RAPPROCHEMENT: TOWARD AN INCLUSIVE APPROACH TO HISTORY AND CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION IN CANADA

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ABSTRACT

Democratic societies around the world, including Canada, have made fostering social cohesion a key priority for education generally and citizenship education in particular. In this article we argue that citizenship education is largely failing in that task because it lacks significant attention to history and that history education often seems to forget its civic purposes. We contend that an appropriate integration of the two makes it possible to develop a deep sense of being Canadian without being simplistic, narrow, or final about what that means. Citizenship education and history education should be seen as intertwined, the questions of one discipline enriching the other. Cultivating a spirit of historical mindedness is one means of developing the reflective and critical habits of mind that are essential for any robust definition of Canadian citizenship.

RÉSUMÉ

Les sociétés démocratiques du monde, incluant le Canada, ont fait de la cohésion sociale une priorité pour l'éducation, de façon générale, et pour l'éducation citoyenne, en particulier. Dans ce texte, nous suggérons que l'éducation citoyenne en grande partie échoue à cette tâche parce qu'elle ne porte pas une attention suffisante à l'histoire, et parce que l'enseignement de l'histoire semble souvent oublier ses objectifs civiques. Nous soutenons qu'une intégration appropriée des deux rendrait possible le développement d'un sens profond d'être Canadien sans être simpliste, étroit ou final en termes de ce que cela signifie. L'éducation citoyenne et l'enseignement de l'histoire devraient être compris comme étant interreliés, les questions d'une discipline pouvant enrichir l'autre. Le fait de cultiver l'esprit historique représente un moyen de développer les habitudes d'esprit critique et réfléchi qui sont essentielles pour toute définition robuste de la citoyenneté canadienne.

INTRODUCTION

This article addresses the challenge of constructing an inclusive national approach to history and citizenship in Canada. First, the Canadian context is situated in a broader debate concerning the adequacy of citizenship education programs to develop belonging and social cohesion. Second, it argues that history education and citizenship education are best seen as intertwined, each asking questions vital to the other. Lastly, the article argues that historical mindedness, defined as a disposition to contemporary social contexts that is derived from a way of looking at the past, can cultivate habits of mind enabling Canadian students to critically examine citizenship and history in their world.

CITIZENSHIP AND CANADIAN HISTORY IN A BROADER CONTEXT

A recent collection of national case studies of citizenship and citizenship education representing jurisdictions from six continents demonstrated there is a widespread sense that citizenship education is not living up to its promise in a range of ways. A particular concern in virtually every state, including Canada, is the perception that citizenship education is not doing well in the development of a deep sense of belonging and social cohesion among diverse citizens.[1] This has resulted in calls to give the subject more substantial focus and priority in the curriculum and to explicitly address issues related to identity, diversity, and cohesion. Perhaps the

most overt examples of the latter have come from England through the *Diversity and Citizenship Curriculum Review,* the so-called Ajegbo report, which concluded:

> The changing nature of the UK and potential for tension to arise now makes it ever more pressing for us to work towards community cohesion, fostering mutual understanding within schools so that valuing difference and understanding what binds us together become part of the way pupils think and behave.[2]

This report fostered calls for teaching *Britishness* in English schools and led directly to reforms of the National Curriculum including much more explicit attention to issues of identity and diversity.[3]

There are real issues to be faced regarding identity and cohesion in democratic societies. Prior to World War II, citizenship education was almost exclusively assimilationist in nature and, particularly in the immigrant societies of Australia and Canada (or English Canada, at least), sought to create a common sense of national identity rooted in allegiance to the Empire and/or Commonwealth. Following the war there was a slow move away from assimilation as a goal for citizenship education for two reasons: it was immoral and ineffective.[4]

Assimilationist approaches to citizenship education centred on teaching and learning a single, heroic, grand narrative of the nation's (or, the empire's, as the case may be) history were replaced by a much more generic brand of citizenship education focused on creating engaged and active citizens. Inclusion is a key aspect of this approach but it is important to note, that what citizens are being included in is not citizenship in the ethnic or sociological sense of belonging to a community but, rather, they are being included in the community of those who participate, who join in a process. Specific national context is largely irrelevant and, therefore, national history has been downgraded or simply ignored in many civics and social studies programs.

In the post 9/11 world, social cohesion has become a huge concern of Western nation states as reflected in debates in France about religious dress in public spaces, prohibitions on the construction of minarets on mosques in Switzerland, and the search for what constitutes 'reasonable accommodation' in Canada. In Britain, the London subway bombings in July 2007, and particularly the fact the bombers were native born citizens, was the catalyst stimulating national introspection and policy development in this area including the work of the Diversity and Citizenship Review Committee and the revised citizenship curriculum mentioned above.

As in Canada and other states, the promotion of social cohesion became a key government policy priority, and more attention to history education was seen as an important component of revised citizenship curricula. The Diversity and Citizenship Review Committee, while recommending more focus on history in citizenship education also expressed concern that "teaching Citizenship with History could mean a return to the old curriculum of British constitutional history and civics." Of course, if students are going to pay attention to the British context of English citizenship they must learn about British constitutional history and civics.[5] The committee was concerned with pedagogical approaches more than with subject matter. They worried about a traditionalist approach that presented constitutional and legal structures as fixed and final, where students were akin to sponges whose main function was to absorb that material and release it again when squeezed at exam time. Gardner calls this "the correct answer compromise" where knowing is reduced to "a ritualistic memorization of meaningless facts and disembodied procedures."[6] This approach to history teaching has been all too common across the world.

In discarding the overweening focus on nation, or empire, because it was impractical and assimilationist, citizenship educators have thrown the baby out with the bathwater. We concur with Barton and Levstik who write: "Some form of identification is necessary for democratic life, because without attachment to community individuals would be unlikely to take part in the hard work of seeking the common good."[7] A substantial part of that identification, we believe, should be with the nation state for two reasons.

First, paying attention to specific state contexts is important in citizenship education because while there are common or generic aspects to democratic citizenship that exist across jurisdictions, it is most often lived out on the ground in specific contexts that give it both form and function. We are not claiming that there is no such thing as democratic theory apart from states but, rather, are arguing that democratic citizenship is operationalized differently across jurisdictions and those differences are important to understand. Second, while we acknowledge profound shifts in geopolitics that are causing fundamental changes to the status and role of nation states, we believe that for the foreseeable future they will remain key sites for the formation of identity and the exercise of citizenship.[8]

Citizenship and history education have been described for years as being at war, and even with current signs of rapprochement scholars and practitioners on both sides worry about being overrun by those on the other.[9] The members of the Diversity and Citizenship Review Committee in England recommended more history but worried about it skewing civics in the wrong direction and

history educators in that country, reacting to the calls to include more history in citizenship education, express concern this might "compromise history's integrity or sacrifice purposes and objectives particular to history education."[10] We believe it is possible to bring history and citizenship education together in ways that can foster an inclusive national history and promote engaged and critical citizenship.

HISTORY AND CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION INTERTWINED

In arguing for substantive attention to national context in civics we concur with Kiwan in calling for a move from "pedagogy of acceptance" towards "pedagogy of process."[11] Specifically, we advocate involving students in the process of constructing the meaning of democratic ideas for their own time and place. In other words, not telling them what it means to be Australian, Canadian or English but introducing them, in an informed way, to the discussion of what those identities have been, are, and might be in the future. This can best be done by engaging students with both the internal complexity of national identity in their particular context as well as with alternative constructions of national identity across the world.

In reflecting on the struggle for democracy to take hold in the states of the former Soviet Union and Soviet Block, Tsilevich contends that one of the major difficulties is the importation of democratic ideas developed over many years in the West. He writes, "Post-Communist countries [are] consumers, rather than co-authors, of this modern and generally accepted liberal democratic political philosophy."[12] The same has been true of traditionalist approaches to history and civics, wherein students have been treated as consumers of ideas rather than co-authors and consequently develop neither deep understanding of the ideas nor commitment to them. Democratic citizenship is fostered in co-authoring democratic ideas and practices through wrestling with what they have meant, what they mean, how they are, how they could be manifested in particular times and contexts. The assimilationist nature of national content can be mitigated by attention to the fluid and contested nature of democratic ideas across time both within the nation and beyond it.

In her comprehensive study of students' experiences with school history in Australia and Canada, Anna Clark found that students from across both countries believed national history was important to know, but that the history education they experienced was excessively content-driven and teacher-focused; students found that such education almost never allowed opportunities for the consideration of multiple perspectives or focused on developing deep understanding.[13] Reports from around the world echo these findings, where students claim that "debates are practically nonexistent" in their history classes, and teaching focuses "on memorization and repetition of teachers' explanations (through taking of class notes) and the contents of textbooks as the core of their history education experiences."[14]

As a range of recent work in history education around the world makes clear, this need not be so. History can contribute to building democracies that are "participatory, pluralist, and deliberative."[15] American researchers Keith Barton and Linda Levstik make a compelling case that History can and should be taught in such as way as to "promote reasoned judgment," "promote an expanded view of humanity," and "involve deliberation over the common good."[16] They have shown how this might be done in ways that are consistent with Situated Learning and Anchored Instruction discussed above.

Barton and Levstik argue that it is possible to teach history in a way that both develops a sense of national identity and explores the contested and complex nature of that identity; that opens up the discussions of difference, exclusion and inclusion. National history should focus in part on the struggle by various groups over time to be included in the national community in the formal, legal and political sense, as well as in the sociological sense. Canada, like Britain and Australia, is recognized as a multi-national state. Traditional and conservative approaches to history teaching regard this as a problem that can be fixed through the presentation of compelling and heroic versions of the nation's past. Barton and Levstik propose opening up this investigation of multinationalism. This requires asking questions that compel the student to address what groups or nations have been included in the state, how they came to be included, and how their perceptions of that inclusion shape or affect their civic participation. What, if any, legal and administrative structures are in place to recognize the various nations and provide them with some autonomy?

Kymlicka and Norman point out that national minorities are only one of a range of minority groups that exist in most modern nation states.[17] It is important in history and citizenship education to explore the range of experiences of exclusion, inclusion and social justice. Nuanced history programs "can help to establish a new narrative of the nation, including a new portrayal of the self and those previously designated as Other."[18] It is also possible for young children to begin to develop fairly complex understandings of diversity and principled approaches to accommodation when there is specific attention to it by skilled teachers.

APPEALING FOR HISTORICAL MINDEDNESS

In many ways, we are arguing that the construction of an inclusive national narrative via citizenship and history education requires the cultivation of *historical mindedness* in Canadian students. This term, not to be conflated with other concepts such as historical thinking or historical consciousness, appeals to a habit of mind introduced at the dawn of the nineteenth century by The American Historical Society, which formed a Committee of Seven to report on The Study of History in Schools.[19] In its discussion of the "Value of Historical Study," the Committee recommended that attention be given to the cultivation of present- and historical-mindedness, which were habits conducive to a critical awareness of contemporary life and the past.[20]

Notable was the depiction of history in education in terms of dispositions and outlooks rather than skills or merely content. These dispositions included a detachment from immediate pressures, a willingness to search for comparisons and analogies, a readiness to subject emotions to reason, consideration of multiple perspectives in issues, and weighing the forces of continuity or change.[21] The importance of these outlooks for educationists committed to the development of an active and critical approach to pedagogy is in no small part because the concept of *mindedness* is used in appealing to habits of mind and human life as opposed to retention of data or dexterity with particular skills.

A hundred years following the American Historical Association's report, Ken Osborne, reviewing two texts on the subject of history education for the *Canadian Historical Review*, reintroduced the notion of historical-mindedness, describing it as "a valuable, indeed indispensable, attribute of democratic citizenship."[22] Osborne called on budding research in history to attend not only to the thoughts, habits, and morsels of knowledge that mature in studying the past, but to consider how history affects actions, worldviews, and the meanings of being human. It is in reflecting this last point that the potential for philosophical mindedness to constitute a way of considering the entire enterprise of education in the context of human life, values, and norms gains force.

Rosa Bruno-Jofré and Karen Steiner reformulated the notion of historical mindedness and articulated it as an educational aim, which they argued is vital to the promotion and establishment of an "ethically defensible vision of education."[23] The development of historical understanding was depicted as a path towards the construction of a literate and critically minded citizenry. Historical mindedness requires, at the very least, an understanding of the implications of our actions, discourse, and ideas within various and overlapping spheres of civic activity.

Historian Herbert Kliebard explained this reflection by arguing that history's purpose addresses and strengthens habits of deliberative and critical reflective inquiry into contemporary civic and educational contexts:

> It is the habit of holding up the taken-for-granted world to critical scrutiny, something that usually can be accomplished more easily in a historical context than in a contemporary one. Ideas and practices that seem so normal and natural in a contemporary setting often take on a certain strangeness when viewed in a historical setting, and that strangeness often permits us to see those ideas and practices in a different light.[24]

Kliebard's position follows that of Emile Durkheim, who held out the promise that studying history taught us neither to revel in the past, nor to be seduced by whatever is new or technological. History leads us "away from the prejudices both of neophobia and neophilia: and this is the beginning of wisdom."[25]

CONCLUSIONS

Citizenship education can contribute to fostering Canadian citizens committed to pluralism, deliberation, and the wider national community. This requires substantial commitment including substantive materials, opportunities for teacher education at the pre and in-service levels and dedicated space within the curriculum. It requires sustained attention to the national context. It is possible to develop a sense of being Canadian without being simplistic, narrow, or final about what those labels mean. Citizenship education and history education should be seen as intertwined, the questions of one discipline enriching the other. Cultivating a spirit of historical mindedness is one means of developing the reflective and critical habits of mind that are essential for any robust definition of Canadian citizenship.

NOTES

[1] Reid, A., Gill, J., & Sears, A. (Eds.). (2010). *Globalization, the Nation-State and the Citizen: Dilemmas and Directions for Civics and Citizenship Education.* New York and London: Routledge.

[2] K. Ajegbo, D. Kiwan and S. Sharma. 2007. *Diversity and Citizenship Curriculum Review.* London: DFES, 18.

[3] Qualifications and Curriculum Authority. 2007. *Citizenship: Program of Study for Key Stage 3 and Attainment Target.* London: QAC.

[4] For a fuller discussion of these trends see, Sears, A., Davies, I., & Reid, A. (2011). From Britishness to Nothingness and Back Again. In C. McGlynn & A. Mycock (Eds.), *Britishness, The View from Abroad* (pp. in press). New York: Peter Lang.

[5] K. Ajegbo, D. Kiwan and S. Sharma, *Diversity and Citizenship Curriculum Review*, 9.

[6] H. Gardner. 2006. *The Development and Education of the Mind: The Selected Works of Howard Gardner.* London and New York: Routledge, 146-147.

[7] Barton, K. C., & Levstik, L. S. (2004). *Teaching History for the Common* Good Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 46.

[8] For a fuller discussion of both these arguments see, Sears, Davies and Reid, 'From Britishness,' and Reid, Gill and Sears, eds., *Globalization.*

[9] Sears, A. (2011). Historical Thinking and Citizenship Education: It is Time to End the War. In P. Clark (Ed.), *Cliffs and Chasms: The Landscape of History Education Research History in Canada* (pp. in press). Vancouver: UBC Press.

[10] Lee, P., & Shemilt, D. (2007). New Alchemy or Fatal Attraction? History and Citizenship. *Teaching History* (129), 14.

[11] Kiwan, D. (2008). Citizenship Education in England at the Crossroads? Four Models of Citizenship and their Implications for Ethnic and Religious Diversity. *Oxford Review of Education,* 34(1), 54.

[12] Tsilevich, B. (2001). New Democracies in the Old World: Remarks on Will Kymlicka's Approach to Nation-building in Post-Communist Europe. In W. Kymlicka & M. Opalski (Eds.), *Can Liberalism be Exported? Western Political Theory and Ethnic Relations in Eastern Europe* (pp. 154-170). Oxford: Oxford University Press, 156.

[13] Clark, A. (2008). *History's Children: History Wars in the Classroom.* Sydney: University of New South Wales Press. Clark, A. (2009). Teaching the Nation's Story: Comparing Public Debates and Classroom Perspectives of History Education in Australia and Canada. *Journal of Curriculum Studies,* 41(6), 745-762.

[14] Rafael Valls, "The Spanish Civil War and the Franco Dictatorship: The Challenges of Representing a Conflictive Past in Secondary Schools," in Elizabeth A. Cole, ed., *Teaching the Violent Past: Reconciliation and History Education* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007): 164. See the other chapters in the same volume for similar reports from a variety of countries.

[15] K. C. Barton and L. S. Levstik. 2004. *Teaching History for the Common Good* (Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 34-35.

[16] Ibid., 36-38.

[17] Kymlicka, W., & Norman, W. (Eds.). (2000). *Citizenship and Diverse Societies*. New York: Oxford University Press.

[18] E. A. Cole, 'Introduction: Reconciliation and History Education', in E. A. Cole, ed., *Teaching the Violent Past: History Education and Reconciliation* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007), 20.

[19] The Report was published in 1899. The Committee, chaired by Andrew C. McLaughlin, included Herbert B. Adams, George L. Fox, Albert Bushnell Hart, Charles H. Haskins, Lucy M. Salmon, and H. Morse Stephens. The Report, in its entirety, can be found at http://www.historians.org/pubs/archives/CommitteeofSeven/index.cfm.

[20] http://www.historians.org/pubs/archives/CommitteeofSeven/ReportValue.cfm (accessed June 15, 2010).

[21] Ibid.

[22] Osborne, Ken. 2001. "Review of the books – Knowing, teaching and learning history. Edited by P. Stearns, P. Seixas, and S. Weinburg (2000) New York University Press and – L'histoire à l' école: matière à penser. Robert Martineau (1999) Paris/Montreal: L'Harmattan," in *The Canadian Historical Review,* 82(3), 553.

[23] Bruno-Jofré, Rosa and Karen Steiner. 2007. "Fostering Educative Experiences in Virtual High School History," *Encounters on Education* 8: 69.

[24] Kliebard, H. M.1995. Why history of education? *The Journal of Educational Research*, 88(4), 195.

[25] Durkheim, E. 1977. *The evolution of educational thought: Lectures on the formation and development of secondary education in France* (Peter Collins, Trans.). London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 9.