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Global Citizenship: An Education or an Identity?

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Abstract

This paper considers the recent focus on citizenship within education by examining curricular reform in Scottish secondary schooling and its linkage with higher education. In Scotland the Curriculum for Excellence reform places citizenship as one of four main capacities (i.e., successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens, effective contributors) that pupils must work towards as part of their education. The Scottish higher education *Enhancement Themes* framework also includes citizenship as part of the development of 'graduate attributes' that students work towards as they progress through their courses. A unifying theme in these reforms is the need for students to take a global perspective and work across different disciplines by, for example, considering how knowledge relates to wider issues such as in relation to sustainable development, e-democracy or human rights. One feature that unites these disparate areas is that, above all, students must learn to be active through the acquisition of appropriate knowledge and skills. In this model of citizenship education learners are enabled to develop their sense of citizenship identity in response to a fast-paced world of innovation and change. Citizenship is therefore linked to a futurist agenda, where the learner-citizen is positioned as an ongoing project, as something to be worked at or perhaps worked on. However, this kind of notion of agency is an expression of an ideological construction of the citizen as a flexible resource for society. Such citizens are active in the sense of being adaptive to change through utilizing intellectual skills but without a sense of identity grounded in one's commitments or reflexive engagement with different forms of understanding. The paper offers a critical assessment of this learner-citizen discourse as focusing on ratiocination rather than relational identity.

Key Words: Curriculum for Excellence, global citizenship, higher education, authentic self.

Introduction

The Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) is considered as a major and ambitious educational reform programme in Scotland (Scottish Government, 2008: 8). It has involved a complete overhaul of the entire Scottish school system, including all areas of teaching, learning and assessment. The reason for this fundamental change lies in its futurist agenda in that it is explicitly driven by anticipated future needs based upon economic, technological and social changes within Scotland and the wider global economy. CfE explicitly eschews a centralised curriculum in favour of a model that relies upon adapting curriculum guidance to meet the needs of local school communities, and in particular how they address the issue of ‘thinking global, acting local’. This commits the reform to a view that education should include a commitment to the development of a sense of global citizenship and subjectivity production (Allan and Charles, 2015).

CfE can therefore be considered as being founded upon democratic values involving a set of structured learning activities that enable students to develop a sense of citizenship, a reflexive stance on learning, and to routinely question matters so that critical thinking becomes internalised (Dewey, 1916: 101-102). This focus on the development of the individual is enshrined the “Four Capacities” that are said to develop: successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors. Alongside these capacities is a more amorphous, but nonetheless desirable set of outcomes which can be aligned to the sociology of a changing society; namely individual enhancement, inclusion and participation.

These outcomes are expressed within the Learning and Teaching Scotland (LTS, 2011) CfE guidance document ‘Developing global citizens within Curriculum for Excellence’. This document has a foreword written by Michael Russell, the then Scottish Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning, which explicitly mentions the ‘think global, act local’ slogan attributed to Sir Patrick Geddes, the Scottish biologist, urban planner and educationist. The slogan is put to use in terms of justifying the need for children and young people to develop the “the skills, knowledge and values to flourish and succeed as responsible global citizens”. This emphasis sets the tone of the document, with the phrase “skills, knowledge and values” (or variants including attitudes) being mentioned a further fourteen times within the substantive seventeen

pages of text. Reference to “active learners” is mentioned nine times within the same set of pages. Given that this is a slim document (thirty one pages in total, seven of which contain full-length photographs), then it is evident these are significant phrases within the CfE global citizenship ethos.

These aims derive from a perceived need for educational knowledge to be open and associated with a society that is itself open to change and to differing perspectives within a globalised world. Bernstein, has characterised this type of curricular reform as a move from a ‘collection code’, in which subject boundaries are relatively fixed, towards an ‘integrated code’ where subject boundaries are permeable and less strong and where there is a greater focus on interdisciplinary study (Bernstein, 1971a). This is part of an ongoing trend in education that began to take shape in the 1960s, most notably in primary school education and the advent themed ‘project work’, through to comprehensive education in the UK in the 1970s and the abandonment of streaming and setting in schools. This trend has therefore witnessed more ‘open’ educational systems rather than ‘closed’ schooling, more diversity rather than division. In other words, this kind of system is open to all and ties in with attempts to promote a multicultural society. Bernstein argued that these changes correspond with the move from a ‘closed’ to an ‘open’ society, or from what Durkheim referred to as the shift from mechanical to organic solidarity (Bernstein, 1971b; Durkheim, 1893). This shift in educational and social values apparently frees education from being seen as the concern of the relatively privileged few to being the concern of all, and of course this now fits the ethos of participation as global citizens. On the face of it, this can be considered as a shift towards transformative education, where there is less specialisation and more integration of learners and knowledge (Illeris, 2014). This can be characterised as a challenge to the ‘old’ authority structures of society in which the form of social integration is mechanical and based upon a ‘closed’ system in which educational and social status are relatively fixed. Instead there is a shift towards organic social integration where social roles arise through differences between people and their own engagement with education. The desire to create global citizens based upon “knowledge, skills and values” and based on their “active participation” in civil society can be considered as a further development of this trend.

The Active Citizen

In developing a view of teachers and lecturers as agents of change, and in laying less emphasis on curricular content, the focus on capacities can be considered as a process of downgrading knowledge (Priestley and Sinnema, 2014) and of foregrounding the agency of the learner and the ways in which they can cooperate with others, engage in constructivist activities and, in general, be able to be flexible and adaptable. The focus on the identity of the learner and the process of transformative places much more of an emphasis on personal traits and the acquisition of social capital as an aspect of the educational process. This is linked to the drive towards widening participation in higher education, and in the way that CfE has become a means of leverage through which Scottish higher education institutions are being prompted to consider linkages between schools, colleges and universities.

This is a key aspect of the current 'Student Transitions' Enhancement Theme that, in part, deals with the transition from secondary school or college into higher education. A curious aspect of this is the way in which social theorists such as Bourdieu (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977) are drawn upon in support of claims that higher education institutions need to help this broader range of students acquire the relevant social capital to become more independent and effective learners (Thomas, 2012: 13). This has been carried over into the ways in higher education institutions in Scotland have attempted to engage with the reform. For most of the post-1992 'new' universities CfE has become a vehicle through which cross-sectoral projects linking schools with tertiary education have been set up, or existing ones repurposed, as ways of demonstrating their mission and commitment to widening participation. On the other hand some of the 'ancient' universities have chosen to foreground knowledge and have engaged with schools in projects that enable able pupils to study at first year university level for part of their studies. This in effect, in some measure exemplifies their more selective status. However, in either case what seems to be lacking is an explicit connection made between the 'Four Capacities' of CfE in any meaningful and developmental fashion, and in particular with respect to the development of 'global citizens'.

Nevertheless, the move from closed to more open forms of learning is now thoroughly part of the pedagogical rhetoric within institutions and is often objectified as part of various strategic documents such as teaching and learning plans and policies. Capacities have become associated with citizenship and have been applied to various contemporary issues such as national economic development, environmental sustainability and responsibility, global trends in information technology, and the need for tolerance and the development of positive attitudes in relation to issues of immigration, social injustice and religious divisions. The responsible global citizen is therefore positioned as being in touch with these issues and able to utilise their skills, knowledge and values to adopt a more tolerant outlook, and yet at the same time, be committed to democratic principles and take their part in civil society.

If capacities are considered a means of developing social capital, then a question that follows is: how are they related to notions of self-development? One way of thinking about this is to consider the contemporary writing of Anders Petersen who discusses the way in which authentic self-realisation has become the guiding normative demand in modern society (Petersen, 2011). His focus is concerned with how this is related to the pathology of depression when people fail to maintain a sense of self-development. However, it is possible to apply his perspective in considering the drive to develop capacities as a discourse that normalizes the focus on citizenship as the achievement of authentic selves.

Petersen aligns himself with Boltanski and Chiapello's (2005) insight in *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, with regard to the emergence of a new ideological commitment to capitalism based on self-realisation. This commitment is premised on a different normative foundation than previously adhered to; one based on people's engagement with the capitalist system in terms of the project of self-realisation. Boltanski and Chiapello argue that capitalism has thrived on critique in order to mutate and adapt to changing socio-historical circumstances. That critique of capitalism has taken two broad forms: social and artistic. The social critique has involved exposing the capitalism as exploitative in terms of such aspects as poverty, social injustice, and individualism. The artistic critique has focused on the ways in which it reduces people to being cogs in an economic machine and thereby, producing a technocratic and dehumanized society. In

other words, they point out that the artistic critique is concerned with the oppression of individual creativity, autonomy, spontaneity, and authenticity through the relentless pursuit of standardisation. However, they go on to argue that the artistic critique has become established to such an extent that capitalism has had to absorb it, mutate and move with the times. The ideological basis of capitalism has therefore altered so that the discourse of individual self-realisation through the various inter-connecting spheres of life (in work, through education, at home, etc.) has become normalised.

This ideology leads individuals consider themselves as an ongoing 'projects' of authentic self-realisation. This can be achieved through activities that allow this aspect of the self to be developed in the workplace, private life, and leisure. Given a rapidly changing globalised world, individuals must learn to develop and deploy a range of attributes that allow them to be flexible, mobile, enterprising, creative, adaptable, and malleable. Chiapello and Fairclough characterise this as follows:

What is relevant is to be always pursuing some sort of activity, never to be without a project, without ideas, to be always looking forward to, and preparing for, something along with other persons, who are brought together by the same drive for activity. (Chiapello and Fairclough, 2002: 192)

This characterisation of modern subjectivity leads to a consideration of attempts to specify capacities within CfE as specifying the normative content of authentic self-realisation in relation to citizenship. However, there is a tension between move towards more open forms of educational engagement leading to personal growth, career planning, and employability, and that of the global citizen who is more outward looking and community-focused. It is often the latter that is a priority for governments, and no more so than in the current economic climate. The Scottish Government has therefore much riding on CfE and an acceptance of the senior phase by Scottish higher education institutions as providing a sound basis for entry and the upskilling of young people. As noted previously reference to "skills, knowledge and values" at times peppers discourse in relation to global citizenship but there is a sense in which these educational objectives are considered in dual terms as serving both economic imperatives for a flexible workforce as well as the latter.

The Rational Citizen

Although reference to “active citizens” is associated with community involvement and taking part in civil society it is also aligned with activity in an educational and academic sense. The stress placed upon skills, knowledge and values betrays an inclination to consider action as resulting from ratiocination founded upon values and beliefs. This is evident in the *Developing global citizens within Curriculum for Excellence* document which states that:

Global citizenship is a holistic approach to developing the four capacities within learners. It encourages the development of young people as independent, creative and critical thinkers, confident in themselves, secure in their own beliefs and values, committed to active participation in society, respectful of others and willing to find solutions to local and global problems (LTS, 2011: 28).

All curriculum areas can contribute to developing skills, attributes and knowledge that will encourage learners to be active global citizens. This also provides rich context for interdisciplinary learning. (LTS, 2011: 11)

The above quotes illustrate an educational perspective that conceives of learning about, for example, other religions or cultures as giving access to different belief systems and that this can in some way form the basis for understanding others’ actions. This in turn implies that such an understanding can lead to more tolerant views and affect how one might act towards others. Likewise the idea that studying, for example, environmental degradation as global problem from an interdisciplinary perspective, will lead to a conviction to “think global and act local”. This again points towards an assumption of ratiocination; that learning to think critically will lead to the desire to act as responsible global citizens. This sets up a view of citizenship as an educational achievement, an academic pursuit in which the basis for action lies in the rational and creative application of knowledge and understandings. The result is an intellectualist projection of citizenship in which what counts is the cognitive abilities one possesses. This also sets up education as the key institutional player in the formation of an active citizenry.

However, there are dangers in favouring of education as the route towards global citizenship. Firstly, there is the lure of appealing notion that the capacity to think critically and weigh up matters is of the utmost importance. However, the elevation of this dimension is rooted in a view of citizens as lone rational thinkers whose actions are guided by their intellectual abilities and concomitant opinions, attitudes and values. Although collective action may result from ratiocination, it is an individualist perspective that is premised on a view of like-minded people coming together as the basis for social movements or involvement in political action. Moreover, such a view promotes the peculiar notion that citizens are in the business of treating different cultures or political positions as involving different or rival belief systems. This leaves out of the frame any sense of the practices that constitute how people understand the world, or indeed that understanding is not a single activity but rather that it involves different kinds of affairs, only some of which involve seeking generalised overarching positions or commitments.

Secondly, equating the development of citizenship with learning in an institutional setting such as the school can appear to downplay the role of other agents of socialisation such as the local community, parents and other family members, in terms of the practices that they engage in. Although engagement with the wider community is encouraged in global citizenship education, for example, through fundraising events, sustainable development initiatives, or cross-cultural exchanges, the locus for these activities is within the formal educational experience of pupils. In other words, such engagements with communities are driven by an educational agenda that again, more often than not, seeks to impose an intellectual frame of reference on such activities. As such, the agenda is yet again one of developing skills, knowledge and values with aim of producing critical and creative thinkers.

Thirdly, in relation to issues of social justice the *Developing global citizens within Curriculum for Excellence* document refers to a case study in which pupils are required to critically investigate prejudice, racism and cultural identity and diversity (LTS, 2011: 27). This is framed around pupils expressing their own views and drawing conclusions to develop their literacy skills. The learning experience involves poetry, storyboarding, film production, and the use of music in order to communicate personal thoughts,

feelings, sense of cultural identity and the inner self. This culminates in a school festival to raise awareness about the impact of prejudice and discrimination in the school and beyond. While this is a laudable attempt to promote social inclusion it is conducted yet again as an educational exercise that develops literacy skills. Furthermore, it is premised on considering issues of cultural identity, prejudice and discrimination as something that inheres within individuals. There seems to be no consideration of the view that prejudice and discrimination are the result of power differentials and vested interests. The result is a depoliticised consideration of the issue in which discriminatory actions are seen as resulting from individual prejudiced attitudes. The educational purpose of pupils investigating the effects of prejudice and discrimination is therefore related to global citizenship in terms of acting as a means of awareness raising and changing attitudes. However, in doing so it promotes a view that this is in itself all that is required to bring about positive change and lessen discrimination. In other words, exposure to the effects of discrimination are taken as being sufficient to bring about a change in attitudes on the part of the pupils as learner-citizens thereby creating a more inclusive community. This is based on a view of tackling prejudice and discrimination through learning about others and thinking through the issues. Again it is a view of ratiocination as the driver of the process of citizenship education.

It would be unfair to critique education for global citizenship on the grounds that it attempts to expose children and young people to different cultures, confront social problems such as discrimination, or deal with global issues such as environmental sustainability. These are indeed issues that are worthy of addressing and learning about as part of becoming a citizen. However, there is a sense in which a plurality of views and practices are presented as being rooted in knowledge or beliefs. This kind of educational approach is based upon the presupposition that people's actions are the outcome of their understandings and convictions. However, the problem with such an approach is that it is only a partial view of cultural, political or religious actions. For one thing this presents a view of human affairs as based upon understandings rather than practices that are associated with ways of living. It places a world of thinking prior to a world of action. It also presents a neutral view of knowledge as disassociated from power or serving the interests of certain groups, institutions or societies. This is hardly surprising given the promotion of education for global citizenship as a matter of

intellectual development and the acquisition of skills, knowledge and values. The foregrounding of these educational concerns is considered as providing pupils with the right kind of cognitive tools to be able to operate as active citizens in the sense of actively using them as part-and-parcel of their everyday lives. In other words, active citizenship is presented as thinking one's way through life.

The Relational Citizen

There is little doubt that the advocacy of citizenship education is driven by an altruistic outlook but one that nonetheless is premised on using education as a vehicle to guide young people towards acquiring the right kinds of skills to help them become 'active citizens'. This can be considered as seeking a manufactured kind of citizenship; people who are active in their educational establishments and communities but who are essentially compliant. This fits in with an educational ethos of citizenship-as-achievement. As Lawy and Biesta (2006) point out, the problem with this view of citizenship is that it trades on the notion that it can only be achieved after a threshold has been crossed after undergoing an educational process. Young people are therefore treated as citizens-in-the-making rather than as already living their lives within prevailing political, economic and socio-cultural conditions.

However, in the same paper Lawy and Beista argue for an alternative view of citizenship: citizenship-as-practice. The advantage of this view is that it is not based upon young people undergoing "a pre-specified trajectory into their citizenship" (2006: 43). Instead citizenship is conceived in terms of social relations amongst all within society and as part-and-parcel of people's daily lives. This places lived experience centre stage, and within that the constellation of social relations that are involved in the practices that people engage in. Such a view is inclusive in two senses: firstly, it does not preclude children or young people from the status of 'citizen', and secondly, it includes the sorts of things that people ordinarily do in life as coming within the ambit of being a citizen. For example, this may include the practices – both formal and informal – by which young people acquire and negotiate their way and their sense of identity in relation to others, including adult or communities in general. The ways in which young people voices are heard or silenced, what power they have or are subjected to, and their sense of community or alienation are all issues that can be

reflexively considered and critically interrogated in relation to notions of democratic engagement and active citizenship.

Citizenship education could make use of this perspective by encouraging young people to draw upon and discuss their experiences across a range of different social relations: within families, schools and colleges, peer groups and leisure activities. Such a view promotes citizenship as a live issue rather than an abstract intellectual matter. Moreover, it moves the focus to that of relational experiences and how these are in turn related to personal and social identity. The interplay between these forms of identity can be thought of as being formed and negotiated across different practices. What it means to be a citizen varies across practices and the ways in which rights, responsibilities, obligations, duties and so on are performed. It is across milieus that citizenship comes alive and is inter-twined with what people do and how they relate to one another rather than being something that has a fixed status.

Conclusions

The drive towards a process curriculum in CfE as well as higher education and linked to learning about and for active citizenship is therefore somewhat paradoxical in its effects. On the one hand, there is more open education system leading to a greater recognition of community involvement and sense of global citizenship. Yet on the other hand, there are a number of problematic issues that follow on from this concern with subjectivity, cognitive abilities and personal reflection. This sort of self-reflection on knowledge and understanding is often considered as a positive outcome related to the learning process. It is seen as strengthening the capacity for critical thinking and the adoption of an open view of knowledge based upon an awareness of multiple viewpoints and interdisciplinary connections. At the same time it is also seen as encouraging the development of more independent and autonomous learners and career planners.

Thus, at one and the same time, it can appear that such a focus on the individual represents empowerment whilst also normalizing the notion that it is the learner that needs to measure up to the desired capacities in order to acquire the human capital necessary to meet the demands of a rapidly changing globalised world. It is this futurist discourse that has tended to dominate issues associated with citizenship, responsibility

and social inclusion. Thus while the connection between CfE and higher education in Scotland paves the way for a focus on citizenship and the democratisation of knowledge there is a danger that this may be skewed by a concern with the development of authentic self-realisation in the form of being active in the deployment of cognitive skills as a means of being adaptable to change. This can be thought of as something of a missed opportunity in failing to realise the importance of bringing in 'knowledge from below' in terms of forging a real connection with lived experience as rooted in people's practices. To fail to risk opening up new spaces for learning about different practices and understandings as something other than based on the holding of beliefs would be challenging indeed. This could lead to a different kind of self-reflection; one that aids pupils and students understanding how the *a priori* conceptions of one's own social or cultural background can lead to a failure to grasp the actions of others in their own terms. This is not to say that critical debate and alternative ideas cannot take place but rather that to stress the mantras of skills, knowledge and values can often end in what Lyotard (1984: 4) refers to in *The Postmodern Condition*, as a the "exteriorization of knowledge". Knowledge becomes something that is not part of people lives and practices in all its variegated meanings, but rather simply an intellectual tool to be used in the pursuit of some goal.

It is for this reason that there is a need to carefully consider how education for citizenship is approached: (a) in terms of its promotion of "responsible citizens" in CfE and (b) in terms of the focus on skills, knowledge and values as a means towards creating "active citizens". An individual learner's personal and social patterns of behaviour have become associated with their portfolio of capacities which are often related to employability skills. This vocationalist emphasis can be considered as part of a neoliberal discourse in which 'the market' has come to dictate how the 'outputs' of education are legitimated. In this sense the personal is made public through the codification of desired citizen characteristics. This has to some extent been tempered by the focus on global citizenship in relation to issues such as social inclusion, prejudice and discrimination, and environmental sustainability. Nevertheless, there is sense in which active citizens are thought of as actively using their skills, knowledge and values in instrumental, utilitarian terms. The stress on activity is one that is without a consideration of people's lives as grounded in embodied and contextually-related

actions, practices and commitments rather than simply being founded upon knowledge, values and beliefs. Put starkly, it is a case of promoting being an active citizen in the sense of doing something rather than being something, of placing thinking manoeuvres ahead of actions and identity.

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