

Teaching for Democracy

Implications for Curriculum Development

Philip E. Said

“For students, education for citizenship embraces both responsibilities and rights in the present and preparation for citizenship in adult life”

The definition and development of citizenship education has been problematic for a number of reasons which may be summarized as follows:

(a) the term ‘citizenship’ has not been in common use in schools;

(b) citizenship has been confused with traditional lessons in civics;

(c) education for citizenship is an area of particular political sensitivity;

(d) absence of agreement about public virtues and the common good gives rise to various disputes about citizenship;

(e) the curriculum does not define the term with clarity - only a “circular characterization” of the subject matter is evident.

Reasons like these render citizenship an essentially contested area of education. They often make teachers feel uncertain about the nature and aims of education for citizenship.

Understanding the nature of social issues and having a reasonable frame of mind about them are often attained when seen within a conceptual framework or a sociological model. The same may be said about the difficulty with the term citizenship and the ensuing citizenship education.

The model proposed by T.H. Marshall may help the way towards convergence in our understanding of citizenship and citizenship education. Marshall posits the concept of citizenship in the paradigm of ‘social rights’ which he defines as “the whole range from the right to a modicum of economic welfare and scrutiny to the right to share to the full in the social heritage and to live the life of a civilized being according to the standards prevailing in the society.” (Mishra, 1991).

Marshall’s conceptualization of citizenship involves three elements: civil, political and social. The social element implies (a) the capacity of citizenship in modern welfare societies to generate a direct sense of community membership based on loyalty to a civilization which is a common possession; (b) the extension of social security and the provision of services (healthcare, education, housing, employment, welfare benefits) as a means of conferring equality of status as citizens. The extension of security and provisions of services safeguard the capacity to participate more fully in society and to exercise more effectively civil and political rights.

Social citizenship, according to Marshall, is the key source of social integration. It strengthens the idea of ‘social entitlements’ to the country’s goods and services. This is

safeguarded by the State when it provides the ground for all citizens to have equal opportunities to participate in citizenship.

Marshall’s model of citizenship takes a social democratic stance based on the tripartite system of the welfare state, welfare society and citizen social entitlement.

Implications of Marshall’s model

Marshall’s theoretical framework drives home implications for citizenship education which are worth considering. First of all, it has provided a working description of citizenship which can elucidate the nature and objectives of citizenship education. Citizenship is not only about formal rights and duties but also about everyday participation in our society. It is crucially concerned with the attitudes, moral codes and values that inform behaviour. Citizenship education is an essential element in the preparation of young people for “the opportunities and responsibilities of adult life.” (British Education Reform Act, 1988)

In December 1988, the House of Commons established a Commission on Citizenship which concerned itself with the meaning of citizenship, impediments to citizenship and ways of encouraging citizenship. Among its findings published in *ENCOURAGING CITIZENSHIP*, HMSO, 1990, one reads:

“The challenge to our society is to create conditions where all who wish can become involved, can understand and participate, can influence, persuade, campaign and whistleblow and, in the making of decisions, can work together for the mutual good.”

The National Curriculum Council in England, in *Curriculum Guidance 8: EDUCATION FOR CITIZENSHIP* states that “Education for citizenship embraces both responsibilities and rights in the present and preparation for citizenship in adult life. It helps pupils by supporting them as they develop from dependent children into independent young people ... in a world undergoing rapid change.”

The National Minimum Curriculum 2000 for pre-primary, primary and secondary education in Malta devotes a whole section on citizenship education in its second declared objective: *The Development of Citizens and the Democratic Environment* (Objective 2, pg.48). The proposal states that through their curricular experiences students are to acquire knowledge about the concept of democracy and the process of parliamentary democracy, develop the skills



PHILIP E. SAID is Education Officer (Social Studies) in the Department of Curriculum Management of the Education Division. A graduate in Social Sciences from the University of Malta, he also has a Diploma in Procedure and Jurisprudence from the Metropolitan Ecclesiastical Tribunal. He has recently submitted his thesis for the degree of M.A.

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to evaluate constructively the policies of their school and community and eventually to actively participate in them, and cherish an attitude of respect of the fundamental rights of others and cultural diversity around them. Knowledge of democratic processes and institutions, investigative and participatory skills, attitudes of respect of rights and acceptance of differences are the essential ingredients of citizenship education. Of its nature, then, education for citizenship provides the space to “develop knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for exploring, making informed decisions and exercising responsibilities and rights in a democratic society.” (NCC, Curriculum Guidance 8)

Therefore **what kind of knowledge** is required?

That which enables pupils to understand

- how communities are organised, including political, legal and financial systems,
- how decisions are made,
- how individuals operate within communities,
- how power is distributed and exercised
- how change can be brought about and conflicts settled.

For this knowledge to have any worth it must be acquired in a relevant context, that is, through the study of issues of immediate concern to the child. Experience of communities can begin with the immediate family and broadened to include the local and national community and, finally, a global dimension.

What kind of skills?

Those skills which enable a person to play a full and effective part in a democratic society, that is,

- skills of finding out, analysing and assessing evidence,
- skills of communication and debate, critical listening, presenting and defending a case and persuasion,
- problem solving, decision making and making things happen,
- personal and social skills in organizing, planning and working with others.

Then, attitudes and values which underline democratic processes and form a basis for co-operation are required. These include:

- respect for others and concern for fairness and individual human rights,
- a willingness to listen to others' views, to negotiate and compromise,
- an interest in community affairs
- a willingness to consider problems with mutual respect,
- a sense of responsibility and concern for honesty, truth and justice.

The school has to provide contexts for the acquisition and development of knowledge, skills and attitudes which form the basis of citizenship education. The school can make this happen through:

The ethos of the school

It is important to identify the messages which the hidden curriculum conveys.

There should be harmony between what we teach directly and the way the school is managed, the system of organisation it employs, and the way staff relate to each other and their pupils. A concern for ethos involves identifying the personal qualities we wish to develop and ensuring that we provide the experiences which are most likely to promote them.

Democratic participation in the classroom

Teachers need to consider their own teaching styles and their own classroom practices against a scenario of democratic education set by a Council of Europe declaration:

“Democracy is best learned in a democratic setting where participation is encouraged, where views can be expressed openly and discussed, where there is fairness and justice...Schools and teachers should attempt to be positive towards all their pupils and recognize that all of their achievements are important - whether they be academic, artistic, musical, sporting or practical.” (*Education for Democratic Citizenship*, Council of Europe, Strasbourg, 1997).

Such a democratic interaction between teacher and students provides an appropriate climate for effective learning about human rights and for the effective development of human rights attitudes.

The informal Curriculum

This provides further opportunities to exercise responsibility and to gain understanding of the community through, for example, a school council, team membership, residential visits, field work, organising clubs, theatre production, community involvement.

These opportunities gain to the individual:

The school has to provide contexts for the acquisition and development of knowledge, skills and attitudes which form the basis of citizenship education.



“Education for citizenship can be achieved on two levels: (a) as a cross-curricular theme, (b) directly through the teaching / learning process of the Humanities”

INCLUSION acknowledges that special efforts are needed to ensure that everybody, irrespective of the diversity in abilities and opportunities, are guaranteed the right of equality as citizens who share common concerns for their national, European and global environments

- wider social contacts and interpersonal relations,
- ability to work in a team, to give and receive feedback and to relate to authority,
- increased flexibility of thought in a variety of situations,
- opportunities to see alternative solutions to problems,
- understanding of social structures,
- understanding the needs of others,
- new challenges for personal and social development.

Implications for the School Curriculum

Education for citizenship can be achieved on two levels: (a) as a cross-curricular theme, (b) directly through the teaching / learning process of the Humanities.

As a cross-curricular theme citizenship education enriches and gives coherence to the whole curriculum. But how are we to ensure citizenship education across the curriculum? We have to think carefully about management of this cross-curricular theme with the help of a process of MONITORING, EVALUATION and REVISION. This process has six attainment targets:

- 1) Identify what is to be taught
- 2) Identify how it is to be taught
- 3) Identify what is being done already
- 4) Identify what else needs to be done
- 5) Develop a co-ordinated policy
- 6) Implementation

This model of management can help teachers of the Humanities where components of citizenship education are dealt with explicitly by teachers and students. Teachers of History and Social Studies, for instance, can promote “a sense amongst citizens that they are members of an inter-generational community.” This implies instilling a strong sense of history, that is, “a strong sense of being members of an intergenerational community, stretching back indefinitely into the past, and stretching forward indefinitely into the future.” Through the teaching of History and Social Studies “citizens are encouraged to think of themselves as having a responsibility to protect a historical heritage, and to ensure that generations to come can also enjoy the benefits of the national patrimony.” (“Education for Democratic Citizenship” Conference - Council of Europe, Strasbourg, December 12, 1997).

Continuous evaluation of the school context

Citizenship is concerned with effective participation, communication and the exercise of rights couched in responsibility. This implies empowerment and access through informed attitudes and values, and training in skills. These must be developed through the

curriculum, through involvement in the life of the school and in the wider community. “The participation of citizens in their society is both a measure and a service of that society’s success” (Encouraging Citizenship, HMSO, 1990). School can evaluate this measure by continuously asking key questions like:

- How can a coherent whole curriculum view be developed in the school and extended into the community?
- How does a school create an ethos which best prepares its students for effective citizenship?
- How can the variety of experiences in education for citizenship be given coherence in the minds of teachers and pupils / students?
- How does a school maximise its links with the community?

At present Society is undergoing a historical shift from a “modern - industrial” era to a “post-modern / information” era. This shift requires a complete appreciation of our conception of the core competencies of citizenship and citizenship education. The conceptualisation of citizenship in a post-modern information society emphasises the skills and competencies for formal political participation and informal social networks. The aspect of social network implies that the traditional model of citizenship needs to be balanced by a range of new challenges facing today’s society - the challenges of (1) SOCIALIZATION where other agencies besides the family and the school have an influence on the socialisation process of children and young people, (2) MOTIVATION focusing on methods of motivating children and youth to get involved in the societal and political arena, (3) INCLUSION which acknowledges that special efforts are needed to ensure that everybody, irrespective of the diversity in abilities and opportunities, are guaranteed the right of equality as citizens who share common concerns for their national, European and global environments.

Society’s call for our response to these opportunities may have become more urgent in a new world order where time and space are shrinking through the challenges of globalisation and the new communication technologies.

Notes

Broad sheet produced by CSCS and the Centre of Citizenship Studies in Education University of Leicester.

‘Creating the Future Together’, National Minimum Curriculum, Ministry of Education, December 1999.

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