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'We don't learn democracy, we live it!':

Consulting the Pupil Voice in Scottish Schools

Abstract

As the education for citizenship agenda continues to impact on schools, there is a need to begin the discussion around examining the kind of initiatives that can push it forward. In Scotland the proposals should, it is argued, permeate the curriculum throughout the school. Yet there is the fear that the responsibility of all can become the responsibility of none. This paper examines, through case study research carried out by the authors, initiatives in schools designed to take forward the citizenship agenda in the light of children's rights. The first two relate to firstly the impact of pupil councils in primary schools and secondly the impact of discussing controversial issues in the primary classroom. The third outlines the impact on values and dispositions of developing more participatory, democratic practice in the classroom. The paper concludes by calling for both more initiatives of this type and more evaluation of their worth.

Introduction

The renewed interest in education for citizenship was reflected in the 1998 publication of the Advisory Group's report, *'Education for Citizenship and the Teaching of Democracy in Schools',* which led to the inclusion of citizenship as a compulsory part of the national curriculum of England and Wales. This was set

against a backdrop of political and constitutional development, including the introduction of the 1998 Human Rights Act, a growing interest in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the establishment of a Scottish Parliament and a Welsh Assembly and the creation of an assembly and elected mayor for London (Osler and Starkey, 2001; Deuchar, 2004; Maitles and Deuchar, 2004). In wider philosophical terms, perhaps the renewed interest in the citizenship agenda has emerged from a more general renewal of interest in values in education and also the perceived need for a more participative approach to school organisation. This has emerged as a reaction towards the worry (or, some would argue, near moral panic) surrounding young people's apparent disengagement with formal politics and alleged alienation from social and community values (Lasch, 1995; Totterdell, 2000; Potter, 2002).

Promoting the Pupil Voice

With reference to the UN Convention on Children's Rights, articles 12 and 14 are particularly relevant in relation to promoting the pupil voice. As such, article 12 recommends that pupils gain the right to 'freely express an opinion in all matters affecting him/her and to have that opinion taken into account', while article 14 promotes the right to meet together and to 'form associations.' In Scotland, recommendations for developing education for active and responsible citizenship have been generated by Learning and Teaching Scotland (LTScotland, 2002, p.7), who present an overall goal for citizenship in schools which reflects the need for 'thoughtful and responsible participation' in public life and which may find

expression through 'creative and enterprising approaches to issues and problems.' A key theme underpinning LTScotland's (2002) vision is that young people are citizens now, not citizens in waiting. This has been further developed by the proposals in *A Curriculum for Excellence* (Curriculum Review Group, 2004) which highlights the development of Responsible Citizens as one of its four key capacities that schools should develop in pupils. Thus, it is felt children need to be regarded as active, competent and vocal members of society and that schools need to embody the values of justice, freedom and autonomy within their institutional practice (White, 1999; Burke and Grosvenor, 2003). There is, indeed, an increasing recognition that pupils need to have a say in how they learn, and many schools have responded to this by establishing pupil forums, such as councils.

It seems also that, in common with the rest of the population, young people are becoming increasingly aware of, and engaged in, single-issue politics. In particular, many children are intensely interested in issues connected with environmental sustainability, and many primary schools have responded to this through the establishment of eco-schools committees and a focus on development education programmes. However, media images in a global age also allow children to become exposed to many more controversial social, political and humanitarian issues than ever before, and evidence has illustrated that pupils are keen to discuss such issues and that a programme on citizenship education needs to respond to this (Maitles and Deuchar, 2004). Indeed, the events organised in July 2005 in connection with the 'Make Poverty History' campaign have led to many primary and secondary-aged pupils becoming actively engaged in community fundraising campaigns for the

African cause. Some schools have established forums to respond to pupils' strong views about the need to wage a war against poverty and to enable them to reflect critically upon social and political developments in the media (Deuchar, 2005).

However, if pupils learn that they only experience this participative approach in isolated situations, there can be a problem of perceived hypocrisy (Covell and Howe, 2001; Deuchar, 2005). It has thus been suggested that pupils need to have a genuine say in matters relating to learning and teaching within each and every classroom, as a means of involving them in the full democratic process.

The Challenges

Alongside this recognition of the need for democratic, active forms of learning, it is fair to say that the structures and pattern of relationships in schools have probably changed less than they should have in order to grant this type of autonomy to pupils and to convince them that their right to have a say is genuinely respected (Baginsky and Hannam, 1999; Burke and Grosvenor, 2003). This gives rise to the thorny issue (for schools) of whether democracy can be developed in authoritarian structures (Maitles and Deuchar, 2004; 2004a).

Pupil councils have, indeed, been long recognised as an effective vehicle for enabling the expression of thoughtful and active citizenship. Dobie (1998) argues that these councils can play a huge role in the process of encouraging pupils to have a sense of ownership in the life of the school community. Baginsky and Hannam

(1999, p.iii) develop this further when they argue that the use of pupil councils can be a very effective means for signalling to students that they are respected and recognised as active contributors. Further, Taylor and Johnson (2002, p.2) argue that, in its widest sense, pupil councils can contribute to the development of pupils' social and moral responsibility, community involvement and political literacy. However, it is essential that pupil councils are represented as the centre and symbol of school-wide democratic practice (Baginsky and Hannam, 1999, p.iii). There is a danger that the management style of the pupil council results in pupils merely being 'consulted and informed' or, at worst, experiencing tokenistic forms of participatory practice where they seem to have a voice but where the school hierarchy remains unchallenged (Baginsky and Hannam, 1999; Dobie, 1998; Hannam, 1998; Hart, 1997; Lister, 2001; Mills, 2002; Rowe, 2000) .

In terms of discussing controversial issues and engaging in decisions related to matters of learning and teaching in individual classrooms, the evidence of good practice appears patchy (Maitles and Deuchar, 2004). Research suggests some tokenistic practice, where school staff pay lip-service to pupils' suggestions or where serious issues are sidestepped. This may be related to the continued existence of school authoritarianism (Osler and Starkey, 2002; Covell and Howe, 2001) and/or the pressures associated with the attainment agenda and prescriptive curriculum guidelines (Nicol, 2000).

The Research

Our research began with the premise that the developing focus on active and responsible citizenship may be channelled into practice via three main vehicles: through the creation of meaningful pupil councils, the discussion of controversial social and political issues that are of interest to pupils and the cultivation of a more participatory and democratic culture in the classroom. While previous evidence has suggested challenges in the effective implementation of all three of these vehicles, our purpose was to highlight good practice while still identifying the related difficulties. This is best explained through reference to three individual case studies, the main content of which is outlined in the sections that follow. However, we must point out that we do not examine why the schools in our case studies adopted innovative and radical approaches to promoting the student voice. The conditions which might help or hinder this will need further investigation.

Case Study A: Primary School Pupil Councils

As part of a larger research project examining the connections between enterprise in education and education for citizenship, we drew upon a small sample of five primary schools which were known to have well-established pupil councils. The schools were selected from different local education authorities and were set within a range of socio-economic backgrounds. While several of the schools were set within highly affluent and more rural areas, others were located within socially deprived, inner-city settings. In addition, pupil populations varied in their ethnicity; while one

school contained a high majority of ethnic-minority pupils, others consisted of predominantly white pupil populations.

We were involved in visiting one pupil council meeting in each school, where a semi-structured observation schedule was used for gathering data under key headings, based on categories used in previous research by Taylor and Johnson (2002). The aims were to explore the way in which pupil members represented the school population, the type of type of items discussed and style of interaction. Follow-up interviews with teacher-leaders and discussion groups with council members and non-members enabled us to examine pupils' and teachers' perceived aims and learning gains. Since pupils were to be active participants in the research, local education authority and headteacher consent was followed up by seeking the permission of parents to allow pupils to be observed and interviewed. In addition, individual pupils were informed of the nature of the research in advance.

Topics for Debate and Discussion

The most popular topics were related to the school playground where pupils were involved in discussion about new recreational games, ways of improving the playground and making it more attractive and environmentally friendly. Their discussions also gravitated towards the more controversial area of social conflict, with issues relating to bullying and ways of improving the quality of co-operation in the playground on the agenda. In addition, pupils were also often involved in discussing ways of improving school amenities and for creating opportunities for

fundraising. In one school, pupils were involved in drawing up a statement of 'shared values' in the local community, working alongside teachers, parents, community members and other pupil committees in school. This later formed the basis of the school's new 'code of conduct', drawn up collaboratively by pupils and teachers. In this same school, some members of the council were also members of other school committees such as the 'eco-school committee' or the 'gardening committee' and those pupils increased liaison opportunities by giving oral reports of the committees' progress to the pupil council.

Pupil Representation

There appeared to be representation from all year groups in all councils, although the nature of this representation varied. While some meetings consisted of the meeting of representatives from P1 to P7 classes (ages 5-11), others brought together a range of pupils from primary 4-7 only (ages 8-11), whereby some children liaised with infant classes and attempted to represent the younger pupils' views. This was achieved through older pupils regularly visiting an allocated infant class in order to gauge their views and opinions on school issues and to provide feedback from the outcomes of meetings. Teacher-leaders described the procedures involved in the election of members to council, and the democratic processes involved in the conduct of meetings. In some schools, members were elected via more informal means whereby individual class members voted for a particular pupil to represent them. In other cases, schools had established a more formal election process where pupils wrote manifestos and ran proper election campaigns. In such cases, pupils voted for

candidates in polling booths during a set election day. Pupils tended to be prepared for their role as councillor through informal discussion with the headteacher or by simply attending the first meeting and being introduced to the expectations via a briefing by the teacher-leader involved.

Facilitating Styles

Although a teacher-leader (usually the headteacher, but sometimes a class teacher) was always present, pupils generally appeared to be free to express opinions, although professional courtesies were upheld via the use of formal agendas. During meetings, teacher-leaders tended to guide pupils in their thinking and encouraged them to reflect upon the feasibility of pupil suggestions and responses. Although the pupils often appeared to take the lead in discussions, teacher-leaders also made suggestions and on rare occasions blocked pupil ideas on grounds of health and safety. An example of this was where pupils were keen to have swings erected in the school playground, but the headteacher had to point out to the pupils the dangers that may be involved and the reasons why the idea lacked feasibility. Observation of teacher-leaders' facilitating styles during meetings illustrated varying degrees of democratic participation. Some teachers tended to direct the discussion through providing information or making suggestions themselves; others were more driven by the pupil voice and used pupil suggestion boxes as the basis of the whole meeting's agenda. Decisions were often made by collective agreement, or occasionally by means of a vote if disagreement arose. These decisions were fed back to the wider school via school assemblies or smaller class meetings. In all

cases, minutes were recorded by pupil members although the methods for allocating this particular responsibility varied; in some schools one pupil acted as 'secretary' all year, while in others the duty was rotated around the older members of the pupil council.

Staff Commitment

Teacher-leaders indicated varying degrees of commitment from teachers in the wider school towards the functions of the pupil council: although some teachers were very supportive, others tended to provide only a tokenistic backing or took longer to be convinced by the benefits of the council:

> Staff have tended to be supportive, unless it infringes on what they are doing. (School 4)

> Not every member of staff is committed … some find it difficult to cope with … some staff feel threatened by children saying there's another way to do it. (School 2)

Our interviewees thought that teachers in their schools were generally recognising and celebrating the pupil voice and encouraging pupil-led agendas. However, they were also clear that not all teaching staff shared this breadth of vision. Whilst there were minor variations in terms of commitment to pupil councils in our schools, there was a general feeling that pupil councils were a 'good thing'.

Pupil Commitment

Teacher-leaders described the benefits and learning gains acquired by pupil members in terms of increased pupil confidence, pride, achievement and recognition. In terms of the wider school, teachers generally felt that other pupils who were not members of the pupil council tended to respect the decisions of councillors and appreciate their work. However, in one school the pupils in general, as opposed to the councillors, were more cynical about the council claiming that:

> To tell you the truth….they haven't actually done anything ... they haven't done anything involving us … it would be better if I was in it … there were a couple of votes for me.

> We don't have a decision anyway … I went to a pupil council meeting once because the girl … she was off … so I went in … and I never knew any of the stuff that was going on … not any of it.

When asked which parts of the pupil council they found most enjoyable, many council members related this to the pride they had experienced in seeing school improvement as a result of their decisions, and the way in which other pupils looked up to them with respect and appreciation. When asked about what they had learned in the pupil council, the most common type of skills highlighted by pupils included discussion, listening to others, taking responsibility, representing other people's views and teamwork skills. .

While many of the pupils in the wider school populations who were not members of the pupil council felt that the most appropriate people had been elected and that they were doing a good job and could be trusted, others were disappointed about not being elected or felt that the council was tokenistic. Three examples here represent a common view that was emerging from two schools:

> In our class … they voted for somebody that they thought would be funny and somebody who's popular … they just voted for a popular person. (School 4)

> People just voted for their best friends. (School 4)

> Once when we came in this room to decide a fundraising thing…they asked us what we wanted, then they never did anything else about it. (School 3)

In one other school, pupils felt strongly that the membership of the council should be changed throughout the year to give other pupils a chance of engaging in the decision-making process.

The evidence emerging from these case study schools indicates that pupils were presented with a regular opportunity to research and discuss social, political and community issues, and they were encouraged to contribute to debates and be mindful of other people's values. Although the nature and style of consultation varied (with some practice more pupil-led than others), it was evident that all primary councils

represented a living model of democracy with opportunities for pupils to channel their own aspirations and give a voice to the school community through transparent and egalitarian means. Where councils worked alongside a range of other pupil committees and acted at the centre of school-wide participative practice, the focus on democracy appeared to be at its strongest (reflecting previous suggestions by Baginsky and Hannam, 1999). However, like real examples of social democracy, it seemed that many councillors had a higher regard for the value of the council than did non-council members. Indeed, the data suggests that, just as young people in society may be disillusioned because of their perceptions that politicians are uninterested in them, this may also be the case for the pupil populations in some schools (Maitles, 2005; Potter, 2002; Tisdall, 2003).

Case Study B: The Iraq War

This second case study emerged again from a wider project examining the connections between enterprise in education and education for citizenship, as described above. During the analysis of pupils' written responses to questionnaires, we noted from an early stage of the study that it was fairly common to find reference to political figures in primary-aged pupils' descriptions of enterprising people. Of those mentioned, the most common were undoubtedly Tony Blair and George Bush. While pupils felt that these figures were enterprising in terms of being brave, courageous, able to take risks and able to lead a nation, they felt that the more responsible and caring behaviour that they also associated with enterprise was

lacking in these leaders. In one particular school there seemed to be strong views surrounding these political leaders and the issues surrounding the Iraq War in general.

The views expressed by this small sample of P7 pupils (aged 11) displayed clear evidence of their emerging knowledge and understanding, skills, aptitudes and values, all of which relate well to the current citizenship education agenda. With reference to the Advisory Group on Citizenship's (1998) 'essential elements' for preparing pupils for citizenship in adult life, the pupils were clearly displaying a rich knowledge of topical and contemporary issues at international levels, as well as an awareness of the nature of democracy and the way in which the future of Iraq could and should be decided. Their concern for humanitarian issues was clearly reflecting a growing understanding of the nature of diversity, social conflict and a concern for the common good. In addition, their reflective comments about the underlying causes of the war were illustrating their ability to engage in a critical approach to the evidence presented via the mass media. These pupils appeared to have a strong concern for human dignity, equality and the need to resolve conflict diplomatically, and were increasingly able to recognise forms of manipulation that may be used by political leaders in their attempts to justify the need for war.

Through follow-up discussions with the pupils' P7 class teacher, it emerged that these particular pupils were regularly encouraged to bring in news stories that were of interest to them as part of their weekly 'International News Day' session. The discussions provided a forum for pupil to express aspects of their political interest, and demonstrate their strong engagement in world affairs, often at a very mature

level. The main philosophical view underpinning the class teacher's approach appeared to be the need for openness and creating an ethos of encouragement for pupils to express their opinions, often in relation to quite controversial issues. Among many of the issues for which she had noted particular pupil interest in recent years, she highlighted teenage pregnancy, the use and misuse of drugs, animal rights and the debate about the teaching of religion in schools as being the most common. During the year of our study, she had noted a strong interest developing among pupils about issues surrounding terrorism and the Iraq War. Thus, it must be acknowledged that outside influences, in particular the media, parents and peers, were having a serious impact on these pupils. Under these circumstances, it seemed entirely natural to this teacher that she engaged the pupils about these issues.

Although this teacher clearly encouraged pupils to express their opinions and saw the importance of demonstrating the value of these opinions to children, she also took up the stance as advocated by Ashton and Watson (1998) of 'critical affirmation' in allowing pupils to develop their arguments. The relationship, trust and respect between the pupils and the teacher becomes central in such an approach. Although proven to be highly successful, this teacher felt that this approach was not as common among other teachers as it should be. Through her own experience, she had observed the reluctance of some teachers to value pupils' opinions due to their fear of 'losing control' of classroom discipline. Her own view here was that teachers who have the confidence and courage to allow pupil participation and to value its worth can, in fact, minimise indiscipline because children will be less frustrated at school.

An interesting development from this study was to note the way in which the particular pupils in this class continued to hold strong opinions about the Iraq War one year on, following their transition to secondary school. Indeed, during follow-up discussions with pupils it seemed that their opinions had become even stronger, and their views towards Bush and Blair had become more negative. The pupils expressed their concern for the way in which the leaders were apparently unable to listen to the common view of the public, but had gone ahead with the war in spite of the general mood of the country. They viewed the war with even more distaste than before, as the following comment illustrates:

> It was a waste of time, because they haven't found anything. They said there were bombs there and that's why they went in the first place. But they've not found anything so it's been a total waste of time. (Pupil, A)

The pupils were also able to reflect upon the capture of Saddam Hussein. Far from seeing this as a solution, the pupils felt that the situation in Iraq had worsened. In addition, they saw a link between the events in Iraq and the Madrid atrocity in 2004. Indeed, their views about the continued threat of terrorism and their fears for the future seemed bleak:

> It's going to be harder for us in the future. The world's just rotting away, with all these bombings … There's probably enough bombs to just blow up the world whenever anyone wants it. (Pupil B)

Finally, although the pupils had originally been fairly apathetic towards the idea of peace protests at the beginning of the war, now they seemed more supportive of the idea but were also convinced that the protestors' words would fall on deaf ears. One typical comment illustrates this view well:

> They're speaking their word and I think they've got a point … but no one's going to bother listening to them. (Pupil C)

The evidence gleaned from this second case study certainly illustrates the interest that this small group of pupils had in an issue of this sort, and the determination that they were showing in trying to understand the implications of current international events. It also illustrates their concern for social justice, and their growing commitment towards young people of their age working towards social change. Although they appeared to become increasingly more cynical towards the motives of political leaders as time moved on, they also demonstrated an increasing passion for knowledge of political and social issues and the opportunity to discuss and debate their implications. The most interesting part of these emerging findings was the fact that these pupils had been so influenced by their P7 teacher's open approach towards discussion and debate that their political literacy had been sustained during their primary/secondary transition year. There can therefore be no doubt that where there can be developed a respectful, trusting relationship between the teacher and the pupils and the teacher encourages the pupils to develop their opinions, even the most controversial issues can be sensitively discussed in classrooms. However, it is clear

that the particular teacher's approach outlined in this case study is by no means typical.

Case Study C: Democracy in the classroom

Does a participatory, democratic atmosphere and practice in the classroom make any difference to pupils' attitudes and dispositions?; is there a link between this practice and citizenship values? What is the impact of giving pupils a genuine say in what affects them most – the methodology and content of how and what they learn. The thinking behind this and its importance for education for citizenship and democracy is that 'democracy is best learned in a democratic setting' (Osler, 1994), or as Worsfeld (1997) put it, we need to be 'teaching democracy democratically'. Pupils themselves mention this as being central to their understanding of school improvement. MacBeath et al (1996) and MacBeath (1999) found in studies that 'having a say in what went on in the classroom was mentioned by pupils of all ages…this meant being able to give feedback to the teacher, making suggestions as to how things might be varied or done differently and sharing some of the responsibility for learning and teaching'. Levin (1999) concludes that 'students want to have something to say about how they learn, when they learn, where they learn and so on…This kind of discussion is critical to learning'. Rudduck (1998) suggests that young people in school are 'capable of analytic and constructive comment' and, when treated responsibly, can help to 'identify aspects of schooling that get in the way of their learning'. MacBeath et al (2000) found that pupils' views can make a significant difference to learning and teaching in the classroom. The ESRC/TLRP

programme organised from Cambridge University is conducting long term major research into consulting with pupils as a central way to school improvement (Flutter and Rudduck, 2004; MacBeath and Moos, 2004; Rudduck and Flutter, 2004).

Yet, if the evidence above suggests that there is some (albeit limited) progress in terms of pupil councils, in terms of pupils having an input into their teaching and learning, it is even more limited. Wyse (2001) found in an (admittedly small) study that 'there was no evidence that children were consulted in any way in relation to their views about the nature of their teaching…no attempts by teachers to encourage students to evaluate the quality of the activities'. Soo Hoo (1993) observed that 'somehow educators have forgotten the important connection between teachers and students' and this reflects itself in teachers ignoring 'the treasure in our very own backyards, the students'. Fielding (2001a) and Raymond (2001) concur that students tend to be seen as data sources rather than as genuine participants in a change agenda.

Evidence as to effectiveness of the participatory classroom

The authors were involved in a research project designed to promote citizenship values through a democratic approach to learning in a large mixed ability Religious and Moral Education (RME) class in a West of Scotland comprehensive (for more details, see Maitles and Gilchrist, 2003, 2006). The key objective was to discover whether a participative learning style and citizenship curriculum content in core RME altered pupils' citizenship values. Pupils completed a questionnaire expressing

preferences about learning styles. Autocratic styles (teacher-centred and highly authoritarian) and solitary activities were most unpopular. At least 90% of pupils were keen to work with partners or teams of their own choice. Most felt that teacher exposition had an important place, especially in small groups, but also wanted to learn from visiting speakers, videos and independent resource-based learning, e.g. using ICT. 83% expressed interest in contacting pupils in other schools and countries. A lower, but significant, proportion of pupils favoured presenting their work to the class (63%) or others (60%). Outings were requested.

The survey results were shared with the class and the teacher explained that she wanted to act on what they said about how they like to learn. Pupils opted to choose teams and were given freedom to organise this. 'You must be mad, Miss, to let them be in the same group' said one girl who insinuated that disorder would ensue and voiced the teacher's concern. Three periods were allocated to setting the tone. Teacher responsibility to ensure pupils' emotional and physical safety, irrespective of learning style, was emphasised to pupils; both teacher and pupils would need to acquire new skills if democracy was to work. This was to be a participative class, but not a permissive one. Team and class discussions explored the exercising of responsibilities that accompanied enjoyment of rights in a variety of settings including classroom. Pupils responded positively and suggested class values based on respect.

Thanks to the groundwork on ethos, there was a relaxed, open, warm atmosphere during teamwork with pupils acting responsibly. Indiscipline was rare and minor,

kept in check as often by other pupils as by the teacher. The class teacher, other teachers in the school, the pupils themselves and their parents commented that they felt that there was a major improvement in the dispositions, values and attitudes and learning of this class, both in absolute terms and in relation to their peers; 87% of pupils agreed they were learning better because the teacher was trying to involve them.

While acknowledging the inadvisability of over-generalisation, it is significant that this small-scale study rooted the theory of the democratic classroom in reality, showing it to be possible, practical and rewarding. Despite previously adopting an autocratic style, the teacher gradually relaxed into the democratic teacher role, and derived a great sense of fulfilment from the transformation, confirmed by a pupil:

> I thought we'd still get, "Do this, do that", but we don't. It's like a vote on everything. It's not, like, just whenever you feel like it … it's just democratic all the time. (Pupil D)

One of the focus group stated that her expectations about the democratic class had been met; five felt that expectations were exceeded:

> You get so involved in it, so wrapped up in what you're doing, you forget it's just a class. (Pupil E)

The teacher felt that the democratic approach communicated informed values appropriately and effectively. This is supported by Brandes and Ginnis (1995), 'Values may be communicated more through method than content … they must ooze from the methodology'.

Challenges and concerns

The teacher identified several challenges and concerns:

- She met with this class for one weekly lesson of fifty minutes on a Friday afternoon when pupils can be more lethargic or overactive and harder to motivate.
- Would pupils abuse empowerment and new rights? There was a challenge in terms of taking risks with control.
- What to do with dissenters? In a secret ballot at the start of the session, five pupils voted against the idea of the democratic classroom. In a democracy, there are always dissenters who have to accept the majority decision, but it is important to listen to them. One pupil who made his reason known explained that he did not trust a teacher to carry it through.
- Would pupils' expectations be met? Being heard is one thing, having one's views acted upon is quite another. The democratic approach was not an easy option, and trying to meet pupils' expectations involved extra unseen work.

- Did the teacher have the courage, the flexibility, the skills of negotiation and compromise? Would she be able to let go of decisions and outcomes and accept pupils' independent choice?
- A substantial reason for teachers' opposition to democracy in schools is the assessment driven nature of the education system where teachers are judged on pupils' academic results. In this case study the democratic approach was piloted with a core class that was not preparing for external examinations. This research was about citizenship issues rather than attainment issues.

These anxieties are echoed by Rudduck and Flutter (2004) who report that the main concerns are 'being on the receiving end of personal criticism', a fear of challenge to the 'familiar hierarchical structure of the classroom', expressed by Waiton (2001) in the title of his book 'Scared of the Kids?' and worries, outlined above, as to the competing priorities, summed up as the target setting assessment agenda. And yet the experiences of teachers (as in the case study) but also shown by Fielding, (2001), Flutter and Rudduck (2004), MacBeath and Moos (2004), MacBeath et al (2001), MacBeath et al (2003), McIntyre and Pedder (2005), Newman (1997), Ruddock and Flutter (2004), is that where increased democracy is introduced, the benefits for both the teachers and the pupils are large, in terms of the better relationships and learning that can and did develop, having a profound impact on the learning experience in the classroom. Osborne and Collins (1999) sum it up by suggesting that 'what surprised us most about the pupils was how fluent they were…at expressing their ideas. What surprised them most was that anyone was prepared to listen'. Smith and Flecknoe

(2003) investigated the impact of a more participatory level of learning in a particularly 'difficult' and disruptive bottom set year 9 class (equivalent of S3) that had so worried the teacher that she had had sleepless nights and decided to consult them on their learning. The pupils had a distinct preference for 'doing and watching rather than speaking and listening' and for working in groups. Teaching methodology was altered, the pupils responded with enthusiasm, achieved well in the assessments and the teacher recorded in her diary/log that she was much less stressed and, indeed, positively looked forward to the class.

It must be stressed that the democratic approach is not an easy option. Prerequisite to its success are mutual respect and trust. Trying to meet pupils' expectations involves a great deal of unseen work, so its introduction, where considered appropriate, should be at a manageable pace. It would be damaging to pupils' perception of democracy if teachers embarked on it half-heartedly and empowerment was not delivered. As Alexander (2001) points out, 'If they dismiss citizenship education as a sham, it may simply add to the cynicism about politics and participation in public life'.

Conclusions

In conclusion, it can be the difficulty of the concept of transitions to maturity that can be problematic. On the one hand, there can be lip service that young people are citizens now as opposed to Marshall's (1950) proposition that they are 'citizens in waiting'; but on the other, the adult world at best 'tolerates' (Crick and Porter, 1978)

actions that it deems unpalatable (and sometimes even frowns at that) rather than encourage the expression of involvement by young people.

Ruddock and Flutter (2004:157) maintain that the consultation process 'can fall short of making a difference to and for students because of power issues embedded in the everyday regime of schools and even woven into the very strategies we use for consulting pupils', yet they go on to conclude that it is essential (Flutter and Rudduck, 2004). Fielding (2001b) puts it that 'teaching and learning remain largely forbidden areas of enquiry…the questions and concerns that are raised are invariably identified and framed by teachers for teachers'. Wrigley (2003: 134) adds that 'teachers in Britain have become so accustomed to every detail of the curriculum being decided from above that the idea of negotiation sounds almost revolutionary'. Allied to a repressive and restricting exam system which further stifles initiative, it leads to a situation where 'from an early age, children learn that they have no right to choose' and it further 'denies young people's rights'. MacBeath et al (2001), reporting on the preliminary findings of the TLRP study, found that 'the target setting agenda has had a profound impact on every school…but as yet little evidence of targets which refer to "deep learning"'. Arnstine (1995) argues that the current system of schooling in the western democracies serves the dominant social institutions, which are 'hierarchical, authoritarian, unequal, competitive, racist, sexist and homophobic'. Democracy, clearly, does not sit well with these. For example, Rudduck and Flutter (2004) raised the issue of democratic classroom with a group of senior managers from inner city schools. The responses ranged from 'schools can't be democratic institutions' to 'our kids have such insecurities at home…they just

want to be told what to do, not given choices or responsibilities' to 'if you invite pupils to express views at school and they're not allowed at home then you're in trouble'. Whilst convinced that education for citizenship and democracy is a good thing, their strategy was to teach about democracy rather than through democracy; they firmly believed, in line with Marshall (1950) that these young people were not citizens yet but citizens of the future.

This is raised not to dismiss it but to understand that for most senior managers (and indeed politicians) quick fixes are the priority. Moos and MacBeath (2004) suggest that for 'school leaders, management is seen to be a short term solution only'. They found it hard to focus on longer term potential solutions, such as increased consultation, participation strategies or school ethos, due to the immediacy of the problems they faced. Blishen (1967) summed it up in his study of pupil attitudes to school that their perception of education was of 'being told what to do and how to do it'. Ekholm (2004) points out that these ideas are still alive and well and that these 'old habits, structures and strategies' need to be re-examined for democratic learning to be introduced effectively.

The implementation and impact of education for citizenship initiatives depends on whether one sees the glass as half full or half empty. This article has suggested that there is excellent work going on to develop young people's interest, knowledge, skills and dispositions in areas of citizenship and democracy; yet it is very limited, indeed rare, to find examples of genuine democracy based on children's human rights. It is a matter of hearts and minds. No amount of hectoring and/or government

instructions can counter this; as Bernard Crick, the person who has most lobbied for education for citizenship in schools, put it 'teachers need to have a sense of mission…to grasp the fullness of its moral and social aims' (Crick, 2000). Field research now needs to concentrate on the impact of education for citizenship initiatives and look towards highlighting instances of good and effective practice and spreading this widely.

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