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Please cite this paper as:

Sigauke, A. (2013). *Citizenship education in the university social science units: An analysis of the teacher education curriculum for pre-service teachers.* Refereed paper presented at 'Knowledge makers and notice takers: Teacher education research impacting policy and practice', the annual conference of the Australian Teacher Education Association (ATEA), Brisbane, 30 June–3 July.

Published by: Australian Teacher Education Association (ATEA)

Available via stable URL: https://atea.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2013_sigauke.pdf

Review status: Refereed—abstract and full paper blind peer-reviewed

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Title:

Citizenship education in the university social science units: An analysis of the teacher education curriculum for pre-service teachers

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Abstract:

Citizenship education is widely acknowledged as a necessary part of the school curriculum for various reasons. For young people, it is assumed that citizenship can best be learnt through the school curriculum. This means that teachers need to thoroughly understand what citizenship means and how to pass this knowledge on to students.

This paper examines the nature of citizenship and citizenship education offered in the social science teacher education program at a teacher education institution in Australia. It analyses ten social science unit outlines to find out how pre-service teachers are trained about teaching citizenship education in schools when they graduate.

Findings show that a multiple conception of citizenship and a cross-curriculum integration model are adopted in the ten subjects. It recommends a stand-alone offering of citizenship education at the teacher education level.

Key words:

Citizenship education, ideological discourse, teaching approach, communitarian, social science education, pre-service teacher

Introduction

Citizenship education is widely acknowledged as a necessary part of the school curriculum for various reasons, including the perception that it can be a useful cure for the 'social ills' often associated with young people: that is, tendencies for anti-social behaviour and political apathy (Potter, 2002), or, what Osler and Starkey (2006, p.437) describe as 'youth deficit'. At the local community level, it is assumed that social and environmental problems can best be resolved through an understanding of what it means to be a citizen. For young people it is assumed that learning about citizenship responsibilities can best be accomplished through citizenship education in the school curriculum (Crick, 1998). Thus teachers also need to have a thorough understanding of citizenship issues and how to teach these in their classes.

In this paper the author examines the nature of, and the extent to which citizenship ideas are dealt with in the social science units of the teacher education curriculum at one Australian university. The author analyses unit documents in order to find out ideological discourses, conceptualisations, aims and teaching approaches in the program. Generally, contents of educational documents such as teacher education programs and school syllabuses are products of government policies on education that may, as Scott (2000) observes, operate to influence public opinion on the agendas of powerful groups in society. Thus even where there is little need to ask, readers are advised to ask themselves questions about intentions of policy documents; their ideological underpinnings and relevance to learners, practitioners and society in general (Scott, 2000). As they pass through the bureaucratic chain educational policies are sometimes misinterpreted or changed. These views are important for this study that seeks to understand the nature of civics and citizenship education in the social science program at the teacher education level.

A number of ideological discourses are helpful in understanding the nature of education in general and, in particular, citizenship education at both teacher education and school levels. Two of these are discussed here.

Ideological discourses on education

Grundy and Hatton (1995, p.8) define discourse as "a particular language or communicative pattern...underpinned by assumptions...what is meant is contained as much in what is not said as what is said". These authors also quote from Ball's (1993, p.4) argument that "discourses are about what can be said, and thought, but also about who can speak, when, where and with what authority...". Ideology, on the other hand, is conceptualised as "a set of ideas, thoughts, judgments, belief systems and values that relate to group interests and important as a basis for evaluating situations" (Bee Bee, 2001, p.2). These views are important in understanding the nature of, and teaching/learning processes in citizenship education.

Research has shown that the nature of ideological discourses in teacher education is important in determining what education (including citizenship education) can do to change the status quo. A study in Australia (Grundy and Hatton, 1995) identified two ideological discourses in teacher education: social transformation and social

conservatism.

Social conservative education

Social conservatism, viewed as the dominant ideological discourse at most levels of education, is a major contributor to conservative outcomes that benefit powerful groups in society. It does so through the reproduction of social order (social reproduction) that retards "both social conscience and social consciousness" (Grundy and Hatton, 1995, p.22) leading to the "perpetuation of unequal and unjust social relationships" (Grundy and Hatton, 1995, p.9). Commentators, such as Shor (1987) and Thomas (2009), observe that education as a whole can be both a liberating and an oppressive tool depending on who is using it and how it is used. It becomes an oppressive force when educators use 'banking pedagogy' (Thomas, 2009) or what Shor (1990, p.348) refers to as "frontal pedagogy". 'Banking' or 'frontal' pedagogy is socially conservative and characterised by passive, hierarchical and teacher-centred schooling, memorisation and subordination on the part of students, breeding conformity and passivity in learners. At the school level, social conservatism is often evidenced by classroom drills and emphasis on testing learners. The school's administrative system is often authoritative while the state is in charge of syllabuses, often of little benefit to learners from poor backgrounds (Shor, 1990).

Social transformative education

Social transformation in teacher education offers possibilities for social change as the system "promotes a situation where future teachers deal critically with what exists in society in order to improve it" (Beyer and Zeichner, 1987 cited in Grundy and Hatton, 1995, p.9). Thomas (2009, p.253) is of the view that education needs to adopt the Freirean "dialogical, liberatory or critical/constructivist pedagogy"; a knowledge creating, learning and collaborative process between teachers and learners that illuminates and acts on realities of everyday problems. Social transformative pedagogy stimulates and raises consciousness in learners, allowing them to be active and responsible participants; and for them to recognise oppressive, violent and exploitative conditions. Malott (2010, p.386), calls this "education from below": collaborative work with oppressed groups in society, formulating educational policies in consultation with and for people who are directly affected by the system.

Critical or constructivist pedagogy is not just the deposition of knowledge from elsewhere into learners (*banking process*). It is a liberating process that empowers students to build a just and equal society: equality between races, sexes and cultures; involving parents, teachers and students in school governance and policy making (Shor, 1990). A democratic teacher using a social transformative approach teaches for equality and critical knowledge; s/he adopts student-centred, participatory and problem-solving approaches. Classroom teacher-student interactions are based on democratic approaches where students bring in everyday community problems for discussions and research. Teacher educators using a transformative methodology act as change agents: changing teaching from an elitist, top-down teacher-talk-centredness to a critical and democratic process. Their loyalties are towards communities they serve. While these views focus on education in general they are equally relevant to citizenship education at both teacher and school education levels.

The study:

This study focused on ten (10) units offered to secondary school pre-service teachers in the 2012 social science teacher education program at an Australian university. Social science education is one among three programs in the Humanities Education and offers units of study for primary and secondary school pre-service teachers at under-graduate and post-graduate levels. However, not all pre-service teachers take all ten units. The majority of them study online. Assessment is by assignments and online quizzes.

While a number of citizenship education issues are mentioned in other units only in three (3) units are specific sections set aside for the discussion of citizenship education. Table 1 identifies units where these sections are offered.

Table 1: Social science education units: 2012

Unit Name	*Section on Civics & Citizenship Education
Aboriginal Studies	No
Business Studies & Commerce	No
Economics and Commerce	No
*Geography	*Yes
History	No
*Human Society and Its Environment (HSIE: 1)	*Yes
*Human Society and Its Environment (HSIE: 2)	*Yes
Legal Studies	No
Society & Culture	No
Studies of Religion	No

Research question

This study aimed at answering the following question: what are the ideological discourses, conceptualisations, aims and suggested teaching approaches in citizenship education in the social science education program at this teacher education institution? An understanding of these issues is significant for teacher educators to improve the program in terms of content, teaching methods and relevance to learners and communities where pre-service teachers will be employed.

Method of analysis

The study involved a qualitative analysis of sections on citizenship education in three units (Table 1). The analysis was modelled along principles of qualitative document analysis which direct the analyst to "soak him/herself into, poke and extract distinct themes" from contents of documents (Wesley, 2009, p.6). Document content analysis

involves thorough examination, interpretation and evaluation of evidence in the text (Bowen, 2009). The analysis attempts to bring out meanings, motives and purposes that are latent and embedded in the text. In the process, as Wesley (2010) points out, the analyst should, as much as possible, try to avoid personal biases, partiality or prejudice; otherwise these have to be reported whenever they are identified.

Following suggestions from researchers elsewhere, (for instance, George (2006) and Platt (2006) in Wesley (2010)), document texts were, firstly, subjected to some thorough but uncritical reading. This was followed by a critical evaluation with the intention of examining the extent to which the program is modelled around social transformative or conservative views (Grundy and Hatton, 1995).

Findings

A number of civics and citizenship issues in the three units reflect those in the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) draft secondary school civics and citizenship education syllabus (ACARA, 2012) and other policy documents, for instance, Tudball and Forsyth (2009) and Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA, 2008). Tables 2-4 present findings on sections focusing on civics and citizenship education.

Geography Unit

Findings from the analysis of the Geography unit are presented in Table 2. Geography is mentioned in a number of policy documents as an area for teaching, learning and training young people in citizenship skills, understanding citizenship concepts and developing positive attitudes and other dispositions relevant to citizenship education (ACARA, 2012, p.10; Tudball and Forsyth, 2009). In addition Mclnerney, Berg, Hutchinson, Maude and Sorenson (2009) recognise the contribution of geography to the education of young Australians so that they become active and informed citizens.

Table 2: Civics and citizenship education in Geography

Aims	Content/conceptualization	Suggested teaching approaches
1. Pre-service teachers to be aware of key competencies outlined in the Years 7 – 10 & Stage 6 syllabuses 2. Pre-service teachers to be aware of aims of social and citizenship education in schools *Social education aims to: - heighten student awareness of social issues - encourage strategies to improve social conditions *Citizenship education aims to: -enable students understand decisions making - heighten student awareness of role of citizens - development of citizenship understanding & skills - giving students opportunities to contribute to reducing social and environmental problems (active citizenship)	1. Social Education: - quality of life & social justice 2. Citizenship education: – roles of citizens, citizenship understanding & skills 3.Civics education: - roles of different levels of government in decision making (often a conservative view) - informing people about their rights and responsibilities - systems that regulate rights & responsibilities (teaching methods are sterile & have little meaning for students) 4. Political literacy: - patterns of interaction between people & environment result of decisions of individuals &organizations with different value & power positions - knowledge of main disputes; beliefs of contestants & effects on ordinary people 5. Civics & citizenship education in Years 7 – 10, teaching materials (e.g. Discovery Democracy) & main themes: - Australian identity; - rights & responsibilities; - decision making; - work related education - literacy (developing & communicating ideas & understanding through a diversity of activities to be undertaken in class-room)	1. Investigative approaches on civics & citizenship education issues (NSW: Stages 4-6: Study of contemporary issues; civics & citizenship education - mandatory) 2. Student-centred inquiry learning approaches 3. Need for careful choice of appropriate content & student centred inquiry learning approaches e.g. fieldwork on gathering, processing, developing & communicating data on views & decision making processes of community groups on local contemporary issues

The Geography unit however, acknowledges some often cited weaknesses regarding teaching citizenship education: the conservative view that citizenship education is about informing young people about their rights and responsibilities; and sterile teaching methods associated with this view. Regarding political literacy the unit quotes Huckle (1983, p.83) that "a political literate person will develop a disposition to do something at the local level which is effective and respectful of the rest of others". Though this links well with suggested teaching approaches it is not clear how pre-service teachers who are online learners put this into practice.

Human Society and Its Environment (HSIE: 1)

Findings on this unit are presented on Table 3. As for geography, this unit recognises that conservative values in policy documents may derail the implementation of 'active citizenship'. How far can both teacher educators and pre-service teachers challenge prescriptions in policy documents? This is perhaps why Prior (1999, p.14) points out that while "a good citizen is often viewed as one who was active and participated in decision making of their community it is not clear that these principles are practised in the classroom or in the school context generally by more actively engaging students in the decision making and governance practiced in the school". This may very well apply to teacher educators in universities. While the unit recommends investigative approaches it is not clear whether this is practically the case at teacher education level.

Table 3: Civics and Citizenship education in HISE (1)

Aims	Content/conceptualisation	Suggested teaching approaches
1. Pre-service teachers to: - distinguish between different types of & approaches to citizenship education -being critical of suggested approaches & materials 2. To conscientise pre-service teachers on need to select & develop teaching & learning strategies on requirements of civics & citizenship education 3. Pre-service teachers to use resources for knowledge development & how HSIE subjects contribute to civics & citizenship education.	1. Nature of civics & citizenship education: – conservative values lead to passive teaching & concern about knowledge acquisition - active & informed citizenship: taking an active role in society - citizenship elements for young Australians: rights & duties, identity, public practice, participation & decision making in life aspects 2. Current emphasis: – a response to policy recommendations: - Hobart Declaration (Senate Standards Committee, 1989) - Civics Expert Group (1994) - Adelaide Declaration (1999) - Melbourne Declaration (2008) - Discovery Democracy Resource Project (1997) 3. Civics in Society and Environment: - Civics & citizenship education in NSW curriculum: mandatory & integrated in Geography & History (junior level & Stages 4 & 5); about Australian identity, rights and responsibilities, decision-making process, democratic processes, Australian democracy, Australia in global community, role of values in citizenship education. - Analysis of citizenship education at senior level 4. Discovery Democracy Project: - why & how developed - purpose - targets 5. Parliamentary Education Office: - school visits to Parliament House - teaching learning resources 6. Linking Discovery Democracy Project materials with school syllabuses	1. Action Learning & Problem Solving developing: - decision making processes, awareness of consequences of decisions; - implications of decisions for social justice; - individual & group action on issues 2. Inquiry into contemporary issues: Australian environments (active citizenship; values education) 3. Using teaching approaches from Discovery Democracy Project: - inquiry & practical learning activities; - simulations to enhance concept development 4. Visits: Parliamentary Office

Human Society and Its Environment (HSIE: 2)

Table 4: Civics and Citizenship education in HSIE (2)

Aims	Content/conceptualisation	Suggested teaching approaches
Familiarising pre-service teachers on civics & citizenship education in school syllabuses: syllabus aims, rationale, content & teaching approaches	1. Assessment of outcomes - NSW: issues embedded & assessed in all subjects - how best to assess understandings & dispositions 2. Linking civics & citizenship education to globalisation & global education - conceptualising globalization; issues; - teaching for national or global citizenship? - citizenship education: historical roots or new world order? 3. Environmental education & sustainability - social, political & economic decision making at personal & institutional levels - different approaches towards resource exploitation	Student active involvement in citizenship activities: simulations, role plays, videos, guest speakers, action in communities

Much of the material on HSIE (2) repeats what is on HSIE (1). This unit takes note of the broad range of citizenship conceptions and advises teachers to be aware of "strong" ideological underpinnings expressed by commentators about what should and what should not be taught (HSIE (2), p.1). However, the unit does not identify these ideological underpinnings. It lists resources linked to government policies for use in schools. Marsh and Hart (2011, p.352) acknowledge the teaching overload that secondary school teachers often have and warn of challenges to teachers who are already "coping with an overcrowded curriculum". Three topics are listed for this unit: assessment, globalisation, and sustainability with suggested teaching approaches to familiarise pre-service teachers on how topics are to be taught. The unit, however, raises an important question concerning assessment: "how can civics and citizenship understandings and dispositions be assessed?" (p.32); is it the student's examination grade or disposition that is assessed?

Discussion

The study intended to find out the aims, content, suggested teaching approaches and underlying ideological discourses informing citizenship education. Three groups of citizenship rights, as identified by Marshall, are recognised in the units: civic, political and social rights (Marshall & Bottomore, 1992). There is also an emphasis for pre-

service teachers to adopt both the communitarian and individualistic models: the "personally responsible citizenship" (Biesta, 2008, p.47). For instance, both pre-service teachers and school students are expected to act responsibly, obey laws, be honest, self-disciplined and hard working. Regarding participatory (communitarian) citizenship pre-service teachers are to be active in communities, for example, caring for people in need. The more radical transformative and justice-oriented citizenship, however, also expects pre-service teachers to be critical in their analysis of issues and be involved in addressing social injustices; to question the social structure, challenge existing political systems and make demands for social change (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004): that is, to learn skills associated with the Freirean social transformative pedagogy (Thomas, 2009).

Only in three units are specific sections set aside for citizenship education. This makes it difficult to develop "deep citizenship" as would have been the case in a stand-alone subject (Machon and Walkington in Kent, 2000, p.184). While the repetition of civics and citizenship topics in different units may be viewed as a constant reminder about these issues, this still compromises the breadth and depth at which these issues are dealt with.

The majority of pre-service teachers study online. This can make it difficult to monitor the extent to which suggested activities are practised. In addition, citizenship education demands that learners be critically analytic, that is, reading documents beyond the surface to expose hidden intentions (Sigauke, 2011). Yet some statements indicate that school syllabuses "represent unquestionable outcomes of lengthy negotiations between various interest groups" (Business Studies, p.5), implying that teachers are not expected to deviate from prescriptions in school syllabuses without very good reason. This is a constraint for pre-service teachers and transformative citizenship education. Policy documents such as school syllabuses need to be critically analysed if social conservatism is to be challenged.

In some countries, a school-wide approach is adopted in the implementation of citizenship education (Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2002) that recognises citizenship values in all aspects of school life. It is implemented in both academic and non-academic (extra) curriculum; providing both theoretical and practical experiences to all learners and beyond the school environment (Thomas, 2009). This could similarly be adopted at the teacher education level. At the moment learners seem to have little opportunity to put these ideas into practice. In addition, constant policy reminders to follow directives leave little room for educators to deviate to other pedagogies that might challenge policies.

Conclusion

Unit documents in this study advocate a mixture of both social transformative and conservative discourses; in some places the emphasis is on personal (civil) rights while in others it is about involvement in communities. It is however, difficult to ascertain how pre-service teachers practically implement these ideas at school and community levels. This article recommends a separate civics and citizenship education unit in the social science education program in order to realize deep citizenship among learners. Citizenship education also needs to go beyond individualistic tendencies by incorporating participatory activities at the local,

regional and global community levels.

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