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**OVERCOMING THE NOCEBO EFFECT - A RADICAL
APPROACH TO CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION**

**SUPERAR EL EFECTO NOCEBO - UN ENFOQUE RADICAL DE EDUCACIÓN
PARA LA CIUDADANÍA**

**SUPERAR O EFEITO NOCEBO - UM ENFOQUE RADICAL DA EDUCAÇÃO PARA
A CIDADANIA**

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Abstract

Evidence indicates that Citizenship Education has been unevenly introduced in schools in England, leading to the suggestion that it is a placebo. This article argues that there is a danger it will be a nocebo, which the current state of Citizenship Education in England is in danger of having a negative effect rather than no significant effect at all. With particular reference to some critical educationists from the mid to late Twentieth Century, a radical approach to Citizenship Education is proposed which could prevent this phenomenon. To that end, attention is given to the urgent need for schools to engage with a range of identified aspects of Citizenship Education and one example of such a school is briefly discussed. It is concluded that notable examples of excellence in citizenship teaching should be the norm rather than the exception, without which development there is a danger that Citizenship Education in England will indeed prove to be a nocebo in rendering future discussion and planning for political and civic education beyond consideration.

Keywords: Active citizenship, ethos, placebo/nocebo, questioning, radical, risk, voice.

Resumen

La evidencia indica que Educación para la Ciudadanía ha sido introducida de forma desigual en las escuelas de Inglaterra, lo que lleva a pensar que se trata de un placebo. En este artículo se argumenta que existe el peligro de que ésta llegue a convertirse en un nocebo, teniendo en cuenta que el estado actual de la Educación para la Ciudadanía en Inglaterra está en peligro de pasar de no tener ningún efecto significativo a tener un efecto negativo. Para poder prevenir este fenómeno, se propone un enfoque radical de Educación para la Ciudadanía, haciendo particular referencia a algunos pedagogos críticos del siglo XX. A tal efecto, se presta atención a la necesidad urgente de que las escuelas se comprometan con una serie de aspectos identificados en este artículo en relación a la Educación para la Ciudadanía, al mismo tiempo que se discute brevemente un ejemplo de este tipo de escuela. Se concluye que los ejemplos notables de excelencia en la enseñanza de la ciudadanía deben ser la norma y no la excepción, y que sin este desarrollo, existe el peligro de que Educación para la Ciudadanía en Inglaterra llegue de hecho a convertirse en un nocebo en los debates futuros y la planificación de la educación política y cívica.

Palabras clave: Ciudadanía activa, ethos, placebo/nocebo, el cuestionamiento, riesgo, voz.

Resumo

A evidência indica que a Educação para a Cidadania tem sido irregularmente introduzida nas escolas da Inglaterra, o que leva a pensar que se trata de um placebo. Neste artigo se argumenta que existe o perigo de que seja um nocebo, que o estado atual da educação para a cidadania na Inglaterra está em perigo de ter um efeito negativo em lugar de um efeito significativo em absoluto. Com particular referência a alguns pedagogos críticos da metade ao final do século XX, um enfoque radical da Educação para a Cidadania poderia prevenir este fenômeno. Para tal efeito, se observa a necessidade urgente de que as escolas se comprometam com uma série de aspectos identificados de Educação para a cidadania e um exemplo deste tipo de escola se discute brevemente. Concluímos que os exemplos notáveis de excelência no ensino da cidadania deve ser a norma e não a exceção, sem a qual o desenvolvimento, existe o perigo de que a Educação para a Cidadania em Inglaterra certamente resultará ser um nocebo na realização de futuros debates e o planejamento da educação política e cívica para além do esperado.

Palavras-chave: Cidadania ativa, ethos, placebo/nocebo, o questionamento, risco, voz.

INTRODUCTION

This paper begins with a discussion of recent evidence regarding the state of Citizenship Education in England, proposing that there are indications of a nocebo effect – where an intervention has detrimental effects which outweigh any potential benefits. It is then argued that a more radical approach to Citizenship Education than is currently generally apparent is required in order to alleviate and reverse the trend towards a nocebo effect, going on to briefly outline a number of strategies through which such an objective might be achieved and identifying one school example of such practices. Finally some observations are offered regarding the consequences of ignoring the current situation.

1. DISCUSSION

It is clear from the detailed findings of the final Citizenship Education Longitudinal Study (CELS) (Keating et al., 2010) that Citizenship Education in schools in England has been unevenly introduced and that its effects have been unevenly experienced. Not all schools have introduced the subject, despite it being a statutory component of the National Curriculum for England (QCA, 2007), and many of the strategies for introduction and ‘delivery’ have failed to engage either teachers or pupils. OFSTED (The Office for Standards in Education–England’s school inspectorate, 2010), a smaller study than CELS in terms of both size and duration as well as being the outcome of school inspections rather than systematic research, none the less found provision to be inadequate in over 11% of schools and only satisfactory in a further 35%. In other words, just under half of the schools inspected provided no better than satisfactory teaching of Citizenship Education. The question mark in the title of that report – ‘Citizenship Established?’ – emphasises the prevailing uncertainty whether the subject has a secure and valued place in the school curriculum in England despite (at the time of writing) being a statutory requirement for all state school pupils aged between 11 and 16 years of age.

As many have attested, Citizenship Education must be relevant to the lives of pupils and of those around them if it is to become both established and effective (Advisory Group on Citizenship, 1998; Ajegbo et al., 2007; Leighton, 2006, 2012; OFSTED, 2010; Reid et al., 2010; Smith et al., 2010). It requires pupils to question social institutions, the mass media and other sources of information, established conventions, new ideas, assumed truths, parents, teachers and themselves. It is a subject which, at its best, can enable pupils to unlock doors and their own potential; at its worst, however, it is a subject which can deter pupils from inquisitiveness and from participation in the political process. Where the subject is not seen as relevant or where it contradicts pupils’ understanding of their own experiences it does not work, but instead becomes ‘innovation without change’ (Rudduck, 1991, p. 26).

In this sense it can be worse than having no provision at all in that the failure of Citizenship Education to effect positive change becomes seen as evidence of the inevitability of inequality rather than a consequence of the organisation and priorities of the state. As Gramsci (1985) and others have demonstrated, the ‘common sense’ of hegemony leads to reinforcement of the status quo, rather than to change, under the guise of failed experimentation. This is the circumstance for Citizenship Education which Gillborn (2006) describes as a

placebo, 'a fake treatment, meant to placate concern, but making no actual attempt to address the central problem' (p. 97) but which might more accurately, and of greater concern, be described as a nocebo. Gillborn's position was taken largely in respect of Citizenship Education's capacity to address racism and other issues relating to ethnicity and diversity; while in full agreement that these must be addressed, the position taken in this article is that there are more issues of inequality and social injustice than these alone.

It is of value to consider research in medicine to both contextualise and question Gillborn's argument offering, as he does, a medical analogy. While Hrobjartsson and Gotzsche (2003) show there is no evidence of placebos having clinically important effects –neither help nor hindrance– (Barsky et al., 2002) discuss the phenomenon of the nocebo, where a placebo has a significant negative effect. Therefore a placebo is of no significance, which is not the point Gillborn appears to intend to make, while a nocebo causes harm. If Gillborn's medical analogy is sustainable, it could be the case that Citizenship Education as it exists in England will exacerbate and create new social problems rather than resolve those perceived problems which informed its introduction into the National Curriculum. In other words, there is a significant likelihood that the ineffective teaching of Citizenship Education in schools, and as experienced by pupils, might serve to further disengage and alienate young people rather than engage their interests and civic commitment. Current approaches to Citizenship Education will not lead to a society where difference is accepted but inequality is not, where citizens are skilled at enquiry, advocacy, opposition and scrutiny, one where people understand who they and their neighbours are without rancour.

Despite the accusation of failure levelled by Gillborn (2006), the claim was never made that Citizenship Education would right all wrongs and cure all social ills in England. Indeed, the Advisory Group on Citizenship report which resulted in the introduction of compulsory Citizenship Education in England's secondary schools clearly states that.

Schools can only do so much . . . Pupils' attitudes to active citizenship are influenced quite as much by values and attitudes in schools as by many factors other than schooling: by family, the immediate environment, the media and the example of those in public life. Sometimes these are positive factors, sometimes not (Advisory Group on Citizenship, 1998, p. 9).

However, there is a significant danger, should the nocebo phenomenon apply, that the failure of Citizenship Education to bring about an end to inequality and all other social ills will be interpreted or offered as evidence that these things are inherent and inevitable in human society. Not only will the lofty ambitions of Citizenship Education fail to be realised, but that failure will become viewed as unavoidable if not inevitable. Although Citizenship Education was introduced into the National Curriculum for England with cross-party parliamentary support, there was considerable suspicion and opposition from many quarters, as summarised by Frazer (2003) where she identifies a conscious and concerted adherence to 'the illusion of the non-necessity of politics' (p. 75) in England – not only, but particularly, in educational theory and discourse. Frazer characterizes the English emphasis on values over structures, theories and action as essentially and explicitly depoliticizing, comparing it to the position in most US states where it is a given that schools are responsible for civic and political education. She challenges the largely irrelevant yet dominant debate on partisan teaching, fuelled as it is by 'deep seated antipathies' (p. 72) rather than being informed by

the reality of the daily experience of educators to maintain positions of informed neutrality across a range of controversial, discomfiting or contested areas of study. Bearing in mind that ‘the media reception for Citizenship Education in England remains distinctly hostile’ (Andrews & Mycock, 2007, p. 81), it is clear that there are many who would be happy to see the demise of the subject.

In order to avoid this irreversible outcome, Citizenship Education has to become more than the civic republican model (with its emphasis on learning and accepting pre-determined civics and citizen responsibilities), the liberal approach which emphasises citizens’ autonomy of choice without apparently questioning how the state shapes or dictates such choices, or the communitarian model which offers as a focus the common good which is situated in society and social roles but does not seriously interrogate the power inequalities which determine that ‘good’. To build on any or all of these perspectives, Citizenship Education has to adopt a radical approach through which the young can become involved and empowered to contribute to the development of their society in ways which they consider essential. After all, as one 15 year old asked some time ago, ‘if you give me the same indoctrination as a child, how can you expect me to be any different from you?’ (Blishen, 1969, p. 7). One such radical approach is provided by the principles outlined in the latter part of this article, with primary consideration being given to why the subject is important rather than simply thinking about what to teach and how to teach it.

1.1. The need for radical Citizenship Education

The notion of a radical approach to education is not new, even if what constitutes radical varies according to time and place. Godwin (1977), for example, described study in order to pass examinations, without any desire to learn and to develop, as a mockery. Several references in this article are therefore made to texts which might otherwise be regarded as dated and which are certainly older –longer established– than might be expected in relation to what is a comparatively new subject in England. The perspectives on education offered by Blishen (1969), Godwin (1977), Goodman (1975), Illich (1973), Morgan & Morris (1999), Payne & Spender (1980), Postman & Weingartner (1976), Rudduck (1991), Spender & Sarah (1980), Wilson et al., (1969), share a commitment to challenging taken for granted assumptions about the nature of education and share a belief in questioning the status quo. They illustrate young people’s insights into their experiences of schooling and identify with clarity and certainty the need to change the old ways if young people are to be prepared for a new society. While they all write about education in general, some time ago and in contexts by no means identical to the current social and educational climate of England, their comments and insights remain pertinent to education in general and to Citizenship Education in particular.

That ‘educators need to be able to inculcate a favourable attitude to learning new things’ (Wilson et al.,1969, p. 364) is particularly true with regard to Citizenship Education, and the final CELS report (Keating et al., 2010) shows that the success of teachers of citizenship in England in this regard has been sporadic. That report’s unequivocal finding was that Citizenship Education is most successful when taught by dedicated specialists in explicitly timetabled lessons – not, perhaps, a surprising finding to anyone who has either taught out-

side their specialism or been taught by a non-specialist, but one of which little awareness has been shown by those school leaders and others who expect Citizenship Education to be taught by people with neither the skills nor enthusiasm the subject requires. As noted in regard to schooling in general by Ruth [15] 'there is nothing worse than sitting in a lesson knowing full well that the teacher is dying to get rid of you and rush back to the staff-room to have her cup of tea' (Blisshen, 1969, p. 141). The same issues appear thirty years later where pupils complain of poor experiences when a teacher 'just reads out of a book', where 'there was not a proper teacher', occasions when pupils 'felt you couldn't ask because you would feel stupid' (Morgan & Morris, 1999, p. 59) and observe that 'if a teacher not doing their own specialist subject, not so good' (Morgan & Morris, 1999, p. 52), whereas one of the significant factors in pupils' perceptions of good teaching is where 'they like doing the subject and had the right training' (Morgan and Morris, 1999, p. 52). It is therefore not unique to Citizenship Education that engaged and engaging teachers have a positive effect on pupils but, bearing in mind that 'the introduction of a new subject, even one that is statutory, has proved to be far from easy' (OFSTED, 2010, p. 4) it is particularly apposite.

Preparation for citizenship is more important than other, more instrumental aims which often enjoy curricular priority. The INCA study (O'Donnell et al., 2010) identifies that all 21 nations surveyed have democracy/civics/ citizenship in their educational aims, reinforcing Gutmann's (1987) imperative that such aims should take moral priority over any other aims of education. Today's pupils will complete their schooling and, in most cases, can be expected to be in some form of employment for about 30% of the day for about 85% of the year for less than 75% of their remaining lifespan – therefore, in the region of 20% of their post-school existence – but they will exist as citizens throughout their lives, whether working, relaxing, socialising or sleeping; education, if it is to prepare the young for their future lives, has an obligation to allow them the opportunity to develop more than skills for work. They will undoubtedly live what Wilson et al. (1969) term segmented lives, but it is their status and actions as citizens which will hold those segments together.

If pupils are to learn about themselves and those around them, about their entitlements and their duties, they have to engage with the political system. For pupils to understand how they can take informed and responsible action in order to hold to account those in government and others in power requires much more than familiarity with rights and responsibilities, and depends upon a great deal more than what, if anything, happens during lessons designated as Citizenship Education. Given the findings of OFSTED (2010) and CELS (2010) referred to above, this is perhaps just as well.

The radical approach to Citizenship Education proposed requires engagement with risk-taking, questioning, school ethos, issues of identity, diversity, the range and potential of pupil voices, political engagement, active citizenship, the nature of social order, and with political knowledge. This list does not represent a hierarchy of principles nor can it be described as either exhaustive or exclusive. There will be other issues to consider, such as modes and purposes of assessment and the development of skills of critical thinking, and each is addressed in outline only, but they lie at the heart of the subject and therefore at the heart of its potential for change.

1.2. Some Potential Components of Radical Citizenship Education

1.2.1. Risk

Radical Citizenship Education requires risk on the part of the state, the school, the teacher and the pupil. The state –whether politicians or bureaucrats– needs to be confident that the system to be scrutinized is robust enough to withstand sustained inquiry, investigation and dissection; not because it is perfect, but because the imperfections can be understood and potentially addressed. It must therefore also be open to the possibility of change. Bryant (2012) cautions that ‘global citizenship, as it is currently conceived in state-sanctioned curriculum resources, is unlikely to foster the kinds of individual and collective action necessary for a substantively more equitable relationship between the First and Third Worlds’ (p. 262). While not as despairing as Gilborn’s placebo, Bryant’s analysis clearly demands a significant change of direction in approaches to global citizenship – one which moves away from predictability and playing safe.

The school which provides a radical approach to Citizenship Education risks parental pressure in favour of examinations and away from pupil development, as well as moving away from a comfort zone marked by boundaries of tradition and convention. Teachers of Citizenship Education take risks daily–often simply in teaching a subject for which they have had little or no professional development and for which they have limited time and other resources. They also risk pupil unrest and colleague disquiet by presenting work and working relationships in ways very different to those established routines which provide a sense of security to staff and pupils. If we agree –as the author of this article agrees– that ‘education is not the determination of who the student should be, but of how she might become’ (Blake et al., 2000, p. 195), then we must ensure an emphasis on risk and inquiry over safe lessons, safe questions and safer answers.

If they are to become or continue to be active citizens, pupils cannot be passive recipients of Citizenship Education, so they must also take risks – by adopting a different approach to learning, by expressing views they will be expected to explain and justify, by facing up to some potentially uncomfortable truths, by taking responsibility for themselves and for others, by taking part rather than being allowed or encouraged to be passengers. These are explicit requirements, although phrased differently, of England’s National Curriculum for Citizenship (QCA, 2007) but there is compelling evidence that such activities and opportunities are only sporadically present in schools in England (Keating et al., 2010; OFSTED, 2010). It must be remembered that ‘curiosity is one of the most general features of young children – until it is crushed out of them by parents and teachers because it is so very inconvenient’ (Wilson et al., 1969, p. 364), and teachers must not allow their own need for security to outweigh the potential for learning and personal development inherent in young people’s curiosity.

Many of the principles of radical Citizenship Education are principles of effective teaching and learning, and risk taking is something which should be a basic feature of all teaching. Most teachers understand and can deploy the technical skills of their calling, just as, for example, most professional footballers can deploy the technical skills of theirs – but the

characteristics which have marked Pele, Cruyff, Ronaldo and Messi from their contemporaries have been the ability to judge when to employ one skill over another, when to be creative, when to hold back, when to take risks.

Jamous & Peliolle (1970) separate the skills of medical practice into the technical and the indeterminate; while the technical skills of diagnosis, prognosis, and treatment are essential, it is the indeterminate skills of professional judgement, patient rapport and lifestyle contexts which separate the outstanding practitioner from the mediocre. To nullify curiosity would render Citizenship education a nocebo in that, in the words of M, a 17 year old male pupil, it is essential that we 'replace constipated ways of teaching' (Blishen, 1969, p. 63) and strive to go beyond the mediocre; playing safe in Citizenship Education is, paradoxically, to take too big a risk with the future.

1.2.2. Questioning

There may be goblets of information which some would advocate as essential –an understanding of the prevailing electoral system, perhaps, or established civil, legal and human rights– but these things can be found in books or internet searches with a minimum of effort by most interested people in 'western' and westernizing societies. If these 'facts' are given to pupils they might then know them, but it does not follow that they are or will ever be interested in them. It must be much more important for the development of an effective and empowering approach that questioning becomes integral to Citizenship Education.

This is not the asking of questions to which teachers already know the answer, a practice derided by Postman and Weingartner (1976), although Clemintshaw (2008) is correct to point out that questioning is an important skill for any teacher when those questions 'are formulated in a spirit of enquiry [which] supports students to offer speculation and posit tentative exploration of their implications' (p. 86). Citizenship Education must equip young people with the tools through which social institutions, processes and structures can be questioned and scrutinised; yet again, although the National Curriculum (QCA, 2007) requires this to happen, there appears to be more evidence of omission than of compliance (Keating et al., 2010; OFSTED, 2010). This could variously be a consequence of the lack of an adequate number of specialist teachers, a reluctance on the part of teachers and/or their schools to encourage a reflective criticality which, once established, might become difficult to stem, or hesitancy among young people themselves to adopt a stance which previous experience tells them is more likely to lead to criticism than acclaim; after all, 'confused, people inevitably try to ward off anxiety by rigidifying the old methods' (Goodman, 1975, p. 13).

The purpose and practice of Citizenship Education cannot be to produce an unthinking electorate which fills its unemployed hours in volunteering and thereby depriving others of employment, but to question a system which accommodates or even expects and accepts inequality, discrimination and exploitation. Its focus must be to fulfil the ambitions of those pupils, like Judith [13] who hoped that schools would become places where people 'learn to live together and love one another, where people learn to reason, learn to understand and above all learn to think for themselves' (Blishen, 1969, p. 30).

The collection edited by Spender & Sarah (1989) clearly demonstrates the invidious power and depth of the patriarchal domination of society. If we extrapolate their arguments against sex and gender domination to address institutionalised social inequality in all its forms, we can determine that school plays a key role in promoting social justice by constantly questioning the way teachers and students make sense of the . . . world. When there are such enormous . . . prejudices in our society a fundamental task of education is to look at those prejudices and the selection of evidence we make in the light of them (Payne & Spender, 1980, p. 174).

Not only must pupils be allowed –enabled, encouraged– to question, teachers should also ask questions and seek answers. By establishing an ethos in which it is understood to be acceptable not to know things but not acceptable not to care about not knowing, everything is held up to scrutiny and everyone – pupils and teachers, parents and governors – can test the validity and reliability of the answers to questions. To do otherwise, to enforce either of the dual fallacies that the teacher, and only the teacher, is correct or the corollary that all views are of equal worth irrespective of evidence and implications is to produce the nocebo effect in a society wholly subservient or (for those who see through the fallacies) wracked in disequilibrium.

1.2.3. *School Ethos*

If those involved in running a school are not committed to the development of its pupils as citizens, the subject will be less than any other in interest, effectiveness and impact. School leaders, governors, administrative and other support staff, teachers, parents, pupils, visitors, the wider community – everyone has to be involved. Once they are fully involved and fully committed, the opportunities for progress are limited only by the imaginations of all concerned.

It remains the case that ‘teachers and others have constructed a complex set of rules and unstated expectations for [pupils] to conform to, with rewards and punishments of very limited kinds to back them up’ (Wilson et al., 1969, p. 333) and it can be of little use to anyone that such complexities and limitations continue. If Wilson et al were correct in noting that ‘these schools only work really successfully to the extent that their pupils are committed to their role as pupil; to the extent that they care about doing well and being well thought of by their teachers’ (Wilson et al., 1969, p. 333), then pupils caring about and being committed to themselves, their teachers and their schools must be central to any school’s endeavours.

Reid et al. (2010) observe that Citizenship Education ‘must involve the whole school and there must be a clear and reiterated rationale for the ideas of shared governance and distributed responsibility if participatory democracy is to prosper in the classroom and in the institution’ (p. 14). This does not mean mission statements and school policies, but daily and systematic commitment to all aspects of Citizenship Education. The school must practice rather than preach, and everything associated with the school must be imbued with the spirit of inclusion, understanding, inquiry and equality. This is, of course, predicated on an assumption that those responsible for the governance of a school are truly committed to participation and democracy.

This requires planned movement away from traditional classroom activities, away from teacher-led learning, and away from the passive reception of assumed truths, into areas of creativity and risk. Teachers and pupils need to know that the school not only supports and encourages creativity, inquiry, scrutiny and risk, but that it insists upon them and provides an environment within which they take place as a matter of routine. Pupils and teachers need to know that they are trusted and that they are safe, otherwise risks will not be taken and passivity will continue. It is from an inclusive, secure and understanding ethos that other principles of radical Citizenship Education can develop. It would also, as observed by Ian [15] 'be beneficial to establish some definite correlation between school and enjoyment' (Blishen, 1969, p. 105) for those who believe that benefit accrues to society when its members enjoy learning and enjoy their lives.

1.2.4. Identity

Central to such an ethos has to be awareness of the complexity of identities. All members of a school bring with them a range of cultural perceptions and a multiplicity of identities; some of these will overlap with each other as well as with the overt culture of the school, and there will be times and places where the differences are as significant as the similarities. A school which ignores such diversity ignores the human potential that it constitutes, and fails to respect all members of the school community. Florio-Ruane (2001) clearly demonstrates the fallacy and the costs of the assumption that issues of ethnicity, language and identity are irrelevant to teaching and learning. Schools are not value free institutions; they either recognize and incorporate the cultures of their community to synthesise a new, dynamic and inclusive culture, or they operate under a rigid and non-negotiable culture. As Florio-Ruane makes clear, schools which tend to the latter model do so to the detriment of everyone involved.

Despite mass media caricatures of migrant cultures, Peters & Bulut (2010) remind us that adherence to parental subcultures can be systemic but can also represent the exercise of choice by young people; while Preston & Chakrabarty (2010) demonstrate that some children will aim to assimilate while others become more 'traditional'. There continues to be a popular and political focus on inequalities of achievement, voicing concern about boys' relatively poor academic records compared with those of girls – a concern I cannot recollect when 'measured achievement' was greater for boys than girls – with attention rarely given to the evidence which indicates that of the three best-known dimensions of inequality . . . gender, and in particular boys' underperformance, represents the narrowest disparity. In contrast to the disproportionate media attention, [our] data shows gender to be a less problematic issue than the significant disadvantage of 'race' and the even greater inequality of class (Gillborn & Mirza, 2000, p. 23).

Identity, diversity and ethnicity are intrinsically linked but are not synonymous – there are many categories of 'other', skills, health status, music, art, eating, dress, sexuality and the interplay between all of these and gender, age, ethnicity and social class create a highly complex and dynamic set of identities.

Social and cultural tensions continue to blight the experiences of many young people, from 'casual' bullying through systematic discrimination to violence and murder. Illich warned of the dangers to society when it 'isolates people from each other . . . when it undermines the texture of community by promoting extreme polarization' (Illich, 1973, p. 11). Schools can address real and manufactured differences by addressing the ignorance which distorts them. Openly addressing racism and other forms of discrimination – not simply through reprimand or retribution, but by setting an example and by ensuring that all members of the school community are fully informed about who they and other members of the school community are. Difference can be a cause for celebration and exchange of information and ideas.

A radical approach to Citizenship Education must go beyond facilitating 'respect, understanding and tolerance' (Advisory Group on Citizenship, 1998, p. 46) to be inclusive, celebratory and empowering. Identity is not a matter exclusively related to ethnicity, nor is ethnicity an uncontested or straightforward concept, and identity has to include all those aspects of existence which combine to make us who we are. Unless schools are to be viewed wholly and exclusively as academic production lines, skills other than the academic must be valued; health status matters; personal as well as community preferences in music, art, eating, dress all matter; sexuality is part of who we are. These and other aspects of people's humanity cannot be ignored or made less of if identity is to be respected. To ignore the multiple aspects of human identities is to devalue difference and to promote parochialism and hostility – if Citizenship Education does not explicitly and with determination address such attitudes it becomes a nocebo by allowing them to fester and continue to be entrenched.

1.2.5. Pupil voice(s)

It takes very little time for pupils to realise that the quickest way to an easy school life is to ask few questions and to give the answers their teachers expect. Lukes (1974) explains how those with authority can manipulate their minions to express only those opinions which have been or will be approved, elaborating on the process identified by Michels (1949) as 'The Iron Law of Oligarchy'. In order to enable pupils to air their own opinions, concerns, beliefs and preferences, they must unlearn the hidden processes whereby they express only approved views.

Pupils do not speak with one voice; no age-groups and few entities comprising more than one person do. Not everyone my age, in my place of work –or in my household– agrees with everything I say. Why should it be thought that all young people, or everyone on a particular school class, have only one opinion between them? Some disagreement is essential in a democracy, and can produce either consensus or, through the process of synthesis, produce an entirely new idea. If disagreement remains, there might have been at least an understanding of another view. An ability to contribute to discussion must be part of radical Citizenship Education in order, as Rudduck (1991) notes, to foster scepticism and independence of mind.

Some of Blishen's (1969) respondents, observed that young people deserved the opportunity to be heard. 'Pupils should be given more chance to speak and the teachers should be

given a chance to listen' (Blishen, 1969, p. 133); a chance to listen being, even in those halcyon days, inhibited by pressure to cover topics and address questions determined in an age without a proscriptive national curriculum. If teachers have the chance to listen they might find common ground with their pupils or at least be able to investigate why such common ground is hard to find. There was also a perceived need for 'self-government by the pupils. I suggest a sort of committee made up of pupils of each age group and elected by that age group' (Blishen, 1969, pp. 161-162) clearly seeking the establishment of school councils, although with greater optimism than time has shown to be warranted.

School councils, regularly identified by schools as evidence of a commitment to pupil voice, do not compensate for restrictive classroom practice; at best they only involve a few pupils for a limited amount of time. Morgan & Morris recommend that teachers 'confront [pupils] about their own learning and . . . challenge them to take appropriate actions' (1999, p. 135) in order to enable their pupils to understand process as well as detail, and to become involved in making decisions about things which matter to them.

That contrasting voices might cancel each other out, arguing as vehemently and coherently for as against particular issues or actions is not the point. The purpose of enabling pupil voices to be heard must be the development of those voices –articulation, construction of argument, collation and exposition of evidence, countering or adjusting in the face of opposing arguments– not so that schools become a representation of teenage idealism, but so that as citizens the young develop the ability to voice opinions and argue for change. Whether voices wish to argue for or against the status quo, they need to be developed to avoid being ineffectual.

1.2.6. Political awareness and engagement

There is a truism that 'knowledge is power' and, as politics is the organisation and exercise of power –and, with good fortune, of responsible authority– political knowledge is knowing what knowledge matters, when it matters, how to find it and how to use it. Lumps of information such as why seats in the House of Commons are green and those in the House of Lords are red, or why the Speaker's Chair used to be a commode, might win points in pub quizzes, prizes on television quiz games or marks in classroom tests and public examinations, but they don't really matter.

To enable engagement and to avoid perceived disempowerment, Citizenship Education must go beyond the simple transference of facts about civics from the forefront of one person's brain or lesson plan into the recesses of another's brain or rarely read notepad. The relative places and merits of 'content' and 'skills', much discussed in teacher education, require scrutiny as we bear in mind that it is impossible to generate worthwhile discussions among and between pupils unless those discussions are properly informed and about something, that 'good discussion cannot take place in a vacuum' (OFSTED, 2010, p. 14).

Rudduck identifies a crucial and complex issues regarding political knowledge when she writes that teachers and pupils often conspire in perpetuating a false security that manifests itself in a reliance on right answers and on a view of the expert as one who knows

rather than one who uses knowledge to refocus doubt. Teachers, prompted by a kindly concern for those they teach, often over-simplify the complexities of living and learning; they seek to protect their pupils from uncertainty (Rudduck, 1991).

Such protection is short-term and exceedingly harmful as it inhibits intellectual curiosity, subscribes to the myth of omnipotent expertise, and deceives pupils into believing that there exist right answers to all things. For Geelan (2010), the awareness of ambiguity and the ability to face up to and deal with it is crucial. Such engagement and awareness can combine to equip pupils with the tools necessary for the acquisition of political knowledge and understanding, and the skills to act upon it.

There has been a regular media portrayal, repeated by various grate and good talking heads, that young people are politically disinterested, apathetic, inept or inert which goes against evidence and depends largely upon one's perception of what constitutes political engagement and what criteria are employed to identify and measure it. By most rational measures, it is an assumption clearly unsupported by evidence in the UK or elsewhere (Bernstein, 2010; Henn et al., 2005; Kimberlee, 2002). The large sample, cross-national study conducted by Ross & Dooly enables them to report that 'children and young people do implicate themselves in political behaviour . . . in contrast to frequent narratives suggesting that indifference to political issues is commonplace among youth' (Ross & Dooly, 2010, p. 43).

Even in those schools where the teaching and learning of politics is taken seriously, operating wholly on a micro scale does not meet pupils' needs; indeed, we should be concerned that those schools adjudged to enable pupils to develop a good knowledge of Citizenship Education are schools where 'good knowledge sometimes omitted the central areas of parliamentary government and politics' (OFSTED, 2010, p. 9). It does not follow from this that teaching about parliamentary politics necessarily results in a knowledgeable and competent body of pupils, as 'where standards were low, students' knowledge was based on completing factual exercises about topics such as parliamentary procedures rather than exploring and discussing current issues' (OFSTED, 2010, p. 9). There may be a place for such exercises, and we must remain open to persuasion that there are educationally valid justifications for their regular use, but they do not develop understanding or independence of thought.

Many pupils – and not only older ones – will already be politically active through, for example, green activism and ethical consumerism. Their peers who reject such activities are, in their rejection, also being political. The commonly touted perception that the young are significantly less politically aware than previous generations is not supported by evidence – and not only because previous generations were much less politicised than some commentators might think, as demonstrated by Kynaston's (2008) analysis of Mass Observation data. Without greater and more diverse political engagement throughout society the political establishment will continue to conduct itself as at present, a circumstance which would be neither appealing nor democratic.

1.2.7. Active citizenship

Taking informed and responsible action is a significant step towards political engagement. Active citizenship cannot and must not be exclusively about young people becoming a conscripted army of involved community members –not that there is anything inherently wrong with involvement in the community– as taking social and moral responsibility and developing political literacy both require action on the part of citizens; it is not simply, or even necessarily, about doing things for other people.

The English National Curriculum for Citizenship Education states that ‘active participation provides opportunities to learn about the important role of negotiation and persuasion in a democracy’ (QCA, 2007, p. 28). One of the three key processes demanded of the teaching of Citizenship Education by the National Curriculum, along with ‘critical thinking and enquiry’ and ‘advocacy and representation’ –both of which offer many opportunities for active learning– is again ‘taking informed and responsible action’. This does not include Big Society volunteerism, school-conscripted and organised events or pupil work experience as these tend not involve pupils making informed decisions and rarely involve them taking –or being allowed to take on– responsibilities.

When pupils work in groups to make decisions, to collaborate on activities, to evaluate their own and others’ contributions to an activity, they are involved in active citizenship. Therefore, classroom group work on any topic is an example of active citizenship and both teachers and pupils should be aware of this in developing and celebrating pertinent skills.

1.2.8. Social order

Comte’s analogy of society as an organism proposes that survival depends on adaptability; a society which stagnates is one which is dying. We must also recognise that one generation’s order and stability is likely to be another generation’s moribund strangulation; social order and social control are not synonymous as the former relates to both the nature of society and the relative stability of it, while the latter is concerned with who controls, manages, and benefits from the nature and degree of social change.

While there could be a perception that ‘social order’ and ‘radical’ are mutually exclusive concepts, this is far from the case. Challenge and change are at the centre of the radical approach to Citizenship Education, enhanced by an understanding of what is and what might be and, in the wonderful definition attributed to Raymond Williams, the recognition that ‘to be truly radical is to make hope possible rather than despair convincing. This has to include an understanding of the current social order and what maintains social order, how to question these and –if and where they are found wanting– what alternatives might be considered, for social order means both the maintenance of an orderly and regulated society, and an established social hierarchy. If the regulations of society are open to question, deve-

lopment and change, as they must be in a democratic society so must the social structures upon which they depend.

2. HOWEVER

While Citizenship Education is, in many cases, in a parlous state, what is generally true is not an absolute truth. There are many schools and other agencies which have adopted the strategies outlined above to significant effect. For example, in Merrylee Primary School in Scotland –where there is no compulsory curriculum– almost everything is about good citizenship education and active learning as the result of careful and integrated planning and of the essence of citizenship education being the essence of the school.

Pupils, staff, parents, the school's environment committee (how many schools have one of these?) and a local energy company worked with architects on the design of a new school building to meet the self-identified needs and aspirations of the school community. Some of the walls have been partially glassed so that everyone can see the construction methods and materials and the insulation – a daily reminder of energy conservation. There is also a dedicated eco-classroom which looks out over the school's own wind turbine. Further consultations brought in the local authority and the Forestry Commission so that the school grounds now house the first natural play site on any UK school campus.

As well as having a pupil elected–school council which meets regularly with the head teacher, there are further opportunities for the expression of pupil voices. Older pupils are consulted on some matters of curriculum development, while peer mediation and a buddy system allow a range of pupils to become involved in working with and supporting each other and to make representation to the school management team. Pupils also have the opportunity to be appointed to posts of responsibility. When a pupil's behaviour is deemed unacceptable –these are, after all, children aged 5-12, not angels or automata– the practise is to try to engender a sense of responsibility for one's actions and the pupil makes amends by helping within the school community.

This is not a perfect school, nor is it the only school which can lay claim to active and empowering citizenship learning and development, but it is clearly one with a strong citizenship focus. It involves all members of the school and with the wider community in a variety of ways (described in more detail in Leighton, 2012, pp. 41-44), ensuring that pupils get practical experience of making representation, negotiation, the exercise of rights and responsibilities. They are encouraged and enabled to ask the questions which matter to them and to see that their opinions can (but don't always) make a difference. The ethos of the school enables risk, engagement, active citizenship and active learning, security of identity and an understanding of others' identities – it is not a nocebo, but a force for social change.

A few similar schools have been identified in England, for example by Keating et al. (2010) and, less convincingly, by OFSTED (2010), but these are clearly considered to be the exception rather than the norm. As such, few pupils will experience the opportunities to participate and to enable change which are the essence of a radical approach to citizenship. A

society in which only a few young people are enabled to be active and involved is not one which provides effective radical citizenship education.

3. CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

In 2010 there was heated and protracted debate in the UK, although neither clear nor well-informed debate, regarding whether the British electorate would be capable of understanding (and possibly using) an alternative voting system to the First Past The Post (FPTP) system which is used in most, but by no means all, UK elections. Contemporaneously, the people of Iceland elected an assembly comprising members of the public other than political representatives whose role was to consider changes to the Icelandic constitution and make recommendations to the Althingi (the Iceland Parliament). These two examples illustrate a considerable understanding and involvement chasm – the people of Iceland were considered capable of understanding political complexities and trusted to come up with recommendations regarding presidential power, the role and function of plebiscites, economic guidelines and principles of probity; the people of the UK considered themselves incapable of dealing with the complexity of writing the numbers 1, 2, 3 – the system used by the three leading political parties in the UK to choose their own leaders, similar to that used in UK elections to the European Parliament, and in recent elections in England and Wales for Police and Crime Commissioners, and more straightforward than that used in elections to the Scottish Parliament.

Irrespective of the outcome of the May 2011 referendum on voting in the UK which rejected a change to AV (alternative voting), there is a clear and worrying perception of political illiteracy. This will not be resolved by continuing to educate people about citizenship as has been done previously – far too often piecemeal, preferring the tried and trusted (if ineffective) ways of the past, or not at all. If established methods continue to not to be effective, there must come a time when different methods are used. There are notable examples of excellence in citizenship teaching, but pupils deserve these to be the norm rather than the exception. If political involvement is to change and, along with it, the general conduct and involvement of citizens, a radical approach to educating the citizens of England is long overdue. If not, there is a real danger that Citizenship Education will prove to have been a nocebo in rendering discussion and strategic planning for political and civic education beyond consideration for generations to come.

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