism. As such, they were beginning to locate their personal vision in broader ideological models of citizenship, developing what Kelchtermán's has called a "personal interpretative framework" through which teachers come to understand and give meaning to their work [26]. Comparing these diverse philosophical influences was also useful in helping them to articulate the tensions in such free and easy borrowing across political beliefs, and this exploration of tensions led the students to discuss the difference between conceptions of the "good" citizen (compliant) and the "active" citizen (politically informed and critical). This reflects a distinction introduced by Crick [27], who was influential in establishing citizenship education in England. Echoing his analysis, the student teachers frequently argued that the Conservative interpretation tended towards notions of the "good" citizen, with an expectation of social conformity, personal responsibility, philanthropy and charity in one's local community. There was an understanding that the Alinsky tradition embraced a much more radical model of "active" citizenship, in which the more overt focus on power and leadership could "potentially create a powerful political movement that could challenge the state" (Charlotte). This was a recurrent theme in the assignments, as the student teachers advocated a "transformational" [21] approach to citizenship education in which it is not enough for young people to participate—they should also be "aware of the political significance of their engagement with their local communities" (Charlotte). In clarifying this distinction David argued for a transformational model of genuine active citizenship, informed by Freire [28] (arguing against the banking model of education), Alinsky [18] (arguing for community action rooted in real-life problem solving) and Hart [29] (arguing against tokenistic forms of participation) and contrasted this with the Big Society rhetoric where "simply giving people the chance to volunteer and 'do good' is not sufficient" (David).

Seeing oneself as an agent of change in Fullan's terms requires, to some extent, a sense of the teacher as a political agent, and these reflections illustrate how the student teachers were able to see their role as teachers within a broader political project, and to draw critically on a range of theoretical perspectives to frame their own responses. This is a powerful dimension to the learning linked to this experiential learning project.

3.2. *The Teacher as an Agent to Promote Democracy*

The student teachers borrowed across from the practices of community organising to the different context of school-based citizenship education to clarify their thinking about the relationship between the ends (enhanced democracy) and the means (experiential learning). The assumption which allowed them to do so was that the underlying commitment of both is to promote transformational and active citizenship. In these assignments, there is evidence that the student teachers engaged in a reflexive process, in which they were willing to reflect critically on the balance between teacher authority and student autonomy in the pursuit of active citizenship education.

Several students wrote about the relationship between democratic action and learning about democracy and this theme emerged clearly in David's work, where he wrote at length about involvement in direct action with Shoreditch Citizens. David reflected on this as a positive example of the organisers setting manageable and achievable goals which enabled participants to achieve some short term success, and he also reflected on how that contributed to a "feeling of power and community cohesion." This exemplifies the value of the experiential dimension to this project for the student teachers. David had already spoken about community cohesion as a curriculum concept, but here he was able to say what it felt like to experience it, and later to discuss how he could transfer this learning to his own teaching. In his conclusions he returned to the discussion of the affective dimension, and asserted how important it was that his students "feel they had some ownership over the project."

There can be a tendency in citizenship textbooks to present a slightly abstracted and simplified account of active citizenship. In textbooks letters to MPs are read and have an influence on decisions; petitions elicit responses; and charities achieve their aims. By contrast, the student teachers' real participation in a community organisation enabled them to reflect on more realistic strategies that might form part of an education programme for active citizenship. David, for example, argued for a full-scale appropriation of the community organising training model by citizenship teachers when developing active citizenship with school students, whilst Charlotte chose to look on Alinsky as a source of ideas for her own selection of strategies. This included the use of small "stunts" to maintain pressure; using a variety of tactics to keep attention; fighting local, winnable battles; and finding small achievable goals to help increase the motivation of community members.

Another student, Dean, explored the methods advocated by Alinsky in a little more detail, and quotes Alinsky in the following extract from his assignment:

The organiser is to develop skills in the manipulative technique of asking 'loaded questions' designed to elicit particular responses and to steer the organisation's decision-making process in the direction which the organiser prefers [30] (p. 91).

This issue of the precise balance of power between the participants and the community organiser mirrors the balance that needs to be struck between the agency of the student and the teacher. Unlike community organisers, however, teachers start this relationship with the assumption of authority over their students. This is a perennial issue in all forms of democratic education, namely the problematic balance between the teacher's desire to cede authority whilst maintaining a measure of classroom control [31]. The risk arises that well-intentioned teachers create the illusion of pupil control, whilst in reality indulging in manipulation and tokenism [32]. The student teachers grappled with these issues and took some subtly different approaches. On the one hand Charlotte noted that some level of manipulation or coercion would be necessary at all levels:

[The Prime Minister] will have to consider the possibility that people will not desire involvement with their community, and that motivation may have to be cultivated, and competency enhanced to encourage further participation in society.

On the other hand, David saw his experiences in school as confirming that those children who chose a project to work on felt empowered and subsequently were more motivated. Both Charlotte and David reflected on how the degree of choice seemed to be related to the level of student motivation. They saw the participants' free choice of issues for attention as a positive dimension to community organisation, which teachers should strive to replicate in their teaching. However, Dean identified this as a problematic area within Alinsky's methodology, and thus argued that this is a clear area where the teacher must reject Alinsky's model in favour of more genuinely democratic models.

This highlights issues around finding the right balance between the teacher's authority and the learner's autonomy. The balance between these two factors depends on the context and the teacher's understanding of that context, and this opens up the possibility that even relatively inexperienced student teachers can begin to critique prevailing assumptions and shift the balance in favour of developing students' agency [33]. It also reflects McCowan's [34] discussion of citizenship education as "prefigurative" in the sense that it does not create democratic practices in society at large, but it acts as an induction into forms of democratic participation which are better than those generally available in society, and which prefigure a more democratic future. In this sense the teacher is helping to ensure young people feel what it is like to participate in active citizenship projects, in the hope that it will encourage them to seek (or create) further opportunities, and enable them to engage with those opportunities when they do arise. This is subtler than simply assuming a direct causal relationship between citizenship education and citizenship as a social practice.

This section has illustrated how the project provided the student teachers with an opportunity to engage with the complicated and contentious debates about the objectives of citizenship education in a

democracy, and to develop constructive approaches towards outlining an appropriate pedagogy. It has also demonstrated how, despite sharing the same experiences in Shoreditch Citizens and in school, the students developed their own understanding of their role and the nature of citizenship education. This furthers the argument that the project enabled them to develop their own vision and sense of professional identity.

3.3. *The Teacher as a Political Agent in the Micro-Politics of School*

Finally, the student teachers used the project to make sense of their practice within schools as complex institutions. It is important for student teachers, especially those qualifying to teach citizenship, to understand how schools do and do not promote citizenship education in its broadest sense. A mantra that has accompanied the development of citizenship in English schools is that it is a “subject and more than a subject” [2] and several authors have addressed the ways in which school processes often undermine the very objectives promoted in citizenship classes, for example by marginalising student voice, or promoting tokenistic forms of participation [32]. In addition, a large-scale evaluation of citizenship in England’s schools has concluded that issues such as timetable time, rigorous assessment, and the employment of subject specialists are the biggest determining factors of the success of the subject [35]. This implies that new teachers need to understand the whole school dimension, and seek to influence whole school decisions, if they are going to genuinely promote high quality citizenship education.

The assignments indicated critical awareness of the intrinsic link between managerial decisions over curriculum provision and the impact on pedagogy and outcomes. Rachel, another student teacher, highlighted the impact that the lack of curriculum time and subject expertise had on high quality outcomes at her placement school, suggesting that “it is difficult to develop and maintain a strategy when they have little interaction and guidance from their teacher” (Rachel). However, there was also recognition that discrete time for citizenship did not automatically improve student engagement and outcomes, particularly when pedagogic decisions may lead to students being confused about the link between actively participating in society and learning citizenship. In this regard the student teachers all highlighted and critiqued the use of the Youth and Philanthropy Initiative [36] as a key mechanism for delivering active citizenship in another school:

My fellow researchers shared concerns that the majority of pupils in both workshops were not engaged in YPI and failed to see how it could help them contribute to their community. This could be in part due to the fact that YPI focuses on charity and raising awareness ... rather than considering how the skills they are developing could be extended to tackling issues in their community (Rachel).

The student teachers recognized that effective citizenship education can only be achieved when teachers are able to maximize the links between the practices of active engagement and the development of essential conceptual and contextual knowledge. This also highlights their understanding that grand policy and curriculum objectives rely ultimately on interpretation by the school, the department and finally by the classroom teacher; itself a process fraught with difficulties in which policy is distorted, reinterpreted or misinterpreted [1].

4. Conclusions

The discussion above indicates that the student teachers’ participating in this community organising experience benefitted in three ways. First, it allowed the student teachers the opportunity to engage with and explore policy in practice and, crucially, to identify some of the complexities for schools working with community organisations to effect real change for citizens in a locality. Second, it allowed the student teachers to develop their own wider citizenship subject and pedagogic knowledge, crucially in the area of active citizenship, which is an on-going challenge. Third, and in an echo of Alinsky’s understanding of the empowering and educative role of active participation in society, our student teachers developed their competencies as active citizens; learning both through

democracy and their own professional practice. As well as the specific contribution this represents to the training of citizenship teachers, this project provides a useful model for other teacher educators in England to develop as part of ITE 3.0, which seeks to root teachers within communities in terms of their practices and their social relations. By developing opportunities for experiential learning which are overtly political and which are specifically rooted in issues identified by local residents, our student teachers were able to experience their own sense of political agency, and by closely aligning this with their own teaching experience, they were able to transfer this learning directly to their own teaching. This provides a powerful model for integrating experiential learning through active citizenship into an ITE programme and avoiding “bolting it on” as an additional activity.

We also have to be realistic in our closing comments and recognise that there are two significant barriers to extending this work. The first relates to the opportunities available in schools, where community organising and active citizenship projects are far from common. This has been a perennial problem for teacher education in citizenship [2], and it is significant that even in an established university programme, there was only capacity to train four student teachers in a community organising school. Whilst encouraging critical reflection means student teachers can potentially learn from any context, it is undoubtedly the case that this is easier if the school is actually consciously trying to develop the kind of practices in which we are interested. The second barrier relates to the prevailing culture in ITE, where there is pressure to conform to external quality assurance procedures and standardised assessment systems, and staff who wish to develop these alternative or additional experiences are likely to come up against countervailing pressures to standardise processes rather than diversify them. This means that such activities are likely to lead to extra work, which detracts from the main activities staff are expected to perform. Whilst this does not preclude such developments, it does mean they remain susceptible to the issue that commonly limits citizenship education—that it is seen as relatively marginal, and remains an option for those with an interest, rather than an essential element of professional practice [37].

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