

Hypocrite or Hero? Thinking about the relationship between being a citizen and teaching Citizenship.

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Abstract

Citizenship seeks to provide young people with a more optimistic sense that politics is both something they can do and a route to improving the world. But, there's a problem, and that problem is us – the citizenship teachers. Critical pedagogy positions teachers as crucial to promoting social justice and yet the literature is replete with examples of teachers' conservatism, their compliance in the face of authority and their prejudice, and schools routinely reproduce inequality and promote a narrow individualistic form of competition. In this context, are Citizenship teachers the hypocrites within the system, shouting for an alternative whilst carefully kow-towing to the managerialism which stifles democratic deliberation and action? In this seminar I will explore some of the international research literature relating to Citizenship and human rights education (HRE) to think about the relationship between teachers' identities as citizens and as teachers of Citizenship in the search for some conceptual tools we might use to critically interrogate our own beliefs and actions.

Introduction

"It's improved so much, like drastically, year 7 and 8 were so basic we kind of did it in primary school and the teacher was crap... but year 9 Citizenship, it involves you a lot more and I prefer that." (Y9 Student, Oakton School)

"When I think of citizenship education I think of Mrs C and world peace for some reason..." (Y9 Student, Oakton School)

"A new kind of teacher... [is] 'called up' by educational reform – a teacher who can maximize performance, who can set aside irrelevant principles, or out-moded social commitments, for whom excellence and improvement are the driving forces of their practice." (Ball, 2003: 223)

This paper seeks to explore the tensions between our recognition that Citizenship teachers are important, and our awareness that educational policies and practices often seem to be at odds with the aims of citizenship education. The first two quotations from students reflect how important it is that children feel they have passionate, enthusiastic and knowledgeable teachers. In my research in secondary schools (Jerome, 2012) I found a strong positive correlation between students' estimation of their teacher's level of enthusiasm for Citizenship, their own enjoyment of the subject, and the teachers' level of expertise. To some extent this confirms Perry's work on the personal appeal of teachers as a form of 'educational seduction' (Perry, 1977). This also echoes the findings of the much larger longitudinal evaluation of Citizenship in England, which found a positive correlation between the amount of citizenship education students experienced (taught discretely by specialists) and their own sense of political efficacy (Keating et al., 2009). However, Stephen Ball (2003) highlights how the system itself seems to be promoting a set of values and practices which may well be working against some of the goals of citizenship education, by constraining certain forms of educational practice, and by increasingly requiring teachers to perform certain roles, whilst minimising others. Whilst the children in my research, and many writers on the subject (discussed below) assert the need for passionate teachers who can engage with real-life, model democratic processes and explore emergent learning with children; the performative system itself increasingly requires a cooler, more distant performance of teacherly activity, which discourages risk, de-emphasises personal values and seeks to iron out unpredictable quirks and complications.

Ball (2008) argues that the new managerialism in education, and the public services in general, seeks to open up the professions to public scrutiny and accountability. This entails establishing standard measures of outcome and performance, and regular routines through which people and institutions are held to account for the quality of outcomes and processes. The aim of such a system is to create a

cycle of continual improvement, in which a combination of professional responsibility and external scrutiny are mediated through some form of market-emulating system of user-choice to create pressure to drive up standards. In education in England this typically means that schools are not guaranteed an in-take of pupils, and therefore are not guaranteed an income to sustain their staff and resources unless they can generate sufficient demand among parents. This demand is supposed to be created by offering a desirable level of service – determined through the publication of league tables and inspection reports. However, it also leads to increasingly slick marketing activity by schools, keen to promote a distinctive identity in the local market of school choice (Maguire et al., 2011) and to an internalisation of these external pressures within school structures. This second response leads to the transformation of everyday practices, as school leaders re-orientate their practices to focus on their school's performance in those external measures and in doing so transform those performance targets into everyday realities for teachers. Ofsted inspections may only occur every few years but, through regular monitoring, judging and target-setting within the school, teachers are pressured to perform in observable ways against the external criteria established within these monitoring regimes. Perryman (2006) describes this as 'panoptic performativity' as the teacher cannot escape the gaze of those empowered to judge them, and therefore the performance of meeting these criteria becomes the focus of teachers' work. As Ball (2003) points out, this system, which was conceived to open up the secret world of the professional, actually leads to a greater opacity, as teachers become increasingly engaged in a superficial performance of 'being outstanding' according to others' (changing) criteria. The implications for teachers are obvious and Ball documents examples of teachers who feel increasingly alienated from their work, and frustrated that they seem to spend more time and energy focusing on aspects of the job which fall outside of the core educational relationships between them and their students. Time spent complying with external demands cannot be spent devising new activities or even just talking to children, parents and colleagues. Emotional energy expended on managing one's performance for the managerial gaze shifts one's focus away from the children. The end result is a feeling of inadequacy and inauthenticity as the superficiality of an externally defined performance dominates one's experience (Ball, 2003).

In addition to the negative impact on teachers, Crouch (2003) has argued that the transformation of public services towards a market-oriented system in which professionals are measured by simple (and simplistic) criteria also undermines any broader notion of public service. Instead, all work is treated in the same way, with the end result that values other than those related to market-emulating managerialism are side-lined. This means that schools are increasingly seen as exam factories and, although the broader goals of education may still be paid lip-service, these are clearly pushed to the margins of school life and therefore of teaching (Smithers, 2007). It also means public service as an expression of a citizenship ethic is replaced by a market-related logic in which teachers are recast as service-providers and children (and their parents) as consumers. Macpherson et al. (2014) worry that we are, "recast[ing] education not as a public or societal good grounded in democratic principles of justice and equal opportunity but as an individual, atomized and personalized private good" (cited in UN, 2014: 11). The UN Special Rapporteur on Education argues that the creeping expansion of the market is "by definition... detrimental to education as a public good and vitiates the humanistic mission of education." (UN, 2014: 20). So there are good reasons to problematize the context within which teachers are trying to promote citizenship education. Their own professional lives, and the contexts in which education takes place, are increasingly at odds with the values and practices of citizenship. When the values of the market and the attendant individualization of risk and responsibility take centre stage, what can we expect of teachers and how do they respond?

Teachers (constrained) agency

Whilst policy makers often tend to envisage teachers simplistically as 'conduits', who will transmit policy into the classroom, in fact they may be better perceived as 'gatekeepers' or 'controllers' (Sim, 2008). On this view the teacher is a *curriculum agent*, whose practice "is intellectual, moral and inventive" (Parker, 1987, in Sim, 2008: 263). This is reflected in Ball et al.'s (2012) work investigating how teachers respond to policy, and how they both shape it and are shaped by it in different ways. However, the preceding discussion reminds us that teachers' agency is exercised in increasingly

constrained contexts, where new forms of regulation exist in a complex 'regulative ensemble' (Aglietta, 1979: 101). Whilst teachers do indeed exercise agency, they do so under an increasingly threatening and controlling managerial gaze, which distorts their efforts. In the following section I review the literature regarding teachers' agency in relation to Citizenship, in order to explore the tensions outlined.

The ignorant teacher

One reason why teachers may not be able to exercise their potential agency effectively relates to their ignorance of the subject. Specialist teacher education remains a problem for Citizenship in England, where it has statutory subject status (Hayward and Jerome, 2010) – the number of training places has never been sufficient to ensure there is a qualified specialist teacher in every secondary school and surveys routinely identify teachers own insecurities about subject knowledge (Kerr et al., 2007). In the first decade of implementation, teachers teaching Citizenship frequently had no knowledge of the key curriculum documents, yet alone a sound grasp of the actual subject knowledge they were teaching.

The UNHCHR evaluation of the first phase of the World Programme for HRE noted that "the overall approach to teacher training seems ad hoc" (UNHCHR, 2010: 10) and bemoaned "the lack of systematic approaches to... the training of teachers" in this area (UNHCHR, 2010: 20). In a survey of teachers in Ireland, whilst attitudes to human rights were generally positive, teachers had low levels of knowledge of human rights (Waldron et al., 2011). This is a common story from international research, for example in Scotland a majority of teachers said they had not been trained and lacked adequate knowledge (BEMIS, 2013); and teacher education emerged as a key recommendation in similar research in Australia (Burrige et al., 2013), Finland (HRC, 2014) and Denmark (DIHR, 2013). A recent survey of teacher education across 26 countries demonstrated that none of the countries ensured teachers knew about children's rights through their initial teacher education (Jerome et al., 2015).

I have discovered no links in the literature between this problem and the performativity culture, but one may note that clearly these teachers are able to qualify and perform the role of Citizenship teacher without remedying these knowledge gaps. This might indicate that the kinds of performance indicators used to judge teachers reflect concerns which are not related to the deep development of Citizenship learning. This certainly resonates with that strand of research which consistently decries the superficial teaching which results from the 'teach to the test' culture in many schools (Jerome, 2010).

The teacher as obstacle

Another obvious way in which teachers act as gate-keepers is through their judgement about the extent to which Citizenship might require additional work. Covell and Howe (2005) argue that teachers who do not have a strong commitment to Citizenship can fall back on their general busy-ness as an excuse for not making space for the subject. This is echoed in Schweisfurth's (2006) study of Canadian teachers, many of whom simply failed to engage with a Global Citizenship Education initiative because they felt they were too busy. Bajaj's discussion of a case study in India points out that at the very least NGOs wishing to develop HRE programmes there must have a strategy for winning over teachers, to gain access to children and schools. Once they are open to the idea of HRE these teachers can be seen as collaborative agents – willing and able to work with specialists to establish educational programmes (Bajaj, 2012).

The link between this form of teacher obstruction and the performativity-managerialist culture is perhaps in this concept of busy-ness. Whilst most schools would officially embrace goals related to Citizenship, there are clear priorities in which other measurable outcomes are favoured. It would not be surprising if teachers responding to these priorities were to perceive time spent on non-priority areas such as Citizenship as time mis-spent. As teachers have to make judgements about where to focus their efforts, it is easy to see how Citizenship might be marginalised.

The conservative teacher

Mead (2010) notes that Ofsted have adopted different agendas for Citizenship, depending on the nature of the schools being inspected. Those schools with poor results and struggling with poor pupil

behaviour received reports which tended to discuss Citizenship as a mechanism for regulating behaviour and promoting better relationships in the school; whilst those schools with higher grades tended to receive more general comments about Citizenship provision and ethos. This implies that inspectors interpret Citizenship in specific ways in response to their interpretation of the school context. Similarly the teachers in Jerome's (2012) case study schools identified school-specific problems and reformulated Citizenship as an educational response. In this way Citizenship can become an educational remedy for perceived deficits, and in many cases this reflects a broader policy discourse relating to the 'responsibilization' or 're-moralization' agenda (Manley Scott et al., 2009). This represents a deeply conservative interpretation of Citizenship, which reflects a traditional view of children as 'the beast in the nursery' requiring civilizing adult guidance.

In dealing with teacher beliefs about children's rights for example, David (2002) points out that this may present a challenge to teachers' traditional beliefs because it represents a shift from education as welfare provision to education as a right, and implies a second shift in adult roles from protection to facilitating emancipation and autonomy. Empirical case studies continue to reiterate the importance of these issues, for example a case study of HRE in Hong Kong concluded that two major obstacles remained: the teachers' fear for the loss of their authority and the limiting impact of their lack of subject knowledge (Leung et al., 2011).

In the absence of specialist knowledge, teachers' innate conservatism often comes to the fore, aligned with the responsibilization agenda. For example, in Ireland a survey found that teachers' ignorance meant their teaching was not always related to human rights language or principles and that this was associated with a tendency to focus on a social cohesion agenda rather than empowerment, critique and inequality. Teachers thus tended to adopt a conservative model rather than transformative one, with half the reported HRE events being linked to charity campaigns with a more global focus than local (Waldron et al., 2011). Similarly Jerome's (2012) case study schools seemed to adopt a softer communitarian sense of citizenship as 'helping' and 'good neighbourliness', and downplayed the more overtly political dimensions.

Bajaj adopts the term 'decoupling' (from Meyer & Rowan, 1978) in this regard, which refers to situations where a programme such as Citizenship or HRE is formally adopted, but subsequently only selectively implemented or significantly adapted (Bajaj, 2012: 4). In her study religious morality or rural public health and hygiene were used as lenses through which to interpret human rights, with the effect that these distorted the learning (frequently by de-politicising rights and focusing on children's responsibilities). There are other examples where prevailing cultural values and educational traditions are seen to be incompatible with aspects of democratic citizenship, for example, Seung-Mi Lee argues that HRE advocates in the Republic of Korea refuse to use the terminology of rights at all in order to avoid the local sensitivities that might be aroused (Lee, 2007), whilst in Japan Akuzawa (2007) and Takeda (2012) argue that HRE tends to be mediated through a dominant approach to moral and values education, leading to some principles such as participation being downplayed. In this context Akuzawa cites anecdotal evidence that, when asked about human rights, teachers often talk about values such as kindness, sympathy and being good to friends rather than concrete rights or conventions. Similar distortions occur where rights are mediated through education for national identity or patriotism (Akuzawa, 2007; Leung, 2007). Similarly, there is some recent evidence that teachers tend to interpret anti-radicalization policies through Islamophobic assumptions, and thus further distort Citizenship agendas (Leeman and Wardekker, 2013; Pal Sian, 2015).

In these ways Citizenship teachers can refract the radical, political and collective nature of citizenship through the dominant individualised logic of school, which also focuses on the deficits of childhood. This conservative interpretation of Citizenship might be promoted through a focus on adult authority, individual responsibility, a lack of trust and a focus on individual assessment and performance. If children are to be judged individually and teachers held to account for their performances, the system seems to favour a conservative reading of Citizenship.

The hypocritical teacher

Whilst this innately conservative culture may lead some teachers to adopt an avowedly conservative view of Citizenship, it may also lead to another potential problem – teachers’ believing they are promoting a more critical and progressive form of Citizenship, whilst falling considerably short of that goal. In relation to Human Rights Education (HRE), Krappman has noted that many schools:

“have a tendency to view children as dependent, inexperienced, and undisciplined [and therefore] in need of clear order and authoritative guidance. When teachers ask students to state their view, students often regard this as a mere educational trick rather than a genuine interest in the students’ perspective” (Krappman, 2006: 65).

Yamasaki’s reflections on his school data led him to warn that schools are open to the charge of hypocrisy where they cannot implement the values they claim to be teaching (Yamasaki, 2002: 46). This resonates with a common theme in relation to student voice work in which school councils are often manipulated to co-opt students into managerialist discourses. Our first form of teacher hypocrisy then is the situation in which teachers appear to offer a democratic citizenship education, but fall short because they do not really believe in children’s capacity to engage with the process, or because they fall back too readily on managerialist agendas. Critics of progressive education argue that this form of hypocrisy is built into the very assumptions of the philosophy because the teacher is always ultimately wielding authority, just under the cloak of democratic participation (Buckard, 2007).

Another form of hypocrisy stems from fuzzy thinking about the role of values in education. Somehow, well-intentioned teachers fall into the trap of proclaiming they leave children free to explore alternatives whilst seeking to embed values covertly into their teaching. The authors of the Council of Europe’s Compass Manual for HRE claim that values clarification is one of their pedagogical tenets (Brander et al., 2012: 32) and thus fail to recognise that the manual explicitly promotes the principle that all young people should value human rights – thus aligning itself more clearly with a model of values transmission. In a study of student teachers of Citizenship, there was a similar tension between their desire to promote the values of democracy through developing democratic pedagogies, but a distaste for explicitly saying that was what they were doing. Similarly many more of these student teachers felt it was appropriate somehow for the school to promote certain values, than were willing to see a role for themselves in that project (Jerome and Clemitshaw, 2012).

Mejias and Starkey (2012) argue that this is not just a problem of well-meaning teachers falling short of their aspirations. The competing priorities of exam grades and individual progress in a competitive system are not simply alternative policy prescriptions vying with Citizenship for attention, but they often function as overarching paradigms, which may be inherently antithetical to Citizenship. In a study of a school implementing an Amnesty HRE programme they concluded there were tensions between the dominant neo-liberal paradigm promoting individualised, competitive, consumer models of education, and the humanistic, collaborative, developmental education espoused within the HRE model, echoing the concerns of the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education (discussed above). In Mejias and Starkey’s example, the dominant discourse prevailed and student voice was ultimately silenced quite dramatically, when managers reasserted their authority over the children and abandoned their rights-based project.

Chuah (2009) tries to argue that hypocrisy within the stifling performativity culture could be embraced as a stepping stone towards a more progressive set of values. His argument is essentially that it is better to tolerate teachers saying they value alternative educational goals even if they really do not, or know they cannot achieve them, because this at least creates an alternative way of talking about education. He also argues that teachers should adopt a more playful approach to exploring non-performative goals. Both I think are problematic in that the former ignores the impact such hypocrisy may have on children, and the second ignores the reality of being monitored and judged. Children with teachers who cheerfully embrace a rhetoric of democratic citizenship but fail to follow through are likely to feel betrayed. Teachers who playfully spend time on alternative projects either detract from their performance of the officially sanctioned roles for teachers, or call these performances too obviously into question. Either way it is difficult to embrace such hypocrisy as anything other than problematic. One

way in which teachers may try to resolve these difficulties is to embrace Citizenship qualifications and thus publically perform educational success through their subject, but this is also potentially problematic in that the subject becomes another element in the 'exam factory' and is as susceptible to the logic of 'teaching to the test' as any other subject.

The heroic teacher

Sometimes the literature captures glimpses of particularly significant individuals, for example Keddie documents Mr C's approach to teaching Citizenship. He is a political activist who uses his experiences around the world as teaching material, and who also creates opportunities for his students to engage in campaigns. Keddie notes that Mr C's personal commitment to promote equality and inclusion affects both his teaching style and decisions about what topics to teach, thus realising the transformative potential of citizenship education (Keddie, 2008). In Al-Nakib's (2012) case study of curriculum reform in Kuwait individual teachers use their agency to interpret even relatively un-promising and conservative curricula frameworks. In her case study school Al-Nakib notes that a long-standing relationship with UNESCO had led to the development of a more student-centred, critical pedagogy, which enables teachers to inject a more 'radical' dimension in to their Human Rights and Citizenship course than had been envisaged by policy-makers and textbook writers.

In her study of Citizenship teachers in Singapore, Sim (2008) described this process as teachers *re-forming* policy, through active interpretation, as opposed to narrowly *conforming*. In his case study of enterprise education in Scotland, Deuchar (2006: 544) described a similar process, in which:

"The teachers studied were perhaps beginning to 'dress' enterprise in a new set of clothes that resembled many of the characteristics of the Citizenship agenda, as a means of taking the edge off of the models of business enterprise education and profitability."

Surveys of Citizenship teachers in England have also demonstrated that their personal scepticism about a political issue, for example in relation to patriotism, leads many teachers to re-form policy with which they are uneasy (Davies et al., 2005, Hand & Pearce, 2009, Jerome & Clemitshaw, 2012). Other studies have confirmed that different political beliefs tend to lead teachers to construct Citizenship rather differently. Leenders and her colleagues have demonstrated in their research in the Netherlands that teachers' own beliefs about politics shape their classroom practice (Leenders et al., 2008) and Myers' research in Brazil demonstrates the impact of teachers' own political activism on their practice (Myers, 2009). For many of these teachers, teaching is seen as a political activity (Myers, 2009: 19) which influences their interpretation of the curriculum, their selection of topics for study and their pedagogical choices. Those with more experience of participating in social movements may well teach in more democratic ways and consider a wider variety of actors and acts within their consideration of active citizenship.

Reflections

Schweisfurth found "the complexity of teachers' work means that they constantly need to make judgements about where to spend their own energies, and the learning time of their students" (Schweisfurth, 2006: 49-50). Whilst this provides many with a reason for ignoring Citizenship, it also leaves significant power in the hands of teachers to find space if they have a strong enough commitment. Schweisfurth found that teachers who felt the global citizenship agenda was important (who held this as a personal value) were able to pursue this agenda more in their teaching than others for whom this was not so personally significant. This helps to explain how the performative culture may indeed create spaces in which teachers can explore Citizenship in different ways with children. As Stickney puts it "caught up in this *hurly burly* of reforms, teachers' agency is only possible where power relations permit freedom" (Stickney, 2012: 656). This requires teachers to tread a careful path – they must understand the rules of the system sufficiently well to spot opportunities for re-interpretation and challenge, whilst not compromising themselves too fundamentally in the eyes of those empowered to judge and discipline them.

Foucault's conceptualisation of power maintains that it does not simply reside with individuals or office-holders, rather it exists within power-relations, i.e. between people. Whilst some may well seek to

construct a panopticon there is always the possibility for forms of “insubordination and a certain essential obstinacy” which means “there is no relationship of power without the means of escape or possible flight” (Foucault, 2001 cited in Leask, 2011: 63). Stickney observes that every occurrence of a surveillance situation involves a negotiation between the observer and the observed teacher. Confident teachers can brazen it out, re-describing radical pedagogical or curriculum interpretations in terms which are more likely to be officially sanctioned. Asserting a confident sense of professional expertise can help to re-orientate the power relationship so that the teacher is not entirely under the influence of the ostensibly more powerful observer. Alternatively Stickney notes teachers can simply reserve a ‘public script’ for such events, and revert to ‘hidden scripts’ when un-observed (Stickney, 2012: 657). This may feel dangerous or even dishonest, but as Leask reminds us, for Foucault this is an inevitable consequence of the way power circulates and constitutes “strategic games between liberties” (Foucault, 2000 cited in Leask, 2011: 64). In this Leask argues “resistance... is reclaimed, and made *common*. Resistance is by no means reserved for Byronic heroes: it is for all, by all, and everywhere.” (Leask, 2011: 66).

Ball and Olmedo (2013) go further in applying this insight to teaching and argue that our sense of identity as teachers cannot exist prior to our engagement in such power relations and that such identities are formed through what we *do*, rather than what we *are* in some essential sense. However, stepping outside of the dominant performative-managerialist discourses entails confronting the “micro-politics of little fears” (Lazzarato, 2009 cited in Ball and Olmedo, 2013: 94) including the possibility of ridicule and a feeling of precariousness in one’s professional context. And yet, silence and compliance also bring the consequences of frustration, anxiety and feelings of inauthenticity outlined in Ball’s original paper (Ball, 2003). Whilst it is difficult, Ball and Olmedo conclude:

“All of this involves recognition of the possibilities of power, the fragility of freedom and the limits of contingency and domination, while seeking a space within them” (Ball and Olmedo, 2013: 94).

Dejaeghere’s (2008) study of educators’ sense of their own citizenship identifies that they often feel a sense of empowerment because they have experienced using power through their own privileged position, inter-personally, within institutions, and within broader social structures. She argues that this provides useful resources on which to draw for those who want to promote citizenship education, although she also cautions this requires a degree of reflectiveness to understand how citizenship might be promoted for people who do not occupy such privileged positions. We might also add that in the kinds of school contexts we have been describing, such reflexivity is essential to develop a more politicised reading of the institutional problems and possibilities for action. What Ball and Olmedo, Leask and Stickney all indicate is that the first step is to unsettle the dominant discourses and create a space for thinking differently. In our critique of the performative culture the alternatives are developed, for example Stephen Ball (2013) has built on his analysis to call for the dismantling of the elements of the performative system to create the space for schools to become genuinely *educative* institutions and for teaching to build a form of *democratic* professionalism. On the basis of critique and re-imagining educational practices one can search for spaces and strategies to explore alternatives, but, having developed a more political reading of one’s situation it is also important to engage with more collective forms of resistance, such as those promoted by Michael Apple (2012).

O’Sullivan (2008) has argued that we should not be surprised that many teachers are not motivated by a radical or critical form of Citizenship, because ultimately they have benefitted from education and are unlikely to question those values which underpin the system. As I have argued, many teachers are also likely to succumb to the dominant discourse regulating their professional lives – faced with life in the panopticon the most sensible solutions may well be to stay and play by the rules of the game or find the door and leave. Those who stay and engage in the personal and collective struggle need help to build the “decentred unities” (Apple, 2012) which offer the intellectual and emotional support to sustain their efforts and to build the democratic alternatives. The heroic citizenship teacher is heroic precisely because through their struggle they create the spaces for developing practices which (may) presage an alternative form of democratic education.

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