Engaging Children in Citizenship Education: A Children's Rights Perspective

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ABSTRACT: The authors argue that recent initiatives in citizenship education are deficient in failing to provide an engaging values framework for the practice of citizenship. Although an international consensus has arisen on the need for stronger citizenship education in schools and for learning that is issues-based, collaborative, and participatory, the consensus has not resulted in appropriate action. Progress has been hampered because of the lack of capacity building and opportunities for meaningful participation. But the problem does not end here. A major shortcoming is the continuing absence of a values framework that engages students and motivates them for citizenship. The authors suggest that when citizenship education is constructed on the basis of treating children as valued citizens and educating them about their rights and responsibilities under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, a much stronger foundation is laid for the practice of citizenship.

RESUME: Les auteurs maintiennent que les mesures qui ont été prises récemment dans le cadre de l'Instruction civique sont incomplètes car elles n'offrent pas de structure comportant des valeurs suffisamment attirantes pour mettre en pratique la citoyenneté. Bien qu'un consensus international ait soulevé le point sur le besoin de renforcer l'Instruction civique dans les écoles et d'apprendre qu'elle est fondée sur l'apprentissage collaboratif et la participation, aucun accord n'a abouti. Le manque de renforcement des capacités et d'occasions de participer d'une façon significative, a entravé l'état d'avancement. De surcroît, le problème ne s'arrête pas ici. Une problème majeur réside dans la carence continue d'un cadre conceptuel de valeurs, à la fois attirantes et motivantes pour que les étudiants apprennent à être citoyens. Les auteurs pensent que, lorsqu'en Instruction civique, l'on considère les enfants comme d'importants citoyens et qu'on leur enseigne leurs droits et leurs responsabilités conformément à la Convention des Droits de

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l'Enfant, les fondations ainsi posées se révèlent beaucoup plus solides pour exercer la citoyenneté.

Introduction

Since the founding of public schools and the beginnings of modern democracy in the 19th century, there always has been an interest in Western countries in a role for schools in promoting democratic citizenship. Over time, with shifting concerns and new roles for schools, this interest has ebbed and flowed. However, in recent decades, with concerns about growing citizen disengagement and withdrawal and about the quality of democracy, interest in citizenship education has become more pronounced. It has become widely thought that with more attention to citizenship education in schools and to quality teaching and programs, there can be improvement in democracy, social cohesion, and active citizenship. Based on this thinking, new initiatives in citizenship education have been undertaken in a number of countries including Canada, the United States, Australia, and the United Kingdom.

These new initiatives are certainly welcome. A long list of writers including William Galston (1991), Stephen Macedo (1991), Will Kymlicka and Wayne Norman (1995), Robert Putnam (2000), and Henry Milner (2002) point to the problem of a democratic society with insufficient citizen involvement and support. Their analyses suggest that excessive individualism is self-defeating: if most people in a liberal and democratic society decided to pursue only their own interests with little regard for the wider public interest, the society would not be expected to endure. If a democratic society is to be sustained, it requires – at some level – the cultivation of civic virtue (or dispositions and habits favorable for democratic participation), a sense of social responsibility, and a periodic willingness among citizens to put private interests aside and participate in the wider community and in the democratic process. Without public spiritedness and active citizenship, a democratic society dedicated to protecting the rights of individuals is not likely to be secure. But excessive individualism is a problem for another reason. New Zealand psychologist John Schumaker (2001) points out how lives that center on self-gratification, consumerism, and materialism, in the absence of connection to community and the wider society, leave an "empty self" and a void filled with anxiety. According to Schumaker, this void cannot be filled simply by purchasing more goods and experiences. A healthy self requires connection to others and to the community. So for the sake not only of a healthy democracy but also healthy

individuals, new initiatives to strengthen citizenship and citizenship education are a welcome development.

However, reviews and research studies have generally shown that these new initiatives have had little impact in improving citizenship. Most important, there is little evidence to show that citizenship education has been successful in engaging children and motivating them to become more actively involved in their community and society. We see little indication of an elevated sense of social responsibility and of an increased willingness among youth to practice democratic citizenship. Among reasons for the absence of success are reliance on a factual approach to the teaching of citizenship, the lack of opportunities for meaningful participation in the classroom and the school, and the lack of a values framework to engage and motivate students for active citizenship. It is our contention that when education for citizenship is grounded in education on the rights of the child, it is on a more solid foundation. When a values framework is developed on the basis of children learning about their own rights and responsibilities under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and when children are provided with opportunities for meaningful participation and are treated as citizens of the present rather than of the future, children are much more likely to become motivated and engaged in the practice of citizenship.

The New Interest in Citizenship Education

Over the past two decades there has been renewed interest in citizenship education. Among philosophers, researchers, commentators, and those involved in education policy-making, citizenship education has been seen as a means of improving democracy and building social cohesion both in transitional democracies such as in Eastern Europe and Latin America and in established democracies such as Canada, the United States, Australia, and the United Kingdom (Heater, 2002; Osler & Starkey, 2006; Print, 2007; Sears & Hyslop-Margison, 2007). In established democracies, concerns have been expressed that trends toward citizen disengagement, withdrawal, and alienation will undermine the future health, stability, and sustainability of democracy (Naval, Print, & Veldhuis, 2002; Osler & Starkey, 2002, 2006; Print, 2007). The solution, it is widely believed, is to give more emphasis to strong programs of citizenship education in schools and to provide students with the knowledge, understanding, and skills such that they will become more engaged and active citizens, committed to participatory democracy and to democratic values such as tolerance,

diversity, rule of law, and human rights (Print, 2007; Print, Ornstrom, & Nielsen, 2002; Tiana, 2002).

Alan Sears and Emery Hyslop-Margison (2007) argue that many of the concerns have been overstated. They point out that problems in the practice of democratic citizenship have too often been expressed as "crises" in citizenship. According to their analysis, reformers incorrectly claim that there is: (a) a crisis of ignorance, as suggested by an apparent lack of knowledge about history, government, and the formal democratic process; (b) a crisis of alienation, as reflected in increasing levels of citizen apathy and disengagement, especially among young people; and (c) a crisis of agnosticism, as shown in the apparent lack of a deep belief in the values of democratic citizenship and in extreme behavior such as the antics of skinheads and anti-globalization protesters. There is no conclusive evidence, they say, for any of these claims. It is not known whether there is any more ignorance now than in the past; it is not clear that there is more youth alienation now than in the past; and it is not clear that there is an actual crisis of agnosticism. On the contrary, although some youth may be alienated from the formal political process and voting, many are involved in community participation and in social movements such as environmentalism and many are very concerned with values associated with democratic citizenship such as human rights and diversity (on this point, see also Schugurensky, 2003).

Nevertheless, although the problems may be overstated, there are very serious deficiencies in the practice of democratic citizenship, which are well recognized by Sears and Hyslop-Margison. Overall levels of democratic participation – voting, membership in community groups, volunteering, signing petitions, boycotting products, and so forth – have continued to decline (Adams, 2005; Print, 2007; Schugurensky, 2003). Pollster Michael Adams (2005) has reported, for example, that in the United States, 40% of citizens did not bother to vote in the important 2004 presidential election. A major reason, according to Adams, was simply that they did not care, preferring instead a life of pleasure-seeking, thrill-seeking, and narrow-minded consumerism and materialism. Adams notes that such an outlook of "privatism" continues to be a growing trend across many Western countries. Also growing, as mentioned by Hyslop-Margison and Sears (2006), have been threats posed by globalization and human capital education ideology that seek to make student learning subservient to the needs of the global economy. Such an attempt at narrow instrumental learning presents yet another challenge for democratic citizenship. Given the rise of privatism

together with globalization and human capital ideology, it would be difficult to disagree about the need for stronger democracy and a more engaged citizenry. And to this end, it would be difficult to disagree with the need for stronger programs of citizenship education in schools.

Education policy-makers have recognized this need and have undertaken reforms and initiatives in several countries including Canada, Australia, the United States, and England (Curriculum Corporation, 2005; Davies & Issitt, 2005; Heater, 2002; Osler & Starkey, 2006; Pike, 2007; Sears & Hyslop-Margison, 2007). In Canada, virtually all provinces have changed their social studies curricula, giving more attention to citizenship education. As part of this, Ontario and British Columbia have reintroduced high school civics courses. In Australia, following a lengthy period of discussion and consultation, the new national citizenship program *Discovering Democracy* has been implemented across the country. In the United States, as evident in the widely endorsed report *The Civic Mission of Schools* (Gibson & Levine, 2003), there has been a renewed effort to strengthen civic education in middle and high schools. Perhaps most noteworthy of all, in the United Kingdom since 2002, a new mandatory program of citizenship education has been implemented in which citizenship has become a required foundation subject in English secondary schools and a recommended one in primary schools.

As reported by Andrew Hughes and Alan Sears (2006), there is an international consensus not only about the need for stronger citizenship education but also about its general goals and means. It is widely agreed that the aim is not simply to improve political literacy among students and their knowledge about matters related to citizenship – history, society, government, and the formal political process. The aim also is to engage students, to encourage them to think critically about issues of broad public concern, and to foster their civic involvement beyond the minimal requirements of voting and obeying the law. They are to be encouraged to care about public issues, make a difference in their communities, and become involved in community organizations, advocacy groups, and political parties. The objective is to deepen their sense of responsibility and obligation to participate, strengthen their support for values such as tolerance, diversity, and human rights, and motivate them to become involved.

Furthermore, as noted by Hughes and Sears, there is a general consensus about best practices on how to do this. It is agreed that the best approach is a "constructivist" one where students are to be engaged

"in meaningful activities designed to help them make sense of, and develop competence with, civic ideas and practice" (2006, p. 7). The focus is not to be on learning facts and on rote memory – as in traditional civic education – but on learning that is issues-based, collaborative, and participatory. Such learning is to take place throughout the school, not only in a particular subject. It is a style of learning and a pedagogical approach in which students are actively involved (like citizens) in constructing meaning. In the tradition of John Dewey (1916), this involves experiential learning where children construct meaning through learning by doing. Children are not to be passive receivers of information but are to be active learners, developing competence and motivation through projects and activities relevant to them. Dewey well understood that schools are micro political communities that provide (or fail to provide) modeling for democratic citizenship. As Sears and Hyslop-Margison (2007) point out, Dewey was acutely aware of the need to foster democratic dispositions in students if they are to be expected to act in accord with the demands of democratic citizenship. To the extent that schools are successful models through facilitating participatory, issues-based, and collaborative learning, the prospects for active citizenship are enhanced. The question is whether the international consensus about best practices has actually been carried out.

Deficiencies in Citizenship Education

Despite the international consensus about the means and ends of citizenship education, implementation has yet to done in a serious and comprehensive way. There is much evidence of rhetoric but little of putting the declared aims and best practices into effect.

Judith Torney-Purta and her colleagues undertook a cross-national comparison of the outcomes of citizenship education in 28 countries during the late 1990s and early 2000s (Torney-Purta, 2002a, 2002b; Torney-Purta, Schwille, & Amadeo, 1999; Torney-Purta, Lehmann, Oswald, & Shultz, 2001). They assessed students for knowledge, attitudes, engagement, and motivation for citizenship. Among other things, they found that the knowledge acquired by most students was relatively superficial and not connected to daily life. Learning had not been generalized beyond what might be expected with rote learning. They also found little evidence of any significant impact of citizenship education on engaging youth and motivating them into active citizenship. Most youth showed little interest in activities such as joining

community organizations or political parties or even writing letters to newspapers. What Torney-Purta's analyses showed was not the failure of citizenship education itself but the failure to implement best practices. What most students were reported to experience was not issues-based, collaborative, and participatory learning, but traditional civic education with a focus on factual learning and rote memory. That there was a lack of engagement and motivation is not surprising. In the words of Torney-Purta (2002b, p. 210), "narrow instruction restricted to facts from textbooks and covering few topics in depth leaves students with disconnected knowledge and a lack of excitement about the real world of social practice outside their school and classrooms."

Carole Hahn (1998) provides strong evidence of the detrimental impact of lack of school engagement on democratic attitudes associated with the practice of citizenship. In her long-term study (1985-1996) of citizenship education in England, Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, and the United States, she found a strong linkage between a positive classroom climate, where students are encouraged to discuss political issues in a participatory environment, and higher levels of engaged citizenship. A key finding was that where classrooms were democratically organized and where issues of relevance were discussed in an engaging and controversial manner, the result was improved democratic dispositions among students. A major problem, however, was a shortage of such classrooms.

But even more recently, in countries such as Canada, the United States, Australia, and England where there have been renewed efforts at citizenship education, there have been major deficiencies. Again, the problem has not been lack of agreement about overall goals or best practices. It has been lack of commitment to implementation. Problems with implementation may be categorized as three: (a) lack of capacity building; (b) lack of application of best practices, including opportunities for participation; and (c) lack of an effective values framework to provide guidance and motivation for active citizenship.

Lack of Capacity Building

Hughes and Sears (2006) identify capacity building for citizenship education in four areas. First is the development of clear and widely accepted goals for establishing directions and standards for citizenship education. Clear objectives, they point out, are basic to good teaching and learning and to good implementation. Although specific goals may

be difficult to articulate in pluralistic societies where there are differing views about certain aspects of citizenship (see for example, Hans Smit (2006)), general goals – for instance, on educating students about democratic rights of citizenship – can and should be spelled out with relative clarity. Second is the provision of curriculum materials to support teaching and learning. Without this, even if the objectives are clear, learning is unlikely to occur on a significant scale. Third is the provision for effective teacher training and teacher development. And fourth is funding for research and development in support of teaching, learning, and program development. Although as noted by Hyslop-Margison and Naseem (2007), empirical research may involve important epistemological problems, well-funded and well-designed research is an important contributor to capacity building. If citizenship education is to be fully effective, capacity has to be built in all four areas. Supports, resources, and the clear articulation of general goals need to be in place.

According to Hughes and Sears, although some countries have made reasonable progress, others have not. The example that they point to is Canada. In Canada, unlike Australia, there has not been a full and comprehensive discussion of the objectives of citizenship education, leading to clearly stated goals. The result has been a lack of understanding among educators of the objectives and a subsequent lack of clear goals, which undermines effective teaching and learning. And in Canada, unlike Australia and the United Kingdom, there also has been a lack of quality curriculum materials in support of teaching. Canadian teachers consistently identify lack of materials as a major impediment. Further, there has been inadequate teaching training and development for citizenship education. Unlike in the United Kingdom, where ample training has been made available to prepare citizenship education specialists and where universities provide an extensive range of post-graduate programs, comparable opportunities are lacking in Canada. Finally, funding for research in support of citizenship education has been lacking. Unlike in the United Kingdom, where a multilayered system of research, monitoring, and evaluation has been put into place, the building of Canada's research base has been sporadic and fragmented.

However, even where there has been greater capacity building such as in Australia and the United Kingdom, there have been major problems. In Australia, Murray Print (2007) points to the problem of teachers not using the range of curriculum resources available to them or limiting their use to specific subject matter or personal preferences.

He found that although the materials were a well established part of the school curriculum, they were used by only a minority of teachers. In England, Mark Pike (2007) notes problems in teaching effectiveness and assessment of results. As pointed out by Pike, recent reports by Ofsted (the Office for Standards in Education which inspects and publishes reports on schools) have concluded that citizenship education is the worst taught subject in English secondary schools and that pupil achievement and the quality of teaching compare unfavorably with established subjects. Reports by Ofsted have also pointed to the failure of teachers and schools to establish reliable and systematic assessment procedures. According to Pike, a major source of the problem is the ambitiousness of the goals. Schools and teachers are called upon to educate *for* citizenship, not simply educate *about* citizenship. Where it is relatively easy to provide information to students and to assess how well teachers are doing in the latter, it is a major challenge to foster active citizenship and to assess progress in schools in doing this.

Lack of Application of Best Practices

A second problem is the lack of the use of best practices. In reviewing the recent development of programs in Canada, Australia, and England, Ian Davies and John Issitt (2005) report that the dominant approaches to citizenship education remain conservative and instrumental, not participatory and constructivist. They come to this conclusion after examining the textbooks and curriculum materials used in each of these countries. According to their analysis, in Canada (with a focus on Ontario), citizenship education continues to be taught primarily in the traditional form of civics. It essentially is a non-threatening conservative approach "concerned with the transmission of information about the development of parliamentary democracy, with some encouragement to take part in established institutionally framed procedures" (p. 400). The general aim is to fill the minds of students with facts, not to promote active citizenship in a serious way through participatory classrooms (see also, Shields & Ramsay, 2004). It is important to note, however, that such a conservative approach is not uniform across Canada. In British Columbia and Alberta, a much more participatory, constructivist, and activist approach to citizenship education has been adopted, a least in principle (Sears, 2004). For example, although it is optional, Civic Studies 11 in British Columbia secondary schools is one of the most progressive programs anywhere in the country. But despite these exceptions, best practices generally have not been applied in Canada.

Davies and Issitt find a similar situation in Australia and England. In Australia, they report, citizenship education is taught in the form of social studies with the aim of increasing societal understanding. However, it is a means to the end of developing critical thinking skills relevant to other and more serious academic subjects – such as history and English – as well as to jobs in the new global economy. It is not an end in itself. And in England, where citizenship education is perhaps most advanced, it is taught as a means to the end of promoting socially useful qualities that young people should acquire. A primary aim is to promote orderly behavior and personal responsibility in such matters as health, personal finance, community service, and helping charities. But what is lacking in these approaches is the recognition of the child as a contemporaneous citizen and the teaching of the child's citizenship rights and responsibilities. In the absence of such knowledge and understanding, students are lacking the necessary framework to think critically about citizenship and political issues or the value of democracy.

Davies and Issitt's review shows a disconnection between the international consensus and the implementation of best practices. Contrary to the agreement about the need for learning that is issues-based, collaborative, and participatory, the approaches used typically have been conservative and constraining. Generally absent in schools have been practices and structures allowing for active participation. There have been exceptions to this. In some classrooms, there has been evidence of some degree of participatory and experiential learning, such as in England following the introduction of mandatory citizenship education (Cleaver & Nelson, 2006). And in some schools, there has been the introduction or strengthening of structures of participation through such means as student councils, student representation on committees, and community service projects as part of education requirements (Althof & Berkowitz, 2006, Howe & Covell, 2005). But overall, there has been what has been called an "implementation gap" (Cleaver & Nelson, 2006). Schools generally have failed to provide opportunities and structures for meaningful student participation, preferring instead to maintain traditional methods such as top-down factual learning or to narrow and limit opportunities for participation and critical thinking about broad political issues. Even in England, there has been "little explicit reference to the need to develop citizenship as an active practice in the curriculum" (2006, p. 36). And even where there have been student councils and structures for student input, these typically have been restricted to issues that are mundane or trivial such as what color

to paint the school washrooms (Bickmore, 1999; Holden, 1998; Howe & Covell, 2005). Sears and Hyslop-Margison (2007) remind us of the film *Crimson Tide* and what the captain of the nuclear submarine said to his first officer: "we are here to defend democracy, not practice it" (p. 58). This appears to still be the thinking of most educators.

There also has been a failure to provide for the integration of citizenship education throughout the whole school and school system. Existing programs typically are implemented as particular subjects – civics or social studies or citizenship education – at particular grade levels, and typically only in secondary schools as in England. Very little thought has even been given to the need for integration in Canada (Sears & Perry, 2000). In England (Cleaver, Ireland, Kerr, & Lopez, 2005) and the United States (Miller, 2003, 2004), although consideration has been given to the matter and there have been a number of initiatives, there has been little substantial movement in the direction of integration. The essential problem is this: even if there was sufficient capacity building and the subject was taught in an engaging, participatory, and constructivist manner, citizenship education would be incomplete and of limited effectiveness if it was segregated as a separate subject. Contradictory practices and pedagogies used in another subject or at another grade level would undermine or defeat even the best of efforts in a subject of citizenship education.

As noted by Pike (2007), although integrating citizenship is the most complex and challenging means of implementation, it is the most worthwhile. In order to make progress in citizenship education, it is important that participatory learning and a constructivist approach be reinforced across subjects, grade levels, and schools from primary to secondary school. It is important also that the formal curriculum be reinforced by the hidden curriculum and that citizenship education be embedded in school structures, codes of conduct, mission statements, and the school ethos. However, as pointed out by Pike among others, such integration generally has not been carried out.

Lack of a Values Framework

A third problem is the lack of an effective values framework or moral cement for citizenship education. Even if there is capacity building and authentic efforts at implementation, without an effective values framework to engage and motivate students for active citizenship, progress will be limited. Although providing opportunities for

meaningful participation is a very important part of citizenship education, students need to be motivated to pursue the opportunities. They need to be engaged by the school and to see value in the practice of citizenship. This requires that citizenship education have a compelling moral component and an engaging values framework.

A difficulty has been that since the second World War, educational authorities in Western countries often have been reluctant to promote distinct values related to citizenship (Arthur, 2005). A primary reason has been that the explicit teaching of a particular set of moral and political values related to citizenship is seen to be problematic in a secular and pluralistic society where there are differing views about basic values. For some communities, religious life or economic success may be of primary importance and active citizenship of secondary or little importance. Educators therefore have attempted to be value-neutral or to have values discussed at a very general level. They generally have subscribed to what T.H. McLaughlin (1992) has termed a "minimal" conception of citizenship where the focus is on transmitting knowledge and teaching skills rather than on promoting particular values (in contrast to the "maximal" conception where attention is given to teaching values). The assumption has been that the explicit teaching of values should be left largely to parents and community organizations. This does not mean that education on values has been absent in schools. At various times and places, there have been programs of moral education in the form of character education, values clarification education, and moral education based on moral reasoning (Althof & Berkowitz, 2006; Howe & Covell, 2005). But such education has been of limited scope and duration and generally unconnected to education for citizenship.

However, in recent initiatives in citizenship education, moral or values education has become a more accepted ingredient of education for citizenship. The best example is England. As noted by Pike (2007), the new mandatory program of citizenship education in England "does not aim only to foster *skills* and transfer *knowledge,* it is designed to influence citizens' *values and actions*" (p. 472). As made clear in the 1988 Crick Report – the report that led to the mandatory program – the intention of the new program was to teach the values of active democratic citizenship and community involvement. In the words of the report and as discussed by its chief architect Bernard Crick, "we aim at no less than a change in the political culture of this country" where people "think of themselves as active citizens, willing, able and equipped

to have influence in public life and with critical capacities to weigh evidence before speaking and acting" (2007, p. 235). According to the report, a key means of making people think of themselves as active citizens was to be through an ambitious program of citizenship education with a strong moral dimension that would promote active citizenship as never before. Students would be educated through learning the value of participatory democracy and through practicing participation (for example, through receiving credit for community service). This was in keeping with the "maximal" conception of citizenship.

Based on the thinking of the report, a mandatory and moralistic program was put into effect. Schools were to engage in a kind of character education where children would acquire certain character traits and virtues that provide a foundation for active citizenship: the proclivity to act responsibly, the ability to practice tolerance, the desire to act by a moral code, a commitment to voluntary service, and a disposition to work with and for others (Arthur, 2005, p. 244). The overall purpose of the program in England was the heavily moralistic one of developing a sense of social responsibility among children, encouraging community involvement and participation in the affairs of society, encouraging respect for others and the development of effective relationships, and promoting the child's contribution to the building of the common good. Of particular importance was instilling in children a deep sense of duty and commitment to participation. Promoting a sense of duty and responsibility was to be at the centre of the values framework. Such a focus is consistent with what is called in the philosophical literature on citizenship "civic republicanism" (Crick, 2007; Kymlicka & Norman, 1995; Oldfield, 1990). It is a belief that through building moral character and cultivating a sense of duty, the highly desirable practice of active citizenship can be advanced.

The program in England is progressive in many respects. In focusing on the value of participation and allowing for student input into such matters as school behavior codes and policies, the program is in keeping with the values that students already possess: students welcome the sense of belonging to a community and they believe they should have a voice in matters affecting them (Cleaver & Nelson, 2006). The program therefore has great potential. But the effectiveness of the particular approach is in doubt. First, as discussed by Osler and Starkey (2006), the program is problematic in that it treats children as *future* citizens rather than citizens of the present. Children learn that they are being

molded or trained to *become* active and responsible citizens. They learn that they are not regarded and respected as valued citizens in the *here and now* – in the political community of the school. Such lack of respect for their status as citizens of the present, together with the stern and heavy emphasis on developing a sense of duty and obligation, does little to engage with children in a serious way and over the longer term (Howe & Covell, 2005). Osler and Starkey emphasize the importance of engaging with children's personal identities and feelings. England's program does not do this to any significant degree.

Furthermore, as pointed out by Don Rowe (2006) in reference to the literature and research on moral development, it is not enough simply to encourage more responsibility and a sense of duty. Much more needs to be done to enable children to internalize the values underpinning social responsibility and to become self-directed and committed to carry through one's values. According to Rowe, although the new English curriculum is progressive in allowing for wider participation and more collaboration with students in matters such as school behavior policies, its implementation suffers because of a lack of opportunity for moral reasoning and dialogue based on values and principles. A problem is that although there is more room for student voice and discussion of issues relevant to responsible behavior, discussion tends to remain at a superficial level, enough to gain short-term agreement and compliance, but not enough to foster the internalization of values underlying positive citizenship. More room needs to be made, says Rowe, for deeper moral reasoning and extended dialogue about the rights and responsibilities of citizenship so that values can be internalized and behavior more self-directed. Educators currently underestimate the level of responsibility that students will accept, often infantilizing students in denying them opportunities to reason about issues and take responsibility. Thus what is needed, in addition to engaging with children's personal identities and feelings, is to provide a values framework that allows for in-depth reasoning about the principles and practice of citizenship.

Finally, England's program has contradictory practices that undermine the effectiveness of the values framework. As discussed by Pike (2007), there is a disconnection between the aim of fostering active citizenship and the treatment of citizenship education as a regular subject with tests and assessment. Children learn about the values of participation and equality and yet are confronted with examinations and assessments that wield power over them. The system of testing and competition "militates against the egalitarian ethos and the spirit of a

citizenship curriculum for all" (p. 478). The effect, says Pike, is to produce subjects, not citizens. But even if the issue of assessment is put to the side, the lack of the modeling of the practice of citizenship in classroom and schools is enough to defeat or undermine the aim of promoting active citizenship. On the one hand, children learn the theoretical importance of active participation, student voice, and the critical discussion of issues. But on the other, with the "implementation gap," they learn that full opportunities for meaningful expression and participation are constricted in their classroom and school settings. Although much progress has been made in England in widening opportunities for participation and collaboration, this has been done only at the secondary level, only is some schools, and only to some degree (Cleaver & Nelson, 2006; Ireland, Kerr, Lopez, & Nelson, 2006). To return to the example of the film *Crimson Tide*, children learn the message of the captain of the nuclear submarine: "we are here to defend democracy, not practice it." The effect of this learning is to dampen motivation and engagement.

In summary, despite the international consensus, progress has been held back by the lack not only of capacity building and implementation of best practices, but also an effective values framework to engage and motivate children into becoming active citizens. Even in England where values have been given major emphasis, progress has been held back by the belittling treatment of children as citizens of the future, lack of opportunity for moral reasoning and internalization of values, and the disconnection between the principle and practice of active participation. We now turn to a form of citizenship education that holds promise in providing an effective values framework for citizenship.

Education on Children's Rights

There is reason to believe that a comprehensive and well-developed program of education on children's rights provides a useful values framework for implementing citizenship education. Children's rights education is a form of citizenship education that gives primary attention to educating children on their basic rights and responsibilities under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Howe & Covell, 2005; Johnny, 2005; Krappmann, 2006; Osler & Starkey, 1998). It is a values framework that strongly endorses and promotes children's rights, but it is also one that recognizes that there is sometimes conflict among rights – for example, between the right to life of a Jehovah's Witness child and the right of that child to practice her religion by refusing a life-

saving blood transfusion – and that there is sometimes tension between rights and community interests – for example, between the child's right to health care and the traditional community practice of female genital cutting that puts the health of the child at risk. Children's rights education welcomes the opportunity for students to discuss these kinds of tensions as a means of promoting their moral reasoning and engaging them in classrooms and schools.

Implemented in individual classrooms in Canada, the United States, Ireland, the United Kingdom, and most notably, in schools across Hampshire County in England, children's rights education has been found to be an effective means of engaging children and motivating them into a practice of citizenship (Covell & Howe, 2001; Howe & Covell, 2005). Such an effect has been observed in Hampshire County, the largest educational district in England, where the Hampshire Education Authority launched an innovative program of children's rights education in 2004 called RRR or *Rights, Respect, and Responsibility*. Reasons for success may be summarized as follows, as based on the experience of the Hampshire Education Authority and assessments of the outcomes of RRR (Covell & Howe, 2007a, 2007b).

First, the RRR program provides a values framework that engages children because it is relevant to their daily lives and allows for self-interest (Goodman, 2000; Griffiths & Davies, 1995; Holden & Clough, 1998). It begins with an emphasis not on the stern value of duty but on the rights of the child and on the need to respect children as bearers of basic rights. It teaches children something that has important meaning for them: that they have value through having fundamental rights, as described in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Children learn that they have three kinds of rights under the Convention – rights of protection (e.g., against abuse, neglect, exploitation), rights of provision (e.g., to education and health care), and rights to participation (to have a voice in decisions affecting them) (Hammarberg, 1990; Howe & Covell, 2005). At the same time, children learn that they have correlative duties and responsibilities. They learn that if someone has a right, others – including they – have the responsibility to respect that right and to uphold practices and communities in support of those rights. Children learn the importance of social responsibility not in a top down didactic way but through learning about their own value as holders of rights. Through learning rights and responsibilities, and through learning that they have value, children take ownership of the values framework and are engaged by it.

It has meaning and relevance for them and provides a foundation for learning about wider rights and responsibilities as citizens.

Second, RRR treats children as citizens of the present, not only of the distant future. Children learn that under an important principle of the UN Convention – the principle of participation – that they have the right to express their views freely in all matters affecting them and that their views are to be given weight in accord with age and level of maturity. This is consistent with and affirms a value that students already possess – that they should have a voice (Cleaver & Nelson, 2006). This is a much different approach from the traditional concept of citizenship education – which continues to be used in England and elsewhere – where children are to be trained for future adult citizenship. The RRR program recognizes that children already are citizens with certain rights and responsibilities of citizenship, which are to be exercised in accord with their evolving capacities. And in the tradition of Dewey, the program also recognizes that although schools are settings for education, they are political communities where child citizens learn democratic citizenship. For children, this is a much more engaging approach than the patronizing one of regarding them as future citizens. It engages with their feelings and with their desire for respect.

Third, RRR allows for moral reasoning and the internalization of values. The program is grounded in teaching and learning about the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which the United Kingdom ratified in 1991 (as did Canada in 1991 and Australia in 1990). Children learn that by ratifying the Convention, the United Kingdom has agreed to the principle that children have certain fundamental rights, including participation and the right to know that they have rights (Howe & Covell, 2005; Johnny, 2005; Osler & Starkey, 1998). As values and rights are introduced, they themselves are held up for questioning and critique, in an age-appropriate way. And with the rights of the child in mind, and with the guidance of teachers, students engage in a process of reasoning about responsibilities that correspond with their rights and about school behavior codes and the operation of student councils and school committees. Through this process of reasoning, children gain a deeper understanding of rights and responsibilities and come to internalize the values underpinning citizenship education. They are better positioned to appreciate the value of social responsibility, to become self-directed, and to carry through on their values than they otherwise would be on the basis of a values framework grounded simply on duty.

Fourth, RRR insists on participatory practices that are consistent with and reinforcing of the values framework. Children observe not a disconnection between principles and practice but an authentic attempt by schools and teachers to model the practice of active citizenship. To begin with, children learn about the Convention not through a factual and rote learning approach but – in line with the international consensus – through learning that is issues-based, collaborative, and participatory. Children learn about their rights and responsibilities through an interactive and experiential process of role play, cooperative learning in small groups, and discussion of controversial issues in participatory classrooms. Role play in small groups is an important part of the learning process. When small groups of students engage in role play, each member of the group has an opportunity to contribute. Less able children have an opportunity to experience success and more gifted students have an opportunity to express their creativity. The experience validates the importance of all students to themselves and to each other and helps each child gain a positive sense of self and personal agency. From a pedagogic perspective, role play is more engaging and memorable to students than traditional teaching strategies and is more effective in developing students' ability to communicate and debate.

So too is discussion of controversial issues. It engages the attention of students and is effective in deepening their understanding of rights that sometimes may come into conflict. Through critical reflection and debate and through seeing different sides of issues, students come to understand and appreciate their rights and responsibilities in a more in-depth way. For example, students can learn about the environment by examining the relation between the health of the natural environment and their rights to health and an adequate standard of living. In this context, students may analyze relevant song lyrics (e.g., Bruce Cockburn's "If a tree falls") to learn about the importance of sustainable development, role play factory workers and children who are affected by factory-created pollution considering the difficulty of rights in conflict, or may discuss how specific environmental conditions such as air or water pollution interfere with children's rights to play.[1]

Finally, under RRR, education for citizenship is not limited to education within a particular classroom. It is integrated into structures of governance, into behavior codes, and across the school and school system. To begin with, citizenship education is provided for through student councils and student representation on committees. Councils and committees are organized with explicit reference to the UN

Convention and the principle of participation. Councils are given the mandate to deal with issues meaningful to students – not just to what color to paint the school washrooms – and to have input into overall school decision-making. Citizenship also is given expression in behavior codes. At the beginning of the school year, in reference to the UN Convention, children are invited to provide input into the development of classroom charters and school behavior codes, which contain standards of behavior for the school year expressed in the language of rights and responsibilities. During the school year, should a student violate another student's right (e.g., a right to learn or play) or fail to exercise responsibility (e.g., respecting the rights or property of others), that student can be held accountable on the basis of a code or charter that the student helped to design. The aim of such integration is to ensure that the values framework and citizenship practices in the formal and hidden curriculum are reinforced and strengthened over time. The ultimate objective is to create a school ethos such that the exercise of rights and responsibilities and the practice of participation are an expected part of school life. And importantly, the integration of RRR across school and classroom practices provides children with a common principle, or values framework that they can – and seemingly do – use as a guide for their behavior. It is a values framework that has legitimacy in that it is based on a global consensus on the importance of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

It is too early, of course, to say conclusively that RRR provides a perfect model for citizenship education. This would require a longitudinal study of a cohort through to adulthood. But developments in Hampshire do suggest that when citizenship education is constructed on the basis of treating children as valued citizens and educating them about their rights and responsibilities under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, a much stronger foundation is laid for the practice of citizenship. There is good reason to believe that as children develop and become adults who are voters, community leaders, and policy-makers, they have a greater capacity to appreciate the value not only of children's rights but also of human rights, social equality, democracy, and active citizenship and to work toward building a society more consistent with these values.

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1. Curriculum resources with specific lesson plans are available at: www.discovery.cbu.ca/pysch/index.php?/children/index

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