



## **Education for Democratic Citizenship within the Multicultural Societies of Europe: A View from England**

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### **Abstract**

This paper aims to examine issues relating to Citizenship Education in England. Compared to other European countries it took England a long time and a huge debate before finally Citizenship Education was formally introduced in the formal curriculum. The paper is divided in two parts: the first serves as an “introduction” to the current multicultural status of England and to the implications for Democratic Citizenship while the second focuses solely on Citizenship Education and its current status in England.

**Key – Words:** multiculturalism, citizenship, education, England

### **1. Introduction**

The knowledge selected for schools by a country and formally distributed to students through the curriculum and textbooks has been a key factor for the maintenance of specific ‘national’ characteristics. Systematic analyses of textbooks (mostly social studies) reveal that statements and patriotic accounts of a country’s history are often emphasized, leading students to believe that their country is superior; national loyalty is promoted, while little time is devoted to analyzing the role of the nation as a member of the world community (Ivrideli, 1998 & 2002; Patric & Hoge, 1991).

This emphasis on national development in textbooks is common in many countries and may present a considerable obstacle to acknowledging the diversity of cultures and for attaining a European and global awareness, although some authors support that textbooks in Europe should reflect each country’s national interest (Ivrideli, 2002; Szabolsci, 1992) and that the curricular systems are

responsible for the reproduction of ethnocentricity and Eurocentricity in Europe (Coulby, 1997).

In the political tradition stemming from the Greek city states and the Roman republic, citizenship has meant involvement in public affairs by those who had the rights of citizens: to take part in public debate and, directly or indirectly, in shaping the laws and decisions of a state. The first (in Western tradition) to articulate a consciousness of culture were the ancient Greeks or, more specifically, Athenians. Athens was the metropolitan centre of the classical world; and diplomats, philosophers, and professional rhetoricians from as far away as Sicily came to Athens to participate in the exchange of ideas taking place there. Many of them also profited by the exchange, offering to teach others the art of discourse in return for money. Among these early teachers were the Sophists, itinerants who roamed the countryside around Athens giving lessons in the art of forensic public speaking, or legal rhetoric.

In *Paideia: The Ideals of Greek Culture*, Werner Jaeger (1970) places the Sophists at the very heart of the origins of citizenship, noting that [t]hrough them *paideia*--the ideal and theory of culture, consciously formed and pursued--came into being and was established on a rational basis (Jaeger, 1970, p. 298). Although many of the Sophists were doubtless content to sell their knowledge to the public, their greatest representatives, such as Protagoras, [claimed] that cultural education is the centre of all human life (Jaeger, 1970, p. 300). Jaeger attributes the birth of humanism itself to Protagoras, telling us that [t]he only true 'universal' culture in Protagoras' eyes is political culture, which is distinguished from the baser concept of civilization, or technical efficiency (Jaeger, 1970, p. 300).

In modern times, however, democratic ideas led to constant demands to broaden the franchise from a narrow citizen class of the educated and the property owners, to achieve female emancipation, to lower the voting age, to achieve freedom of the press and to open up the processes of government.

The paper focuses on England and to some extent on Wales because in law both of these parts of the United Kingdom (UK) share the same legal and educational systems. Scotland has its own educational system; that of Northern Ireland is directed from the Department of Education (Northern Ireland), which has its own variants of education practice in the six northern counties of the Island of Ireland inappropriate in the present context. It is also difficult to give a perspective from the UK because of the devolution of power to Scotland and Wales in the form of a regional parliament for these two parts of the UK. The perspective given here is therefore from England and by a foreigner.

## **2. Multicultural Britain**

For centuries, Britain has prided itself on the readiness with which it has offered hospitality to refugees, but the spontaneity of the welcome has usually been dependent upon both the number and the colour of the skin of the refugees (Clough, 1978, p. 6). Prior to the mid-twentieth century Britain was mainly a country of high levels of emigration and internal movements between the various nations in the British state. The vast majority of migrants to Britain since the early nineteenth century were of European origin (Miles, 1993, p. 130).

Most striking was the exodus of seasonal and permanent Irish workers into the industrial heart of England, southern Wales and western Scotland. These, mainly unskilled and semi-skilled manual workers, shared the opprobrium of the religious and cultural stigma of the race apart. Racist hostility was also encountered by the 120,000 Jewish refugees fleeing the pogroms of Russia between 1875 and 1914 (Pearson, 2001, p. 80). German and, to a lesser extent, Italian migrants were also subject to anti-foreigner agitation that grew in intensity as war broke out.

A severe labour shortage at the end of the Second World War was initially approached through short-term work permits and labour contracts, notably the European Voluntary Scheme, that brought 90,000 alien workers from Poland, Italy and other European refugee camps to Britain (Miles, 1993, pp. 155-7). But the British, unlike most northwest European states, did not use 'guestworkers' extensively and soon returned to their offshore subjects as a source of labour (Pearson, 2001, p. 81). Workers continued to flow across the Irish Sea, but 'surplus colonial manpower' started to appear as a possible solution to labour shortages (Pearson, 2001, p. 81).

The history of black and Asian people in Britain is centuries old (Fryer, 1984). Thousands of slaves and ex-slaves, many of them children, were employed as servants in upper-class households in the eighteenth century. But the more far-reaching migration, in political terms, of workers from former British colonies in the Indian subcontinent, the Caribbean and Africa, occurred after 1945.

One of the effects of the McCarran-Walter Act was the tightening of immigration restrictions on Caribbean, particularly Jamaican labour, into the United States (Pearson, 2001, p. 81). The resultant ripples of this policy reached the shores of Britain, where many employers were actively searching for workers. By 1961 there were over half a million people of New Commonwealth origin in Britain, mainly employed in semi- and unskilled manual work viewed as unattractive and uncompetitive by the local white labour force.

From the early 1960s, British subjecthood, citizenship and nationality were redefined in an attempt to embrace what was always a compartmentalized conception of global Britishness (Pearson, 2001, p. 82). In a nutshell, New Commonwealth immigration was seen as creating 'a race relations problem'. The 1962 Commonwealth Immigrants Act confirmed the transformation from universal British subject to 'coloured immigrant', while a further Act (in 1971) heightened the distinction between 'the truly British' and the rest (Pearson, 2001, p. 82). Initially, there was disagreement between Labour and Conservative Party political leaders about the ethics and efficacy of slamming the door in the faces of Commonwealth 'family', but a consensus emerged between the centre right and left, in and across rival parliamentary parties.

Between 1962 and 1981 the evolution of British immigration and nationality legislation reflects a 'dynastic shift' from subjectship to national citizenship (Joppke, 1995, p. 35 in Pearson, 2001, p. 134). The 1981 Nationality Act introduced the overthrow of a thousand-year convention of granting automatic citizenship for children born in Britain of non-British parents. With this Act distinctions were drawn between cultural, national and legal meanings of

'Britishness', with only those with direct genealogical connections and residency being granted 'full' membership of the state.

The summer of 1967, punctuated by 'race riots', clashes between pro- and anti-racist factions, and incidents of police brutality, showed racial tensions remained, despite closed immigration doors. Roy Jenkins, the Labour Party Home Office Secretary in the mid-1960s, set the tone for a 'liberal hour' of racial integration with his call for cultural diversity and equal opportunity within an atmosphere of mutual tolerance.

Yet it was Enoch Powell's infamous airing (in 1968) of the dire prospect of being invaded by inassimilable hordes that finally cemented Tory/Labour agreement that 'integration' had to be pursued within mutually defended borders (Pearson, 2001, p. 135).

The 1970s saw the establishment of a race relations 'industry' based on a national Race Relations Act and Commission for Racial Equality, and local Race Relations Councils set up (in 1976) to provide social welfare and monitor racial discrimination. The Scarman Report (1981) on racial disadvantage, which resulted from further flashpoints of racial tension in south London, pointed the finger at urban deprivation and inequitable life chances rather than institutionalised racism.

The Swann Report (in 1985) is commonly seen as marking the official shift to multiculturalism in Britain, with its stress on 'diversity within unity' and an acknowledgment of different modes of attachment to 'being British'. The Swann Report led to the establishment of more independent voluntary-aided schools for different 'cultures', for greater flexibility in modes of dress, cuisine and curricula within 'multiracial' schools, and the hiring of more Asian and black teachers. But, as Vertovec (1996, p. 51 in Pearson, 2001, p. 136) notes, in a survey of multicultural initiatives in British cities, there is no single view, strategy or mode of political incorporation under this rubric. What we have is a plethora of associations, units and councils in the realm of local and national minority representation.

And as Gundara (2000, p.59) puts it, most recently:

*"The new government (Tony Blair's) has failed to recognise the nature of multiculturalism in British society. It has tried to focus on exclusions within it but without recognising the wider implications. There is the same old stereotyping of 'ethnic minorities' and 'ethnicity' as categories, with their familiar assumption of there being a dominant English nation."*

Gundara stresses the fact that there is little recognition of the multilingualism within British society and the need to develop models of teaching first and second languages formally in the schools. 'Other languages' are not seen as fundamentally part of the school's work, not only to enable young people to learn their first language better but to acquire greater competence in English as a second language. And Gundara (2000, p. 60) concludes:

*"The issue of intercultural education still remains to be faced seriously - seriously, because Blunkett, on a visit to Dublin, announced that the Irish language is to be*

*introduced into the English national curriculum so that English schoolchildren can have lessons in Irish. In Irish – but not in Punjabi, or Urdu? Is multilingual education only to be seen as a little weapon for use in international power policies, and not as a potentially enriching cultural force?’*

As Pearson (2001, p. 136) notes, all major parties have an eye on the ‘ethnic vote’, as the rise in minority electoral candidates, and labour’s formation of black sections in some local party organizations, reveals. Some events, like the Rushdie affair in 1989, spark national (and international) recognition of the limits of majority tolerance and bring multicultural issues into the mainstream of British politics. British centrist political elites have been remarkably successful in steering a hazardous political course between the dangers of majority intolerance and minority separatism. Mainstream politicians involved in the Rushdie issue were able to distance themselves from media hysteria. They effectively defused the situation by sympathizing with ‘moderate’ Muslims while extolling the virtues of Britain’s multiracial framework. The Rushdie case, therefore, is an exception illustrating the rule, that, in sharp contrast to the United States, over the past three decades ‘race’ has become a comparatively minor national theme in British politics, relative to some other European societies too.

Bhikhu Parekh, on the other hand, writing soon after the *Satanic Verses* issue, offers a ‘model of national integration’ including the perception that cultural differences have a positive value and cannot be preserved outside the existing communities themselves. ‘Integration’, he argues, ‘requires movement on both sides, otherwise it is an imposition’ (Parekh, 1989).

### **3. The Case of Citizenship Education**

There is no doubt that education in societies that are in transition towards multiculturalism or are already considered multicultural challenges the existing curricula, bringing together the three main processes of political socialization (Bell, 1991; Bell, 1996, p. 203; Papadakis, 1998, pp. 45-47), namely the promotion of citizenship, ‘the process of intensifying cultural influence through mutual contact’, and the re-socialization of adults (see Mangan, 1990). These processes can be facilitated in those situations where certain historical, cultural, geographical, and existential bonds exist between communities who seek to share a supranational identity. An interesting dilemma faced by schools in the European Union (EU) is how to harmonize the strengthening of national tradition in students with the development of a European consciousness.

By introducing citizenship education in schools in 2002 English society has a unique opportunity to create a ‘citizen democracy’ where cultural variation would be considered as an element of cohesion within the society.

Citizenship has been a continuous topic of discussion for the last twenty years in intellectual and political circles in England. It has attracted copious comment from social commentators, political and economic theorists and politicians across the spectrum. Everyone from the New Right, across the crowded Centre, to the Old Left, has been preoccupied with redefining and claiming ownership of the concept (Kerr, 1999b).

However, these attempts to redefine citizenship have had only a limited impact on debates about citizenship education in schools. They reached their apogee in the late 1980s and early 1990s with discussion of the implication for schools of the then Conservative Government's championing of civic obligation or 'active citizenship' (Kerr, 1999b).

Since 1989 England has a compulsory national curriculum for all local authority schools, but Citizenship has not been a required subject. The history of educating for citizenship in England is well documented (Annette, 1997; Batho, 1990; Heater, 1990; Kerr, 1993, 1996, 1999b; Oliver and Heater, 1994). Davies, Gregory and Riley (1999, pp. 16-17) argue that from 1969 to 1999 there have been three main (overlapping) frameworks-types of citizenship education which can be discussed: political literacy; 'new' or 'adjectival' educations and education for citizenship.

The Program for Political Education (PPE) had as its key aim political literacy. The principal figure was Bernard Crick. There was a critical approach to knowledge and efforts were made to ensure that pupils could learn about politics. Political literacy made four main shifts from earlier work. It was issue focused; it used a broader concept of politics than had been used in British Constitution courses; it valued procedural concepts; and it was concerned with skills as well as knowledge and attitudes, so as to develop pupils' potential for action. By the end of the 1970s, political literacy did seem to have gained a strong position with key policy makers. Legitimization had been achieved, however, without implementation and during the 1980s a raft of 'new' educations replaced it.

The 'new' educations are perhaps not a coherent school of thought or action other than in the commitment they have to social justice. The relationship to citizenship education is not necessarily always helpful or straightforward. Some, such as Peace Education and World Studies, had existed from the post-First World War era (Heater, 1984); others, such as anti-sexist and anti-racist education, were more recent. Academics in 'new' areas such as women's studies, as well as trade unionists, workers for aid organizations and teachers were regarded as being the ones involved in the promotion of projects as well as, at times, setting up departments in schools. These various camps often competed between themselves for resources and curriculum space.

The 1990s were seen at an early point, according to Dahrendorf, as being the 'decade of the citizen' (Keane, 1990). Education for citizenship having been declared as one of the five cross-curricular themes of the National Curriculum (NCC 1990) and the subject of a report by the Commission on Citizenship (1990), it seemed that perhaps something would be done. For the first half of the decade this expectation was soon shown to be unfilled. The cross-curricular themes have for various reasons been generally ignored (Whitty, Rowe & Aggleton, 1994). Indeed, of the five themes, education for citizenship seems to have been the one, which is ignored more often.

Kerr (1999b) points out that there is a complex relationship between citizenship and education for citizenship. Citizenship, he argues, is a contested concept. At the heart of the concept are differing views about the function and

organization of society. Because education is accepted as central to society, it follows that attitudes to education, and therefore to citizenship education, are dependent on the particular conception of citizenship put forward.

Kerr argues that the current focus on citizenship, and therefore on citizenship education, has two triggers, one long-term and the other short-term. The long-term trigger was the impact of the world oil crisis of the mid-1970s in western, industrialized 'democracies' such as Britain. This has caused such democracies to radically restructure economic, welfare and education provision to meet the challenges of the rapidly changing world.

More important, in terms of citizenship education, has been the short-term trigger, namely, the seemingly pervasive erosion of the social political, economic and moral fabric of society in England, in the face of rapid economic and social change (Kerr, 1999b). This has resulted in increasing disquiet, in many quarters, at the apparent breakdown of many of the institutions and values which have traditionally underpinned society and encouraged social cohesion and stability, such as family, marriage, religion and respect of law. It has led to a particular concern about the impact of such developments on the attitudes and behaviour of young people.

The findings of the IEA Civic Education Project (1999, p. 204, the case of England) point out the huge gaps that exist in the knowledge and research base, which underpins the area of citizenship education in England. In particular, little is known about the following at the school level:

- the impact of school ideology or ethos on approaches to citizenship education;
- the provision for citizenship education in secondary schools;
- the strategies, resources and approaches employed by teachers in the classroom;
- the needs of schools and teachers regarding citizenship education;
- the outcomes of citizenship education programmes.

Also, little is known about the following at the student level:

- the extent and type of knowledge and understanding 11- to 16-year-olds have of society;
- the stages of development that students of this age group go through in acquiring social knowledge;
- the individual, social and cultural determinations of the development and growth of students' social knowledge;
- the relationship between knowledge, attitudes and behaviour among this age group;
- the degree to which schools, teachers and the curriculum can affect the acquisition of social knowledge by students and influence their attitudes and behaviour.

The National Curriculum underwent considerable revision in 2000. The most significant new development is the introduction of citizenship education as an additional curriculum subject. From 2002, citizenship is a statutory subject in

secondary schools and is also to be taught in primary schools, together with Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE). The DfES also set up a working group on Citizenship 16-19 and programmes of citizenship education for those aged 16-19 have been developed.

The Government has highlighted citizenship education as a key means by which education for racial equality can be achieved (Home Office, 1999). Citizenship education in England is seen, as it is across Europe, as a means of strengthening democracy and therefore of challenging racism as an anti-democratic force (see for example, Holden & Clough, 1998; Osler, Rathenow & Starkey, 1996). The Government sees citizenship education as a key means by which race equality initiatives will be developed in the curriculum.

But as Jill Ruter (2003) points out, there is a lot of work to be done by schools and teachers in order for citizenship education to become a real subject of the school curriculum. Her observations revealed the following:

- Most schools have chosen to deliver citizenship education by merging it with Personal, Health and Social Education, or with PHSE and Religious Education.
- Citizenship is mostly a classroom-based subject, involving very little out of classroom activity – involving very little participation in the political process. Students are rarely encouraged to bring about real change in their schools or communities.
- Much of the teaching is knowledge and concept focused.
- Many student teachers and some of the experienced classroom teachers, lacked skills in teaching controversial issues.
- In most schools non-specialist teachers were teaching citizenship, usually without a background in politics (or philosophy or sociology).
- Student motivation towards citizenship is poor. In many schools students perceive citizenship and citizenship PHSE as being the ‘doss’ subject – the subject where you mess around.
- The merger of PHSE and citizenship was not always a happy marriage. Political issues tended to be pushed aside by the concerns of health education.

Finally, in the summer of 2003, David Blunkett announced his intention to work to make civil renewal ‘the centrepiece of the government’s reform agenda’. For the Home Secretary, civil renewal is the key to redefining the relationship between the individual and the state, locally as well as nationally. At its heart is a recasting of modern democracy and a reinstatement of the role of political community:

*“We have to assert that our identity as members of a political community is a positive thing. Democracy is not just an association of individuals determined to protect the private sphere, but a realm of active freedom in which citizens come together to shape the world around them. We contribute and we become entitled.”*  
(p. 11)

It is clear that the civil renewal agenda has a number of implications in terms of race equality, yet these are barely hinted at in what the Home Secretary has written.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Finally, what does all of this entail for citizenship education? If we are going to educate our children to become citizens, then we need to decide, obviously enough, what it means to be a citizen. Is it a matter of being a law-abiding member of the community, of having an essentially moral grasp of right and wrong? Or is it a matter of knowing what the state can do for you, how to ensure that you get what you are entitled to from public agencies? In my opinion, important though these two aspects of citizenship are, they are not sufficient. To be a citizen in the fullest sense you must in some way be actively involved in shaping the way that your community develops, whether this is through political activity in the strict sense or through public involvement of a non-political kind. This also seems to be the view of the Crick report on *Education for Citizenship*.

But in that case we also need to decide what our future citizens are going to be citizens of: it is possible to disentangle citizenship from the issue of nationality, of the nature and boundaries of the political community to which someone belongs. Unfortunately it is no longer possible – certainly not in Britain or Greece – to say that someone belongs to just one such political community. Depending on who we are and where we live, we may find that our political identity is split between two or three different levels. So citizenship education will have to come to terms with this fact. One of its tasks will be to explain how the different levels of identity have emerged historically, and how they are now related – what it now means to be Scottish in Britain or British in Europe. These are hard concepts to grasp; most people, I suspect, find single-level identities easier to deal with. National identity matters, and as we continue to debate the meaning of Greekness or Britishness in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we should not hesitate to pass down our best understanding of this idea to the rising generation through the education system.

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