

Citizenship: Moving beyond State Borders

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Purpose

This paper will review Citizenship Education in school curricula as a starting point for theorizing a new way of thinking about citizenship in the twenty first century, one which begins with a rich conceptual frame of how individuals come to form their views and actions related to citizenship. This attention to individuals forms the basis for articulating a new vision of Citizenship Education focused on self-actualization.

Perspective(s) or theoretical framework

Individuals develop their own beliefs and actions related to citizenship largely through their experiences, that is, their social, economic, political and other contexts and conditions (Broom, 2016; Carr et. al., 2016; Colombo, 2016). Parents, friends, economic opportunities (or lack of them), and social media influence youth's civic attitudes and beliefs, shaping their civic identities. Rather than beginning by attempting to push particular views into youth through school programmes of study, this paper argues that developing a conception of citizenship should begin with a reflective journey through individuals own lived conceptions of citizenship, with the aim of helping individuals to improve and develop their understanding of what and how they understand and live their citizenship. It begins by asking individuals to look *within themselves*, to consider: how do you view citizenship? Why do think you might hold these views, what are your aims for life? How do you plan to achieve these aims? How are your views and aims related to your own experiences? What impact will your views and your actions have on others around you and on local and global communities in general? Thus, Citizenship Education begins

with individuals. This reflective process develops out from the individual to consider the impacts of personal choices and actions on the general community.

Methods and data sources

This paper reviews how Citizenship Education is and has been conceptualized in present and past curriculum documents, discussing these in relation to the theoretical conception of citizenship described above. It develops a new conception of citizenship and Citizenship Education as Well Being, which will be discussed in the full paper.

Results, Conclusions and/or Interpretations

Civics curricula of the nineteenth century attempted to deal with conflicts and issues in society through an educational program that aimed to develop “good” citizens, that is, individuals who supported the nation state and were nice neighbours and community members. Reflecting changing social and economic patterns in the United States, the course of Social Studies was developed through a committee’s recommendations in 1916 (Evans, 2004; Jorgensen, 2012, Nelson, 1994; Ravitch, 2003; Sherrod, Torney-Purta, Flanagan, 2010; United States Bureau of Education, 1916). The aims of Social Studies included teaching History, combined with other Social Sciences including Geography and Economics, in a way that developed students’ patriotism and understanding of their society. Social Studies was designed to be a practical and relevant course by presenting problems for students to think about critically (Saxe, 2003). History should help students understand the present and focus on contemporary and relevant history that develops students’ understanding of relevant issues (Nelson, 1994; Ravitch, 2003; United States Bureau of Education, 1916). The primary intention was to prepare students for social and political life, as well as to improve individuals and society through the teaching of social and civic virtues. The approach used was to be a topical one in order to

“cultivate a sense of membership in the ‘world community,’ with all the sympathies and sense of justice that this involves as among the different divisions of human society” (quoted in Saxe, 2003, p. 93; Whelan, 1997 & 1991). Dewey’s (1916) theory of improving democratic society through an experience-based education influenced the committee members’ thinking. Canadian provinces including British Columbia and Alberta followed this American pattern in establishing Social Studies courses. Canadian courses also aimed to develop good citizens who worked to improve their democratic society. Social Studies, in summary, founded on earlier Civics and History courses and formulated through the 1916 Committee’s recommendations, aimed to improve society through educating individuals and nurturing their support for and active engagement with the nation state. Education focused on political and social citizenship (Marshall, 1950).

Educational importance of the study

Galileo wrote, “You cannot teach a man anything; you can only help him find it within himself.” This paper echoes the sentiment of this quote by arguing that citizenship cannot be pushed into individuals through educational programs of study focused on fostering particular political behaviours, which might explain why research by the author has demonstrated that youth argue that their citizenship education is incomplete or even missing in their education, when it is mandated in their programmes of studies (Broom, 2016). This paper will conclude with a new way of thinking about Citizenship Education as wellbeing, focused on achieving our human potential of living a happy and successful life (Broom, 2010).

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