

Editorial: *Education for Active Citizenship: Practices, Policies, Promises*

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In recent years the adjective ‘active’ has frequently been added to the term ‘Citizenship Education’. Bernard Crick wrote “an education that creates a disposition to active citizenship is a necessary condition of free societies” (1999, p.337). This suggests that Active Citizenship is seen as more desirable than Passive Citizenship – but what do these terms mean, in terms of either educational policy or educational practice? Is it related by some policy makers to concerns about what is called the democratic deficit? Or is it perceived of as a variant of service learning? Are there different kinds of active citizenship, and of active citizenship education?

This Special Issue of the *International Journal for Progressive Education* explores these various meanings, through the analysis of policies and practices. Active Citizenship promises much: does it deliver?

Aristotle wrote

... it is not possible to be a good ruler without first having been ruled. Not that good ruling and good obedience are the same virtue – only that the good citizen must have the knowledge and ability both to rule and be ruled. That is what we mean by the virtue of a citizen – understanding the governing of free men from both points of view. (*The Politics*, Book III, Chapter iv (1277a33))

But the good citizen is not the same as the active citizen. Crick also pointed out that one can be a ‘good citizen’ in an autocratic state, and one can merely be a ‘good citizen’ in a democratic state (‘that is one can obey the law, pay taxes, drive carefully and behave oneself socially’ Crick 2007 243). Active citizens, on the other hand, will be able to discuss whether laws work well, if they are inequitable, and how they can be changed.

Citizenship education deals with the relationship between the individual and political society, between the self and others. The curriculum needs to reflect this: it must help the individual understand both their own identity and the nature of society, and how to actively engage with the complex relationship of rights and responsibilities that exist between the two. Audigier indicated the magnitude of this: ‘Since the citizen is an informed and responsible person, capable of taking part in public debate and making choices, nothing of what is human should be unfamiliar to him [sic], nothing of what is experienced in society should be foreign to democratic citizenship’ (1998: 13). Possibilities are opened for a vast range of exhilarating and stimulating work, drawing from the whole canvass on contemporary political and social debate. In one sense, the content of the citizenship curriculum is straightforward, based on the social and political debates of the day. What is critical however, and the major thrust of this journal issue, are the conditions and means by which these issues are debated, argued, analysed and acted upon by pupils.

The goal is the development of the active citizen: while many politicians would settle for a passive citizen (the ‘good citizen’, who votes, subscribes to the state obeys the law), many others – including most progressive educators – would hope to empower young citizens, to critically engage with and seek to affect the course of social events. This critical distinction between active citizenship and passive citizenship must be analysed, in both policy and practice.

Politicians and policy-makers in many countries now press for an ‘active’ citizenship that will address what they perceive of as a democratic deficit. A considerable literature has developed on this (see, for example, Verdun, 1998; Moravsci, 2004; Avbelj, 2005; Mitchell, 2005; Hirschhorn, 2006). In many democratic states the level of participation in elections

appears to be falling from election to election, and it is claimed that the percentage of young people voting also tends to be less than that of older people. This creates a problem for political leaders, who need a reasonably high percentage of the electorate participating in elections, in order to give them the legitimacy to govern. On the other hand, many in the citizenship education movement, and others, would also aspire to educational processes that empowered citizens – providing the intellectual skills and the practical knowledge to individuals who will critically engage with, and seek to affect the course of, social events. Active citizenship is, very broadly, about doing things, while passive citizenship is generally seen as related simply to status, to the act of being. The distinction between active and passive citizenship has been particularly debated over the past five to six years (Ireland et al, 2006; Nelson and Kerr, 2006). There is no consensus on these terms, but the model suggested by Kennedy (2006) may be helpful.

He distinguishes four forms or levels of activity in citizenship. Conventional political activity – the level at which those concerned with the democratic deficit would have us act – is engaging in voting, in belonging to a political party, and in standing for office. This is not necessarily far removed from Almond and Verba's (1963) third type of citizen orientation, the 'participant', who possesses a sense of influence and confidence in understanding the domestic political system and who votes regularly in elections. Voting, though an activity, is of course a minimalist action, but these kinds of traditional conformity are nevertheless participation, and participation with a view to changing civic society.

The second form of activity lies in social movements, in being involved with voluntary activities - either working as a volunteer with agencies, or collecting money on their behalf. This form of participation in civil society (as opposed to the former civic action) is essentially conformist and ameliorative in nature: it is action to repair rather than to address causes, or even to acknowledge possible causes: as Lister (2003) puts it, 'an exhortation to discharge the responsibilities of neighbourliness, voluntary action and charity' (p 31). It could be argued that the activities described in Jason Wood's article in this issue (2012) fall into this form of activity. These, and the previous conventional form, constitute what is sometimes derided as the 'voting and volunteering' approach to citizenship education.

The third form consists of action for social change, when the individual is involved in activities that aim to change political and social policies. This would range from such activities as letter writing and signing petitions to working with pressure groups and participating in demonstrations, pressure groups and other ways of trying to influence decision making. This form would also have various illegal variants, such as taking part in occupations, writing graffiti and other forms of civil disobedience. Common to both legal and non-legal forms of activity is a conflictual model of civic and civil change. Pahl describes this as 'local people working together to improve their own quality of life and to provide conditions for others to enjoy the fruits of a more affluent society' (1991, 34), or as Lister puts it, 'active citizenship which disadvantaged people, often women, do for themselves, through for example, community groups, rather than have done for them by the more privileged; one which creates them as subjects rather than objects' (2003, 32). In this issue, the articles by Ribeiro *et al* (2012), Porfilio and Gorlewski (2012), and by Nam (2012) clearly describe activities in this category of active citizenship: but so are aspects of the work described by Bronwyn Wood (2012), Hope (2012) and Inman *et al* (2012).

The fourth active form is of enterprise citizenship, an essentially individualist model of citizenship action, in which the individual engages in such self-regulating activities as achieving financial independence, becoming a self-directed learner, being a problem solver and developing entrepreneurial ideas. This is very much an economic model of citizenship activity, and individualistic in its range.

These four forms in no sense comprise a hierarchy or sequential form of development – the individual does not need to progress through one form to achieve the next: but the third form in particular would appear to be the type most closely aligned to what is meant by

‘active’ by most of the contributors to this Special Issue. But any curriculum should see all of these as concurrent activities to be encouraged, at any age or stage of development: the agenda set out by Chow in this issue (2012) seeks to classify all of these within a framework of civic competency. Nor is active citizenship necessarily always progressive: Lister distinguishes a radical collectivist activism from the narrower voluntary action and charity (Lister, 2003, p 31).

Kennedy also distinguished two forms of passive citizenship. The first of these is concerned with national identity, where the individual understands and values the nation’s history, and the symbolic and iconic forms of the nation – in its institutions, the flag, the anthem and the political offices. This kind of passive citizenship is commonly taught through transmission models of education, through civic education and the hidden curriculum of unspoken mores, structures and assumptions. Ghosh’s article in this issue (2012) illustrates the problems and potential challenges that such an approach might give rise to.

A second and variant form of passive citizenship is seen in patriotism, a more extreme national identity that includes military service and unconditional support for one’s country against any claims of other countries. This form of passive citizenship would inculcate values of loyalty, and unswerving obedience, and stress the value of social stability and hard work.

But these distinctions are not necessarily clear-cut, and Nelson and Kerr’s analysis (2006) demonstrates that there are strong cultural variations in what might be considered as appropriate forms of ‘active’ citizenship. In some countries it is clearly considered that many of the attributes characterized above as forms of passive attributes concerned with accepting status are elements of active citizenship that are to be encouraged and developed. This may depend on the particular historical development and configuration of the state: in some countries (perhaps particularly in Europe) there is a greater perception that citizenship and national identity may now be seen as social constructs, and that active citizenship may embrace a diverse range of relevant political scenarios in which to be a ‘politically active citizen’. The idea of multiple citizenship has been possible for the past half century, and ideas about nested citizenship were developed by in Heater, 1990; European Union, 1992, 1993; and the Council of Europe, 2002.

These variant forms of citizenship all imply a much greater sense of activity than passive citizenship, or even of conventional active political behaviour. Thus Davies and Issitt (2005), for example, suggest that aspects of the global citizenship education programme might usefully be incorporated into citizenship education, as separation appears to constrain both movements. Active citizenship, it is now being suggested, moves necessarily beyond the confines of the nation state. Differentiating citizenship education into active and passive is not uncontroversial. The development of citizenship as a simple passive identity has led to some issues as individuals are formally incorporated as citizens in France, for example (Sutherland 2002), while others (Mannitz, 2004) identify parallel issues of identity and civic belonging amongst young people from non-German heritages in Germany.

What are the key elements or components of an active citizenship education programme? The consensus in many countries seems to be that three major elements can be distinguished in any effective citizenship education programme: values and dispositions, skills and competences, and knowledge and understanding (Crick and Lister, 1979; Crick, 1998; Kerr and Ireland, 2004; Cleaver and Nelson, 2006)

The identification and demonstration of certain values and dispositions lacks precise definition of which values are meant, and the extent to which they agreed to be universalistic (or even universalistic in contemporary times) is not unanimous (Joppke, 2010). These key values might, for example, include the upholding of human rights; ideas of social responsibility and obligations towards others, particularly in relation to equity, diversity and minorities; certain legal values, particularly those concerning the rule of law, democratic processes and various (contested) notions of freedom; and humanistic values of tolerance and empathy for others. This list may appear at first sight to be relatively uncontentious: a survey

by Kidder (2002, in Sutherland, 2002) suggested that people from all across the world, when asked to identify their core moral values, would all agree on the same five ideas – honesty, respect, responsibility, fairness and compassion – but these concepts will have different meanings and differences in different cultural contexts and societies.

Crick and Porter (1978) and Crick and Lister (1979), in their pioneering works on political literacy in the 1970s (described in Clarke, 2007) had a more critical edge on these values: they argue for attitudes of scepticism to be tempered with self awareness, self criticism and an awareness of consequence. They also qualified the conception of tolerance of the substantive values of others (religious, ethical, political doctrines) with the need to maintain particular procedural values necessary to freedom - respect for truth and reasoning, open-mindedness, and willingness to compromise. Toleration, they argued, was not just accepting difference, but welcoming diversity, though not exploitation, racism or the suppression of opinion. Memorably, having an open mind did not mean having an empty mind.

The second group of key elements comprise the skills and competences necessary to be a citizen (Ross, 2007). These include the skills of enquiry, of rationally seeking to establish processes, causes, and the bases for action; sophisticated skills of communication, which include being able to consider and respond to the views of others, being able to persuade, and being capable of being persuaded; skills of participation, which include an understanding of group dynamics and of how to contribute to the social development of civic action; and skills of social action.

Knowledge and understanding is necessary for passive citizenship, but also underpins active engagement. These include both a conceptual understanding of key concepts of politics and society, but also knowledge of particular institutions and their procedures, local, national and international. It can be argued that an understanding of the underlying principles of the role of the law, of the nature of representative democracy, the powers of and restraints on government, and some awareness of the premises of the economy, society and the environment are necessary for the educated citizen.

Values, skills and knowledge are necessary factors for active citizenship (ineluctable, difficult to measure and imprecise though this may be); knowledge alone is sufficient for passive citizenship (though it may be efficiently and accurately assessed). The articles we present here all contribute to our understanding of this mix.

Jason Wood (2012) describes a form of activism located firmly in the communitarian tradition of citizenship, where a university took on the ambition of having an active role in its local community. He argues that higher education institutions are often left out of citizenship education programmes: their contribution to the localities in which they work is often a somewhat passive contribution to the local economy as a consumer of local services. The initiative described in his case study is largely of voluntary action, working with local schools and community projects, providing health screening, and the like: offering improvements and support, but not necessarily acting to politically transform.

Ana Bela Ribeiro and her colleagues (2012) present the sharply critical view that many non governmental organisations (NGOs) have of such institutional based programmes of active citizenship education. They evaluated the views of 120 citizenship education focussed NGOs in 20 European countries, and report that their predominant feeling is that formal citizenship education passively focuses on rules, responsibilities, duties and democratic processes, and pay far too little attention (or avoids) developing critical engagement and activity, and that this is particularly so in formerly totalitarian states: ‘policy makers are barely interested in promoting young people’s participation as well-informed, critical and active citizens’, but are instead ‘focussed on the theoretical transmission of formal democracy and on the discourse of respect for responsibilities and duties’.

Brad Porfilo and Julie Gorlewski (2012) give two vivid case-studies of NGO activism in the area of civic education in Canada. Youth-led organisations allow young people to express their awareness of social issues - racism, violence, inequity, gender inequalities - focussing on active citizenship and solidarity. Beat nation is a first nation/native Canadian young women's group that appropriates the language and forces of colonization to create agency and empowerment, while the 411 Initiative for Change –uses art to engage young people in social advocacy and commentary: both are reactions to the belief that the 'dominant forms of citizenship promoted by schools and dominant political and economic leaders ... have little prospect of ameliorating the intense suffering, social inequalities and alienation experienced by citizens across the globe'.

Chaebong Nam (2012) draws rather similar conclusions from his study of community activism among the Puerto Rican-origin young people in Chicago. *Huntington Park No Se Vende!* is a community activist group that organized to preserve Puerto Rican cultural heritage and space in the inner city in the face of a proposed gentrification development. This is advocacy for social justice from the bottom up.

But the three papers that follow suggest that not all schools are incapable of developing active citizenship.

Bronwyn Wood (2012) reports on a detailed analysis of teacher discourse to illuminate the perceptions and practices of active citizenship of 27 teachers in four New Zealand schools. Although the Ministry of Education there requires students to 'participate and take action as critical, informed and responsible citizens', she finds variations between schools and how they interpret and understand this requirement. Two schools – both lower ranking in socioeconomic status – focus on community service and cultural citizenship: what the teachers describe as 'social studies with boots on'. Two other schools – both higher ranking in socioeconomic status – focus more on 'doing something' at national and global levels. Active citizenship, she concludes, does not happen in a vacuum. She attributes these differences to the collective, but often unstated, doxa shared by teaching departments in a school.

Max Hope's (2012) detailed ethnographic study of a small private school in rural England is a very different setting. The school negotiates both the curriculum and the rules and ethos of the school with the students, through community meetings. 'Citizenship education' is never raised, nor the term used, but Hope argues that the democratic process the pupils experience are far more effective than mainstream schools that work within the currently defined citizenship curriculum.

Sally Inman and her colleagues (2012) focus on one particular citizenship issue, of race equality practice in English schools. Examining a wide range of schools, with pupils between 9 and 17 years of age, they suggest that islamophobia is rare in schools that have a strong citizenship ethos that respects different religions. Citing Parekh (2000), they take a 'maximalist' view of citizenship, and find that in their sample of schools with a strong Muslim presence there is a 'pattern of harmonious schools, where religion and diversity are largely respected and where there are strong institutional processes and procedures to ensure any discriminatory practices are dealt with promptly and effectively'. This, they conclude, means that these pupils 'experience a form of citizenship in schools that is at odds with the wider society'.

Shreya Ghosh (2012) writes from a very different perspective, analysing the development of citizenship education policies in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. Drawing on textbook narratives in these countries, she suggests that educational practices build a militarist idea of citizenship and, in doing so, show the nation as vindication of community-aspirations. In the process, conceptualisation of a south Asian space are erased from the cognitive maps of these countries' citizens. In such a context, education in south Asia is used to 'activate' a citizenship which is relational in content - based on ideas of 'us' versus 'them' – instead of allowing critical understanding of rights and identities. The active citizen becomes one who understands their membership of the polity as necessarily entailing a constant state of

preparedness to guard frontiers and homogenise notions of national identity, irrespective of the fact that they always can be plural in nature.

Finally, Joseph Chow (2012) outlines a project in progress that will include active citizenship within a general framework of civic competency, to be analysed across Europe. He contrasts the idea of civic competency – ‘the underlying attitudes, values cognition, motivation and behaviour citizens should possess in order to achieve civic engagement’ with civic competence – the actual level of competence in performance.

Crick wrote, in his 1998 report, that active citizens would be ‘willing, able and equipped to have an influence in public life and with the critical capacities to weigh evidence before speaking and acting ...[citizenship education should] make them individually confident of finding new forms of involvement and action among themselves’ (1998, 7-8). We hope that this Special Issue of the *International Journal for Progressive Education* will add to the discussion on how this might be achieved. It will not be achieved only through formal education activities; nor will it always be identified as active citizenship education. As Chaebong Nam (2012) writes about the Puerto Rican student activists in Chicago in this issue,

what particular sense of citizenship is being constructed? ... the answer could be “No sense of citizenship was found,” because there was no language of citizenship in the community. ... [But] activists ... vigorously engaged in praxis-based citizenship to create situated and diverse forms of civic practice. ... Their wide range of community work—creating their own local information system, enthusiastically participating in an electoral campaign, and reaffirming Puerto Rican identity through cultural events and rituals—contributed in different ways to educate and involve community people of all ages for the purpose of building a unique model of grassroots democracy. HPNSV was effectively an overt collective resistance to social prejudice and oppression imposed on the community people. Their actions also naturally produced holistic and intergenerational civic learning for people of all generations, raising up critical and engaged citizens in the community.

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