The pedagogy of civics and citizenship education

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Review Paper

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by

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Australian Council for Educational Research

March 1996

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Preface

The point of view put forward in these papers suggests that it is only through recognising the primacy of pedagogy as the focus for the development of democratic citizenship that a democratic community can be constructed. The argument finds its clearest expression in the work of Dianne Common (1994). Stated simply the argument put forward here is that it is only through a pedagogy in which processes (such as critical thinking and conversation with others) are key elements that a democratic educational community can emerge and which is able to embody a truly democratic culture within the school organization.

These propositions have important implications for materials development: the literature suggests that pedagogy must be at the centre of any reform efforts. Providing that the principles of pedagogical reform are established then the precise directions for subject matter are contained within these broad assumptions.

Approaches to subject matter and to pedagogy in the literature have been characterised in several ways. A ‘traditional’ approach emphasizes factual knowledge and a more didactic style. A more ‘reformist’ approach teaches about the resolution of issues that are part of ‘real life’. This approach favours discussion and inquiry methods of teaching. More ‘radical’ approaches suggest that a ‘critical’ appraisal of subject matter (such as doctrines, policies and so on) is required so that students learn to understand that society is dynamic. Inquiry and discussion methods are evident but there are suggestions that students also need to participate in school and community politics and practices.

Much of the writing on pedagogy in the civics and citizenship literature is predicated on the notion, which is held to be both logical and necessary, that such a pedagogy cannot be effective without a co-existing school ethos which is amenable to the reflection on those considerations and the practice of those learning activities congruent to citizenship learning, as defined by that school. As to how this co-existence is to be achieved, there is a divergence of opinion. The introduction of a citizenship curriculum may induce changes in the ethos, or the prevailing ethos may induce the introduction of citizenship curriculum. Most, if not all, the writers referenced in this Review Paper argue for the interconnectedness of pedagogy and school ethos, of them being part of the one environment.

Another key assumption held by the writers is about teachers: they are ultimately the people whose task it is to translate theoretical notions into practice. In this sense classroom events are the embodiment of the curriculum, of the pedagogy and of the school ethos. Despite this assertion, there is often an unwillingness to view the work done by teachers as the complex activity that it is. It is crucial to recognise that the teacher is at the centre of any reform efforts. It will be necessary for teachers to evaluate their existing practices in the light of the data outlined in these papers, and to make judgments about which practices need to be re-assessed. In other instances, teachers will see the desirability of, and ways to incorporate changes into their practices, if the arguments put forward in these reviews are convincing.
Key Theoretical Perspectives and Matters of Definition

There is in the literature, an increasing recognition that democratic societies are facing a crisis in the late twentieth century (Bickmore 1993, Osborne 1983 and Fenstermacher 1995) which is to do with the recognition that pluralism not only means there exist a pluralism of doctrines (religious, philosophical and moral) but that not one of these doctrines is affirmed by citizens generally (Rawls 1993, cited in Fenstermacher 1995, p 76). As Fenstermacher (1995) has stated the issue it is that the members of each and every comprehensive doctrine must seek and find a common basis for preserving union (p 76). He goes on to state that the task is to meet these challenges in ways that preserve both union and diversity, democracy and difference, nationhood and neighbourhood (p 77). As education is seen as the key ingredient in attempting to resolve these dilemmas, the issue of pedagogy is paramount. Teachers need to be concerned both with moral issues as much as with content issues; conflict and controversy need to be evident in classrooms so that children learn how to come to grips with differences, when to respect them and leave them as they are, or respect them and leave them but seek their reconstruction in the commonweal (Fenstermacher 1995, p 78).

Osborne (1995) argues that pedagogy is crucial to the development of democratic citizenship. In particular, he argues pedagogy must incorporate several central elements: 'the skills and values of critical awareness, participation, involvement and community' (1995, p 42). These elements are referred to in the literature as 'liberatory pedagogy' or 'critical pedagogy' or 'transformative pedagogies' (Osborne 1995, p 42).

At the outset it is necessary to indicate some definitional distinctions derived from the literature. Terms such as 'political education' 'civics' and 'citizenship education' require some minimal elaboration and distinction. According to some key writers in the field 'political education' refers to the 'attempt to teach people, in this case school students, about politics and the political system...' (Osborne 1982, p 60). This view asserts that such political education should place emphasis upon making students more 'politically aware' and promote a participative role in the political process (Osborne 1982).

The outcome is thus a more 'highly political citizenry' which sees itself as able to participate in 'civic life' and thus contributing to the maintenance, perhaps too the improvement, of the political system (Osborne 1982). Involvement in the political system, it is claimed, is a way of 'reducing alienation and cynicism and so preserving the system' (Osborne 1982, p 61). Related to this notion is the idea that 'a more broadly based and active political involvement' is a matter of 'simple justice' (Osborne 1982, p 61). This argument emphasises that 'participation serves to educate and to humanize those who participate' (Osborne 1982, p 61). Thus the propositions are about 'valuing citizen participation' on the one hand and about the preservation and maintenance of the political system of liberal democracy on the other (Osborne 1982, p 61). These elements are not necessarily contradictory but they do represent two different notions evident in the literature.

'Civics' or 'civic education' are terms that are often used with considerable diversity and at times they are used to convey the ideas of political education. This overlap has not received much acceptance or recognition in the literature. The 'traditional' approach to civics 'meant little more than a factual knowledge of governmental and political institutions with (some) social virtues' (Osborne 1982, p 62). Indeed, as Osborne (1982 p 62) somewhat disparagingly remarks 'civics portrays a consensus view of politics in which questions of conflict and power play little part...This approach is still very much alive and seems to be especially popular with teachers of younger children'.
Today the ‘essential ingredients’ of citizenship are often understood to contain several elements: ‘first, a sense of identity with some wider community, usually defined as the nation; second, a set of rights and entitlements, such as the right to vote and to be represented; and third, a set of corresponding obligations, such as obedience to the law’ (Osborne 1995, p 12).

The term ‘citizenship education’ has been used variously, but most commonly the proponents of citizenship education incorporate ‘the whole range of socially useful and desirable qualities that youngsters should acquire’ (Osborne 1982, p 63). Often associated with these ideas are ‘competencies’ which are seen to be desirable. The goals of citizenship education include: ‘acquiring and using information; assessing involvement; making decisions; making judgments; communicating; co-operating; promoting interest’ (Remy 1980, cited in Osborne 1982, p 63). The political system (and politics) remains outside these ‘basic citizenship competencies’ largely due to the lack of direct reference to the notion that political education involves part the expression of active participation (Osborne 1982). Kennedy has some comments about the conflicting conceptions of citizenship, in which he draws on the work of Dynnesson and Gross and others, and which are relevant to this discussion (Kennedy 1995).

Political education seldom acknowledges that the state is not so much seen as ‘the impartial umpire between competing interests, but very much as a player in the game ’ (Osborne 1982, p 64). Recently this view has gained greater prominence in the literature. The consequence has been acceptance of the fact ‘that conflict is at the very root of politics’ (Osborne 1982, p 64).

The different conceptions of political education have meant consequent changes to approaches to teaching (and curriculum). Osborne (1982, p 64) has suggested that these ‘new’ approaches have witnessed the development of curriculum structures which examine ‘(1) issues, (2) political process, or (3) political concepts’. A fourth approach - ‘the involvement of students in community or political action ‘ - has emerged more recently (Osborne 1982, p 65). It is important to acknowledge that these approaches are in contrast to ‘old-style civics’ (Osborne 1982, p 65).

Pedagogy Linked to Learning and Attitudinal Outcomes

Research by Torney-Purta and Schwille (1986), based on cross-national data regarding civic values learned in school, suggests that the ‘extremes of authoritarianism and permissiveness in schools’ ought to be avoided in efforts to foster learning contexts which are conducive to diverse learning outcomes.

This ‘implicit curriculum’ in which students, inter alia, are encouraged to be autonomous and to show initiative, yields ‘positive consequences such as decreased violence and increased empathy for others’ (Torney-Purta, et. al. 1986, p 49). Moreover, where students have the opportunity to make school decisions there seems to be ‘decreased alienation’ (p 49).

The authors of the study add: ‘In social studies classes, from about age 10, other benefits such as less authoritarianism and greater tolerance for diversity appear to result from encouraging students to discuss a variety of issues in the classroom (including those that are controversial) and from stressing the causes of problems discussed, not merely requiring students to memorize facts or participate in patriotic rituals’ (Torney-Purta et. al., 1986, p 49).

There is some research data which suggests that the ‘prevailing ethos’ which exists in a ‘democratic school’ compared with the ethos in a ‘traditional school’ has some important effects (John and Osborn 1992). The research data suggest that ‘in terms
of democratic values, citizens' rights and the process of civic participation', students in the traditional school studied had their values and beliefs 'confirmed or reinforced by the prevailing ethos'. In the democratic school studied the students exhibited more positive attitudes towards both gender and racial equality and were more suspicious of some of the traditional democratic principles which underpin our society' (John and Osborn 1992, p 162). In other words, and acrross a number of values indicators the authors conclude that 'these students (in the democratic school) benefited from the more liberal ethos of their school' (John and Osborn 1992, p 163). As part of this research study and in response to issues about rights and freedoms, 'respondents in the democratic school tended to hold more liberal attitudes towards the outgroups of society' (John and Osborn 1992, p 163).

All of the students in this study shared ideas about good citizenship: 'all the sample saw the ideal citizen as being conservative, passive and private' (John and Osborn 1992, p 163). Despite this finding there was some other evidence that 'the high level of classroom participation, mutual respect and openness displayed in the democratic school appears to have reached the pupils' consciousness' (John and Osborn 1992, p 163). This finding regarding pedagogical approaches and school ethos echoes the research which advocated ways towards developing positive citizenship attitudes in the 1970s and early 1980s (see John and Osborn 1992, p 163).

**Shaping the Pedagogy in Classrooms and Schools**

Dianne Common (1994) points to one of the key dilemmas in attempts to sort out the ability of schools to prepare students for democratic citizenship: 'our schools are not structured to be democratic institutions...They are not designed to include and invite cooperation and diversity' (p 243). Rather, Common (1994) suggests, most arguments for school reform 'are fundamentally designed to make competition, precisely measured, the hallmark of the pedagogy practiced in our public schools' (p 243). Common (1994) postulates that a 'new' organizational design for schooling - a 'democratic organization, within which teachers, students, and parents will be empowered to exercise influence, to shape conditions conducive to success for all, and to develop a community of caring, sharing cooperation, responsibility, and diversity' (p 245) - must be derived from pedagogy, the essence of schooling (our emphasis/italics), and be shaped by it' (p 245).

Pedagogy, according to Common (1994), must not be seen to be 'accommodating to organization. Rather, pedagogy must create organization structures; pedagogy must shape organizational culture. From democratic pedagogy will rise democratic organization' (p 245). There is much that is compelling in this argument and the centrality of pedagogy which it forces. It should also be noted that Common (1994) accepts that there are many who would argue that the 'democratization of the structures' is the key and initial element in any reform process. Cooperative endeavour between both ideas is required; Common (1994) maintains that 'lasting reform will come from the nature of the educational relationship between students and teacher and that only subsequently will we build an organizational edifice to accommodate such reforming pedagogy' (p 246).

Common's (1994, p 246) thesis is that 'the pedagogy of conversation' is the 'fundamental means for the democratic reform of public education...'. The quality of the conversation 'hinges on the questions asked by the teachers and those the teachers encourage their students to pose'. (Common 1994, p 256) Associated with the effectiveness of the questioning is 'the ability of the students to understand or to formulate meaning' (Common 1994, p 256). Equally important is the ability of students to work together, 'to engage in the mutual exchange of effort to understand, and to forge a community of inquiry' (Common 1994, p 256).
Pedagogical practices require on-going reassessment to take account of pervasive social problems (crime, violence, drugs, illiteracy, racism, sexism, classism, intolerance, etc. - Ukpokodu 1994, p 31) and a world which is culturally diverse and increasingly interdependent (Ukpokodu 1994). Moreover, it needs to be recognised that students may come from social environments which 'impede positive attitude development and functional relationships' (Ukpokodu 1994, p 31). Noddings (1991) makes reference to the possibility that 'Given current conditions of poverty, crime and child-neglect, our society may be ready to raise its evaluation of 'women's work' (p 70). All students' rights to an 'empowering education' - that is, self-empowerment, critical consciousness, and a reflective capacity to transform their present realities - need to be assured (Ukpokodu 1994, p 31).

Inquiry and Questioning in the Pedagogy

Critical pedagogy, therefore, must reflect these 'imperatives' and support 'active, experiential, meaningful, inquiry-oriented, and equitable education fostering the development of participatory skills necessary to function in a democracy' (Ukpokodu 1994, p 31 drawing on Dewey 1966 and others). This so-called 'constructivist perspective' has been highlighted by many writers in the field, including Giroux (1989).

Part of this 'new' perspective embodies a considerable emphasis on questioning so that the discourse which occurs is in essence a 'question-answer-question process' (Common 1994, p 259). Although subject matter, group size and specific objectives may vary, one overriding element remains: 'the objective of a pedagogy of conversation is not consensus but knowledge, and this could very easily entail knowledge of different reasoned points of view on the issues as defined by the curriculum framework' (Common 1994, p 266). The key point is that reform efforts need to be levelled across the whole school curriculum, not just within specific subject domains (Common 1994).

A bringing together of the critical inquiry position and the participatory, inquiry-based classroom model is proposed by Dianne Common (1994). A 'pedagogy of conversation' is proposed by Common as a means of constructing knowledge which will lead to students being prepared for participating in democracy as 'educated citizens'. She argues this is not possible at the present, due to limited pedagogy and (workforce) goals. This pedagogy of conversation requires a movement through dialogue, the development of a sense of community, reflection, construction of (individual and community/group) meaning, correction, re-construction and imagination, past personal experience to a more broadly-based grasp of knowledge and a more conscious recognition of how this knowledge has been achieved and can be applied to the community or the wider society. 'The exchange, if it is to be democratic, entails careful reflection and critical examination of the views offered in the light of the uncertainties in individual experience and knowledge, the goals that the community comes to hold and the plurality of shared values that forge them together' (p 246). She models, analyses and gives actual examples of the approach.

Common (1994) cites Sharp (1988) who indicates the approach by advocating that 'the construction of communities of inquiry through discourse is the means of education and, ultimately, social reform' (Common 1994, p 257). 'Dialogue' transforms the established social and intellectual relationships between teachers and students 'into those that characterize a group or a community' (Common 1994 p257). This community of inquiry, established through discussion and the sharing of meanings, through dialogue to use Sharp's (1988) term, is, in Common's (1994) terms, 'synonymous with conversation' (p 257).
The Pedagogy of Service Learning in the Community

One form this ‘active, experiential pedagogy’ can take is that of service learning, where the community is brought into the classroom and the students can engage with the community by actually physically contributing to it, upon request, and after planning and reflection on the task and its purposes. The goal of such a curriculum is that ‘it should prepare students to participate effectively in social mechanisms of public problem solving’ (Couto 1994, p 26). Data collected from participating students, principally college level, over 20 years consistently reported student outcomes included personal, social and political development and a heightened awareness of their own attitudes. They became aware of the importance and usefulness of networks in bringing about change and (were) left with hope that change is possible‘(Couto 1994, p 25).

For MacNichol (1993), the questions to which he sought answers were ones about how to accomplish a pedagogy which enabled students to learn by doing, and to ‘say to those students who are at risk that they are needed and not just needy’ (p 9). After four years experience with service learning, which was characterised as ‘tied to academic outcomes’ (p 10), in a High school, he concludes ‘Service learning does create more student-directed learning, more learning by doing, more authentic learning, and a deeper sense of caring and citizenship’ (p 10). Pedagogy is central: ‘Service learning is not a task to be accomplished, but a path to take to find better ways to educate and teach young people’ (p 11).

Power Imperatives in Pedagogic Change

Changes to the traditional style classroom management where, ‘the teacher remains in charge of time and how it is used,’ are outlined as requiring ‘turning over significant amounts of class time to the students for planning and reporting,’ Couto affirms that ‘Delegating that control is not an abdication of teaching responsibility but a deliberate pedagogy to foster the community entailed in problem solving and civic education’ (p 25). There seems to be merit in the notion that this approach has relevance in the training of teachers who then can adopt a similar pedagogy in teaching their school students.

Part of this critical pedagogy derives from the idea that many students in the classroom represent members of oppressed groups and who require ‘empowerment’ to ‘alter the social constructions that oppress them’ (Ukpokodu 1994, p 31). A key ingredient of this notion as it applies to pedagogy is the idea of the ‘inclusive classroom’ - ‘a classroom that legitimizes the ‘voices’ of all students and raises their consciousness in the learning process’ (Ukpokodu 1994, p 31).

The process incorporating critical pedagogy asserts that ‘when students actively and critically engage in the learning experiences, they become more knowledgeable about themselves and the complexities of social life and cognisant of the idea that society is a social construction’ ( Ukpokodu 1994, p 32). Part of this process, it is asserted, develops a ‘new awareness’ among students with associated outcomes such as a heightened sense of ‘obligation’ and insight into ways in which society may be ‘reconstructed’ to include all humans (Ukpokodu 1994, p 32). Underlying principles are the concepts of ‘voice’ and ‘liberation’ (Shor 1992, cited in Okpokodu 1994).

Of key importance is the need to create conditions in the classroom that foster active participation and learning. Giroux (1983, p 203) states this idea clearly: ‘Within the critical pedagogy approach, conditions must be provided that give students the opportunity to speak with their voices, to authenticate their own experiences.’
Global Perspectives in the Pedagogy

Where the curriculum focus is to be global citizenship, there is little difference in the pedagogy recommended by the literature. The wide variety of methodologies analysed by LeSourd (1992) are presented in four classifications: Cognitive processing skills, the enhancement of consciousness of the global perspective, student participation in the re-creation of cultural elements (ie from unfamiliar cultures), and direct cross-cultural contacts (ie visiting other cultures/places). LeSourd found the pedagogic literature, written specifically for teachers who wanted to enlarge their understandings and repertoire of strategies in this area, were 'An eclectic assortment of methods, without theoretical or research-based grounding... a rather shallow fund of professional resources' (p 35), and recommended more research into best practice be conducted and that these findings be published in teachers' journals.

Ukpokodu supports the notion of a global perspective as one which moves students to help 'create and foster a just world for themselves and all humans' (p 31). A survey of the literature suggests that the concept of a global perspective seems to have a particularly significant meaning for women.

The Feminist Perspective in the Pedagogy

The appropriateness of the female, rather than the male, standard, for the content and pedagogy of citizenship education is argued by Noddings, (1991), on the basis that such a curriculum will be more about duties which are more positive and voluntary than those prescribed by the law. Education for citizenship, if it is recalled that 'citizens are also inhabitants of communities', should be about manners, social skills, family relations; all of which are central tendencies which affect the experience of women. Were the female standard adopted rather than the male standard, rather than the for this curriculum, it would consist of more women than is usual, more active peace learning(as opposed to facilely a cessation of war), more of the ethics of care, more about decent human relationships and more emphasis on a safer, more caring community and world. Noddings emphasises 'In discussing citizenship and social consciousness, I've recommended not that we eliminate the male standard and substitute a female one but, rather, that we consider both traditions as we plan curriculum and instruction' (p 69). Some useful research into the role gender plays in social studies classrooms, with particular emphasis on civics learning, has been done by Harwood and Hahn (1992).

Noddings' interest in the role of social consciousness in citizenship is supported by Dynneson's 1992 research into 'student perceptions of good citizenship as they pertain to social influences in order to reveal how students think about citizenship education, and particularly how they think about good citizenship'(p56). He found that 700 US senior students from 4 states 'rated an ability to make wise decisions and concern for others as the most important citizenship characteristics.' This demonstrates good citizenship includes important social considerations and that the civic learning approach does 'not address ... the role of important social relationships in the entire socialization process.' These students 'rated knowledge of government and participation in community or school affairs as not very important.' Dynneson concludes that 'students relate good citizenship to social education to a greater extent than to political education' (p 57).

The Role of Textbooks and Materials in Civics and Citizenship Curricula

There are a number of references to methodologies which begin or are premised upon a close study of key documents. The UN Declaration of Human Rights is seen
by Muyumba (1994) as a critical document for the pedagogy of liberation. Drisko (1993) maintains that a curriculum based on a study (at appropriate levels) of the Federalist Papers, which are commentaries on the American Constitution, is a most effective pedagogic device in a school which is concerned to develop in its students a knowledge of, and the capacity to act according to, the fundamental principles of democracy.

Conley and Osborne (1983), in an examination of the textbooks used in schools, support the broad findings of Torney-Purta et. al., outlined above, as applied to Canada. In their findings they draw the distinction between curricula (including pedagogy and textbooks) which focus on political community and those less successful ones which emphasise the regime and its processes. They state: 'Research into political education and into political socialization suggests that such things as teaching style and classroom organization are at least as potent as textbooks and course content' (p. 72). (Note Table III on pp 82-83.)

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Literature Search Methodology

The methodology adopted for this literature search was to initially seek titles in the British Education Index, Canadian Education Index, ERIC (US) and the Australian Education Index. The key terms identified, in the case of the first Review paper, were: pedagogy and either civics or citizenship, which were added to by any word with the word stem pedagog. The subject terms used as alternates by the Indexes, 'teaching process' in the British Education Index, and 'instruction' in ERIC were also employed. The search terms were applied not only to titles, but also to the descriptors, identifiers, key terms and to the text of the abstracts which appeared in the entries. It was surprising, and not a little salutary to establish that there were no titles at all forthcoming from the Australian Index.

Subsequent stages to the literature search were identical for both Papers. Following the collection and reading of the materials produced by this method, other titles were located by perusing the extensive bibliographies associated with the materials already acquired. References which helped elaborate 'new' considerations were incorporated. Some of these were very recent. The work of particular authors, whose interests and research resided in these areas were also searched and included. Others were suggested by and sought from colleagues, or came from the storehouse the writers already had at their disposal. As with all literature searches, some serendipity was involved. All these materials were read, and those which proved appropriate, appear in the Bibliography.

Bibliography


