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Citizenship education: models and discourses

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Citizenship education in England and Wales has a long history. The need for citizenship education and corresponding definitions have changed over time but a persistent characteristic would seem to be a fear of indoctrination and a lack of a coherent vision due in part to the notion of citizenship being a contested concept. However the modern notion of citizenship implies a commitment to some form of equality, an emphasis on universal norms and a secular framework of values to support political claims and social obligations (Turner, 1986). Within this framework, social inequality is no longer regarded as inevitable and natural. These different notions of citizenship in turn support different theories of citizenship education, and as a result a number of commentators have identified 'ideal' forms of pedagogy, values, skills, curricular content and assessment.

Models of Citizenship

Citizenship education programmes have as their rationale an end product – the ideal citizen. There are two principal problems. The first relates to reaching agreement about the ideal model towards which any programme of citizenship education is directed. The second relates to the most appropriate pedagogical arrangements to achieve such an end. This is not to suggest that these are separate issues, since the means for achieving educational ends always have implications for those ends themselves, and, even more importantly, the ends themselves restrict the types of pedagogical means which can be employed. It should also be noted that school programmes of citizenship education are not hermetically sealed from the world outside the school – other influences and other social experiences have an influence on the citizenship identity of the individual. Any process therefore is likely to be fragmented and multi-directional. The achievement of ends is rarely a straightforward linear process.

Given these important caveats to the development of ideal models of citizenship and citizenship education, it is possible to identify a number of continua from which theorists have drawn in their construction of models of the ideal citizen. These are as follows:

- scientific / critical or postmodernist views of knowledge;
- active / minimalist orientations;
- community-orientated / individualistic relations to society;
- rights / responsibilities;
- public / private behaviours;
- inclusive / exclusive worldviews;
- local / global dimensions.

Views of knowledge

A model of citizenship which understands that knowledge of the world is constructed scientifically can be distinguished from one which emphasises the place of values and identifies a power dimension in the construction of knowledge. At one extreme is a desire to create a positive science of society, or in effect to mirror the scientific approaches which had been successfully applied to the natural world. This would support the view that: 'observation is theory-neutral and a-theoretical; experience is given; a univocal and transparent language is possible; data are independent of these interpretations; there are universal conditions of knowledge and criteria for deciding between theories.' (Usher, 1996).

At the other extreme are value-embedded and critical approaches. These are best exemplified by citizens with feminist and anti-racist perspectives and they embrace the idea that knowledge gatherers brings with them to the learning setting not only a theory or theories about the world, but also a desire to change it so that it conforms better to their view of what the world should be like. In particular, they argue that knowledge should be about identifying and unmasking those human beliefs and practices which limit freedom, justice and democracy. For feminists these practices comprise patriarchal discourses and behaviours. For anti-racists the practices are ethnically and racially discriminating. Furthermore, they would argue that much knowledge about the world, especially when conducted within a positivist framework, acts to conceal its real purpose and effects, albeit that this may be unintentional. For critical learners, conventional learning acts to oppress and discriminate.

We have already suggested that citizenship and citizenship education are contested concepts in that they set out a view of the ideal citizen and how the education service can produce such citizens. The ideal citizen therefore may be understood as operating within a particular tradition of knowledge which argues that those dispositions and virtues which it implies are underpinned by a naïve realist epistemology which in turn suggests that knowledge can be produced which is predictive, teleological, nomothetic and can be expressed in terms of prescriptive models which guarantee the good life for all. If knowledge is understood differently, as in critical and post-modernist traditions, then prescription becomes more difficult.

Active / minimalist orientations

The fact that there does not exist one, universally held, definition of citizenship has meant that beliefs about what active citizenship entails differ greatly. Active citizenship has therefore received support from people from very diverse backgrounds, each group having a different understanding of the idea based on different criteria. Liberal individualism and communitarianism each give rise to different understandings of active citizenship. Within the former 'the individuals remain external to the state, contributing only in a certain manner to its reproduction in return for the benefits of organisational membership. In the other, the citizens are integrated into the political community like parts in a whole; that is, in such a manner that they can only form their personal and social identity in this horizon of shared traditions and intersubjectively recognised institutions' (Habermas, 1996, p. 25-26). Different standpoints thus influence beliefs about which activities carried out by individuals can be categorised as 'active citizenship' and therefore contribute towards the fulfilment of citizenship obligations.

A minimalist definition of citizenship would suggest both that the obligations on citizens are restricted and that individual agency can in essence be understood as separate from those social formations within which it is positioned. Active forms of citizenship understand the individual as located firmly within society; and this therefore has attached to it a different set of behaviours and obligations to minimalist definitions of the citizen as one who acts separately from society, but enters into a contract with it to further her/his interests.

Community-orientated / individualistic relations to society

Communitarian viewpoints move away from classical liberal viewpoints in a number of other ways. The individual is understood as part of a community (though Etzioni and others have problems in defining what that community consists of – global, nation-state, city, ethnic, local or family) and therefore has rights as an individual but also obligations as a member of the community. Individuals therefore have to restrict their behaviours, i.e. make decisions about what they should do (certainly in public and possibly in private as well) because they are required to act in conformity with the desires of that community. They are under an obligation to do so. Some of the problems with this viewpoint have been cogently expressed in critiques of communitarianism.

The first of these is that if the majority of members of that community decide what minorities should do and how they should behave, this may lead to the suppression of minority rights and desires. Furthermore, there are minority rights within minorities, for example, the rights of women within ethnic minority groups are often ignored or marginalised. This argument is countered by reference to the guaranteed rights of individuals within a community regardless of the wishes of the majority or other minorities. However, it is possible to suggest that the designation of rights is contested both because of genuine disagreement and because it is difficult to determine the consequences of the exercise of those rights. Those rights refer to procedural rules for decision-making within the community as well as rights which pertain to the individual alone.

And this leads on to the second criticism of communitarianism, which is that it implies a view of how people should behave, think and be. In other words, some forms of behaviour, discourse and identity are approved of, whereas others are not. This may be inevitable in any designation of citizenship since even classical liberal views of citizenship proscribe certain forms of behaviours and encourage others. By introducing the notion of obligation into the equation, communitarians hope to provide some justification for the proscription of certain behaviours which they dislike. However, an obligation is merely another way of suggesting that an individual should behave in a one way and not in another.

This is best illustrated with reference to the debate about the distribution of resources in society. An unequal distribution of resources restricts the choices that some people can make i.e. taking holidays, access to a healthy diet etc., but, it is argued, may lead to better and more efficient government and the creation of wealth which ultimately benefits everyone in the society. However, it does restrict the rights of some individuals in relation to others, that is, some people in society have rights as consumers which are denied to other people. Communitarians would suggest that personal and social rights should be distinguished from economic rights, but this is a difficult distinction to make. A way out for them is to suggest that since people are not going to be equally rewarded, their

obligations should be correspondingly differentiated. Thus the rich have obligations to protect the interests of the poor because they are equal members of the community and because the poor are not in a position to help themselves, whereas the poor have other obligations, i.e. to behave responsibly and to work hard, again because they are members of that same community. The point that we are making here is that the language of rights and obligations may actually act to obscure the real arguments about equality which modern societies have to address; indeed, they may do more than this, they make act to support political arrangements which have at their heart unequal economic rewards for different members of the community.

Rights / responsibilities

A tension can be discerned between rights-based views of the polity and communitarian views of the obligations that citizens have within the community. Some of the problems with the rights-based view are that rights are contested, and that for agreement to be reached about what are appropriate rights requires those rights to be described at such a level of generality that it is difficult to turn them into practical propositions. Or at least the turning of those rights into practical propositions requires mediation by political bodies so that one section of the community is able to impose their view of what are appropriate rights on other parts. It thus becomes an exercise in power. A solution to this problem is to suggest that the specification of rights should be limited to procedural rules and institutional frameworks for determining how people decide between different rights agendas. An example of this would be democratic institutions, the right to speak freely without sanction and so forth.

Another approach is the classical liberal approach, which is that individuals have the right to do what they want so long as they do not prevent other people doing what they want. This individualistic viewpoint is different from a communitarian position because it does not take as its reference point any particular view of how society should be organised and of what the good life consists, though even here there are implicit views of how people should behave and what appropriate social arrangements should be made.

Private / public

One problem which has emerged concerns the distinction between public and private morality. Public or even private displays of indecency may offend some people. Does this offence carry with it the right therefore to prevent people from doing it? This is usually resolved by discriminating between serious and minor offences, though this creates another problem, which is how we distinguish between them. This last decision is usually left to legislators.

Second, a distinction is drawn between the public and the private, so that some behaviours are considered to be acceptable in the public and private arenas and other behaviours only acceptable in the private arena. The problem with this is that private behaviours have consequences which may spill over from the private to the public. Thus hedonistic behaviours which are conducted in private and therefore have no immediate consequences in terms of restricting the liberty of others may lead to the development of undesirable characteristics in those people, which may lead in turn to public behaviours at a later point in time which have the consequence of restricting the freedom of other people.

Thirdly, resources are consumed or changed in substance and these have consequences for the future well-being of other people in society. The individualistic viewpoint being

expressed here treats an individual and her/his actions as separate from the activities and experiences of every other individual in society. However, most people live within complicated networks of relations so that their actions have consequences for the actions of other human beings. What distinguishes this from other viewpoints is firstly the degree of prescription involved about how people should behave and secondly that no particular view of the good life is being prescribed.

Inclusive/ exclusive worldviews

Different positions on this continuum reflect different views of who should be included and who should be excluded from a range of citizenship rights and obligations. Feminist critiques of citizenship have highlighted how the construction of the male and female in liberal democracy has given men and women differing characteristics which impact on their experiences. This distinction is further compounded by the separation of the private and public sphere and the gendering of these spheres (Arnot, 1997). For example, care work undertaken in the private sphere of the home tends not to be counted as active citizenship because active citizenship is regarded by many as political participation, and political participation occurs in the public sphere (Lister, 1997). Furthermore, that which is the norm in the public sphere 'are socially constructed notions … to provide advantages to those who had the power to construct them, usually white males' (Marshall and Anderson, quoted in Arnot, 1997: 281). With regard to the teaching of citizenship education Arnot discovered that understandings of citizenship by student teachers were influenced by three key discourses – political, moral and egalitarian. She suggests that what was significant was that all three discourses 'privileged, in their own way, men and marginalised women as 'other'... None of the three discourses of citizenship privileged female over male spheres' (Arnot, 1997: 286).

Local / global perspectives

Multiple citizenship identities imply an intermingling of local, national and global elements and a reconciliation between them. Within these elements there is an additional problem of the respective importance which should be attached to each, and nation states are suspicious of identities which subvert national boundaries. Furthermore, the debate spans rights and responsibilities – the communitarian agenda. The problem is how these rights and responsibilities are defined, and why and in what way they should be related.

In the past citizenship has tended to be equated with membership of and relationship with the nation-state. Consequently the main aims of citizenship education have been to build a common identity and a shared history, and to encourage patriotism and loyalty to the nation. This form of citizenship education has been described as 'nation building' (Gellner, 1983) which in turn has been described as 'a polite term for the cultural and ideological homogenisation of a country's population' (Nandy, 1997: 265). However a number of changes in the way nations relate to each other have led commentators to suggest that the concept of citizenship needs to be reassessed and redefined in order to take account of the different levels of citizenship that can now be distinguished and 'to moderate the exclusive demands of nationalism' (Wringe, 1999: 5). Furthermore, any definition of citizenship needs to recognise that civil, political, social, economic and environmental rights and responsibilities transcend national borders. The key changes that have an impact on the meaning of citizenship have been identified as: the globalisation of the economy; technological change including changes to means of communication;

population growth and movement and the environmental situation (Cogan and Derricott, 2000).

The environmental situation has given rise to the suggestion that 'the shared sense of common destiny of environmentalism' (Gilbert, 1996) should be included in any conceptualisation of citizenship, and there has been a call for the development of 'the earth citizen' (van Steenbergen, 1994: 151). A key point made by both commentators is that citizenship is not a static concept. Citizenship is a site of struggle for individuals fighting for equality of rights and has played an important part in defining needs which are then turned into rights. This has implications for citizenship education. Critics of education that includes an international dimension have in the past maintained that it will weaken national loyalties and therefore threaten national security. Inherent in these critiques is an underlying assumption that loyalty can be 'used up' (Torney-Purta, 1981: 258).

Discussion

The UK government is attempting to engender a paradigm shift from an understanding of citizenship based on rights to one which is based on mutual obligation and is underpinned by the notion of active citizenship. One could perhaps expect to discern a tension between individualist values and collective values of taking responsibility for oneself and others. However the government has been very explicit in its designation of a new social contract and the establishment of a 'something-for-something' society, 'putting an end to the 'something-for-nothing' approach to reform of the public services and the welfare state' (David Blunkett, 3 November 1999). Indeed the claiming of rights is conditional on individuals carrying out their duties to society:

> *The basis of this modern civic society is an ethic of mutual responsibility or duty.*
> *It is something for something. A society where we play by the rules. You only take*
> *out if you put in. That's the bargain. (Prime Minister's Speech, 2nd June, 1999).*

The UK government's plans for citizenship education are implicitly underpinned by a set of values which are socially ameliorative in orientation. The theme 'it's down to you' was one which was very apparent in a citizenship education lesson Lawson observed on law and order which was led by a local police constable. During the lesson a pupil was dressed up in police riot gear and asked to stand in front of the class. The message from the police constable was that the police force always responds to the way society is and if society becomes more violent then the police will have to "arm themselves to the teeth in order to tackle violent crime." The pupils were asked "Do you want a police service that looks like this?" Most said that they did not and they were then told:

> *In that case, behave well. You all have choices to make. You as young people have*
> *a role to play in choosing how your police service looks. Life is full of choices and*
> *you have to decide whether you want to be a good citizen or not. Teachers,*
> *parents can't decide for you. If you are good citizens you might not have to have a*
> *police service that looks like this (i.e. in riot gear). It's up to you.*

Here we have a case of prescribing appropriate behaviours, with the message being reinforced by the identification of the consequences which individuals might suffer if they do not conform.

However, drawing out from pupils what are the most appropriate ways to think and behave may not lead to an acceptance by them that they will in fact do what is required of them:

Teacher: What can we do as consumers to improve the situation?

Pupil: We shouldn't buy the footballs but the reality is that we won't stop buying footballs or stop playing football. I know it's selfish. It's as bad on the streets as it is in the factory.

Teacher: So are you saying that a certain amount of child exploitation is inevitable?

Pupil: Yes.

Teacher: How many of you realised that Nike trainers were made in these conditions?

One or two say that they did.

Teacher: How many of you will buy Nike trainers know you know the conditions they are made in?

Nearly all the pupils put their hands up.

Wringe (1999) suggests that education for active global citizenship involves knowledge and understanding of what is occurring in the world, and developing an awareness of how to bring pressure to bear on organisations to act in a way that is globally acceptable. However, as the above extract demonstrates, knowledge and awareness do not necessarily lead to action. In order to ensure the 'establishment of acceptable collective arrangements' (ibid., p. 10) attitudinal change and a desire to act collectively are also needed.

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