

Conclusions and Recommendations

The central dilemma for education in divided societies lies in the way its schools engage with issues of difference. The historical role of education systems has been to promote social cohesion either by inculcating children into the national community through a process of assimilation, or by preparing them for their appropriate station in life within the ordered hierarchy of society, or, perhaps more often, both at the same time. Conflict arises when elites have to work hard to maintain a position of domination or when oppressed groups see a possibility of change; violent conflict emerges when there are no alternative routes to prosecuting these claims. What then of the role of education?

(Gallagher, 2009: 5)

As highlighted by the *Civil Paths to Peace* report, humanity is at a crossroads at which we can either continue down the path of the advances in the upholding of human rights, intercultural understanding and global peace that have been made since the Second World War, or revert to a situation of intolerance, hostility and injustice. Education is pivotal in avoiding a retreat into mutual distrust and barbarism, and beyond short-term reconstruction, can sow the seeds of lasting peace with justice. And yet, as Davies (2004; 2005), Harber (2004) and others point out, schools are as much implicated in the initiation and maintenance of warfare as they are in building peace in contemporary times. As Davies (2005: 2) states: 'One myth is that education is generally beneficial and that more education is therefore even more beneficial'. Instead of assuming that the expansion of education systems taking place under the auspices of Education for All will inevitably lead to economic advancement, democracy and the rule of law, close attention is needed to the nature of that education, the experience of schooling and the distribution of opportunities in the education system.

This report has provided an overview of existing theoretical and empirical knowledge about citizenship education, and explored current provision in Commonwealth countries. It has also reviewed previous work carried out by the Commonwealth Secretariat, with a view to providing recommendations for future action. The main focus of this report has been on the complexities of *implementation* of citizenship education, an aspect that is frequently sidelined in favour of debates over the desirability and conceptualisation of citizenship in the curriculum. In reality, both of these aspects require widespread debate in society and sustained attention.

Citizenship education has traditionally maintained a focus on the nation-state, aiming to galvanise loyalty and transmit knowledge about political structures and processes to enable citizens' participation in voting and other limited forms of public engagement. This focus has been challenged in recent years by the phenomenon of globalisation, along with displacement of peoples and the inevitability of interaction at the global level and down to the local. However, the move

away from the nation-state is not only a response to current economic and political realities, but also an ethical ideal, moving away from parochial interests and xenophobia towards an identification with and care for all human beings. While citizenship education must continue to prepare people for local and national participation, it must not in doing so foster competition or indeed conflict between nations, or between groups within the nation, and must maintain the global as the fundamental moral unit (even in the absence of a global government).

One compelling vision for citizenship education can be found in Nussbaum's (1997) three qualities of critical self-examination, world citizenship and the narrative imagination. These qualities – fitting closely with the recommendations of *Civil Paths to Peace* – provide a basis for young people to understand their own and others' culture, to be able to critique but also be sympathetic to ideas different to their own and to have a strong commitment to upholding justice both in a local context and in the world as a whole.

However, the world is full of wonderful ideals that cannot be brought to fruition. Education is often handed the responsibility of bringing about a wide range of social goals, some of which are entirely unrealistic or outside the capability of an educational venture. Citizenship education can make a real and lasting influence on respect and understanding, but only if close attention is paid to the realities of educational practice. Education is not a chemical formula that once identified can be reproduced successfully in any time and place. It involves unique interactions between teachers and students – human beings with their own beliefs, idiosyncrasies and contradictions. In the language of the curricular transposition framework, there are challenging 'leaps' that must be undertaken in conducting successful educational interventions. Citizenship education must both engage these participants directly in the development of curricula, and also acknowledge the uncertainty, unpredictability but also the creative spontaneity of any pedagogical encounter. These reflections will underpin the more concrete recommendations that follow. First, there will be an outline of general recommendations for Commonwealth countries in the development of citizenship education programmes. Second, there will be recommendations for the work of the Commonwealth Secretariat specifically.

Recommendations for citizenship education in the Commonwealth

The following are recommendations for the development of citizenship education provision in countries across the Commonwealth. These recommendations are directed at national governments, but also apply to other levels of government, supranational, non-governmental and community organisations, and those directly involved in the education process, namely teachers, teacher educators, students and communities. Naturally, citizenship education should not be uniform across all contexts and across time, and these recommendations do not constitute a blueprint to be implemented universally. Different countries will have particular concerns – whether they be inclusion of migrant communities, ethnic conflict, corruption, electoral apathy etc. – and provision must address these distinct challenges. Responses must also be appropriate to local contexts – and indeed must be formulated by the participants in those localities. The recommendations, therefore, are intended as guiding principles to inform local formulations. In acknowledging diversity, we are not forced into a relativist position in which all universal ideals must be abandoned. It is essential that we adhere to ideals of global justice and maintain a critical scrutiny of all cultures and contexts based on robust ethical commitments.

Three principles will underpin the areas of action:

1 Teachers and students should be involved in the conceptualisation and development as well as the implementation of initiatives

There is both a pragmatic and a principled rationale for this requirement. First, however well-designed national guidance or curricula may be, ultimately educational practice will only be effective if teachers understand and endorse the frameworks in question. Likewise, students' engagement in the initiative, and therefore their meaningful learning, will be enhanced if they have some involvement in its design (in dialogue with teachers and others). The leaps from ideal programme to implemented curriculum, and then to the effects on students, can only be bridged by unifying the underlying principles and involving all stakeholders. Teacher (as well as teacher educator) and student participation are most effective in the context of broader community participation too. Beyond these pragmatic rationales, it is consistent with the goals of democratic citizenship that those participants in education are considered to be *subjects* of the process, rather than *objects* of initiatives designed by others (Ghanem, 2004).

2 Teaching about democracy should take place in an environment that embodies democratic values

Empirical research (e.g. Morris and Cogan, 2001), shows that students are conscious of the mismatch between the messages promoting democracy they are receiving and the undemocratic functioning of schools. Furthermore, participatory bodies such as student councils are an opportunity for developing key knowledge and skills. Schools are unlikely to be perfectly democratic institutions – and there are justifications for some coercion, particularly in the case of young children – yet there are considerable strides that can be made towards democratisation.

3 There should be porous boundaries between educational institutions and experiences of participation outside

Schools and universities provide extensive opportunities for the development of key citizenship qualities, particularly when diverse groups are brought together to engage in deliberation. However there are some qualities that can only be developed through real experiences of participation. Opportunities should be provided for young people to engage in political debate and action outside their educational institution, with space to discuss and reflect on those activities afterwards within the school. Particular moments – such as post-election, or in emergencies – may be particularly important in terms of strengthening citizenship or peace education.

Spheres of action

Four spheres of action will be addressed here: curriculum and pedagogy; the school environment; teacher education; and the structure of the education system. This is not to say there are not other relevant areas, and clearly citizenship values and action must be integrated into all aspects of educational policy and practice.

A Curriculum and pedagogy

Much discussion on citizenship curriculum revolves around the question of whether it should be a discrete subject or instead integrated or infused throughout. There are advantages to each: with a discrete subject coverage is assured, and yet an infusion model makes use of the opportunities

provided by distinct subjects, and avoids the compartmentalisation of the civic. Ideally, then, curricula will combine some dedicated time to addressing issues of democracy and politics, while in addition bringing out the civic relevance of each discipline. Nussbaum (1997), for example, highlights the importance of engagement with literature and the arts as a means of developing empathy and understanding for others. In terms of a discrete subject area, there are important overlaps between citizenship and human rights education, development education and education for sustainable development, and these areas should acknowledge common ground, while maintaining their distinctive foci (Bourn, 2008; Huckle and Sterling, 1996).

The exact content to be delivered will of course vary from context to context, but will necessarily involve elements such as human rights, political institutions and processes, and the workings of supranational organisations. Young people's participation around the world is evident in forms of action such as campaigns, but not always in conventional party politics (Torney-Purta et al., 2001). This finding has important implications for the provision of citizenship education, as schools must find ways to engage with the real political interests of students. Furthermore, they must not assume ignorance or lack of engagement. In research carried out in Brazil (McCowan, 2008), students described by the citizenship programme facilitators as being disengaged from the initiative turned out to be actively engaged in youth movements and to have a sophisticated political understanding. Their lack of engagement in the programme was not due to apathy, but to opposition to its narrow focus on voting rather than a broader conception of political action.

So as to avoid dry transmission of constitutional structures, schools should aim to engage with topical issues, such as the referendum discussed by Hirshberg (1998), which allowed for significant political conscientisation of the population in New Zealand. As seen in chapter 4, a particularly important area is the treatment of history, particularly in post-conflict contexts, and broad involvement of diverse groups so as to develop interpretations acceptable to all groups is necessary. Furthermore, history teaching is pivotal to broader attitudes to war, as Davies (2005: 363) states:

In the history curriculum, the teaching of peace and non-violence is mainly rhetorical, theoretical and sporadic. In contrast, the teaching about struggle, war and violence is historically grounded, well illustrated and well fitted into the context of the development of civilisation (Najcevska, 2000). Children are mentally prepared for war this way.

The pedagogy used for citizenship education must also be in harmony with the stated goals, embodying the ideas of respect for persons that underpin democracy. As Paulo Freire (1972) argued, the development of active citizens who are *subjects* of political processes must begin with students being subjects of pedagogical processes, rather than mindlessly absorbing content (the so-called 'banking education').

Last, attention is needed to the role of assessment. The phenomenon of 'the tail wagging the dog' – with tests determining instead of monitoring learning – cannot be ignored, and in many cases a formal assessment qualification will raise the status of citizenship. At the same time, great care must be taken not to allow citizenship to become another discipline with a set of discrete items of knowledge and skills to be mastered, while ignoring the centrality of affective, relational and active elements that may be hard to measure. Creative forms of assessment relating to deliberation and community involvement should be developed.

B The school environment

As discussed above, human and children's rights must be assured not only *to* and *through* education, but also *within* education. Some of the best practice examples given in the previous chapter showed how it is possible to create safe and rights-respecting environments in schools that allow all students to flourish. This form of environment involves effective leadership, and attention to the relations amongst staff members, between staff and students, and amongst the student body. Schools, for example, must provide facilities that are appropriate for girls as well as boys, and must ensure that discipline is maintained without the use of physical aggression. In responding to the challenge of conflict in the Commonwealth, it is particularly important to challenge violence in schools, and the roots of conflict in violent masculinities.

Student councils and other participatory bodies involving teachers and community members are an important opportunity both to develop knowledge and skills, and to exert a real influence on the functioning of the institution. This kind of meaningful participation can enable students to develop a sense of 'school efficacy' (Kerr, 2005), which can lead to a broader sense of 'political efficacy'. Significant challenges, however, are involved in extending participation in these bodies beyond a small group of motivated students, and in responding to resistance to increasing influence of children on the part of teachers and community.

C Teacher education

The centrality of teacher education has been seen in the cases above – such as that of Sri Lanka, in which reforms were hampered by a lack of attention to the development of teachers. In countries such as the UK in which the component of citizenship has recently been introduced into the curriculum, there is an urgent challenge to train teachers for this area. Courses for citizenship specialists should be developed, in conjunction with infusing civic elements into all teacher education. However, this is not just a question of developing subject-related and pedagogical knowledge in teachers, but also of embodying the democratic values within the teacher education course itself. Teachers will be able to create democratic and rights-respecting environments in their schools more effectively if they have experienced it themselves. Examples of democratic and empowering teacher education courses can be found in the Landless Movement in Brazil (McCowan, 2009), and the Rights Respecting Postgraduate Certificate in Education at London Metropolitan University (Jerome and Bhargava, 2009).

Teachers and teacher educators should also be involved in an ongoing collective enquiry and debate about the meanings of citizenship. As highlighted by Schugurensky and Myers (2003), teachers are themselves involved in a process of lifelong civic learning. The concept of deliberative democracy comes into play here – in that dialogue about the aims and means of citizenship education should take place at and across every level of the system – leading to a 'seamless enactment' of citizenship (McCowan, 2009). Research in Zimbabwe (Gomez, 2010) has shown how educational change depends on 'shared meaning' (Fullan, 2007), with teachers and teacher educators fully involved in the inception and formulation of programmes. Dialogue and exchange within the education system, with curriculum developers, policy makers, teacher education and school level actors engaged in this way, will bring coherence and combat the fragmentation within the system that results in failure of curriculum and policy reform.

D The structure of the education system

While this study has focused primarily on the role of citizenship education in developing respect

and understanding, of equal importance is the backdrop of the education system as a whole. There is little point in promoting messages of tolerance, respect and equality through the curriculum if the distribution of educational opportunities embodies discrimination on the basis of gender, ethnicity or social class, or fails to include those with disabilities or HIV/AIDS. As highlighted in the introduction, respect and understanding require both attention to access and to the content and nature of education. Students must as far as possible be instructed in their mother tongue, both because it will normally allow for more effective learning, but also because in the context of a multi-ethnic society, multilingual education is an important instance of respect for diverse groups. Representations of social groups in textbooks must promote equality and avoid negative stereotyping on the basis of gender, social class or ethnicity.

Education institutions are an excellent opportunity for engaging in sustained dialogue with diverse groups, and to develop a strong understanding of other cultures through respectful interaction. For this reason, integrated community schooling is ideal for developing respect and understanding in society. Segregated schools on the basis of religion, gender or ethnicity may be justified in particular instances in which the mainstream system is failing to ensure the learning and cultural integrity of a particular group, but only if those schools share an expansive and non-separatist vision.

Inequalities between educational institutions also need to be addressed. Privileged schools often have the most effective citizenship provision, thereby widening the gap in civic knowledge and the ability to influence decision-making. Marginalised communities that have been engaged in political struggles can have high levels of civic understanding – as can be seen in the stronger engagement with citizenship in a former black school in South Africa than its privileged white counterpart (Crowe, 2010). Nevertheless, public schools serving impoverished communities will often need extra support in their citizenship provision.

Lastly, governments must make efforts to ensure that the civic is not squeezed out by economic imperatives. Reid and Gill (2010), for example, highlight the negative effect on the civic potential of schools of the increasingly individualist and competitive culture in Australia, exacerbated by government education policy. An exclusive focus on skills for employment will lead to an impoverished vision of humanity, one in which individualism and materialism will push co-operativism and human values to the sidelines, and will undermine the possibility of a just and equitable society. The predominance of high stakes testing and international competitiveness through league tables can only exacerbate the undermining of civic and moral values, and of social cohesion. Furthermore, Davies (2005: 359) argues that ‘the selection functions of education in most countries contribute to competition and fear, easily played on by those seeking to instil hatred or to urge acceptance of aggression’. Peace building, therefore, involves transforming the whole orientation of the education system.

While it is impossible for this report to address all of the spheres of society in which political understanding and values can be developed, it is essential to remember that citizenship education must not be confined to educational institutions, or even non-formal programmes. As Juma (2001) showed in her study of HIV/AIDS in Kenya and Tanzania, pupils learn as much about the pandemic from sources outside as inside the school, and teaching about it within schools can take place even in the absence of formalised support. As stated above, experiences of volunteering and real political participation – in addition to simulations – are indispensable in citizenship learning.

Cultural activities, sports and museums amongst other educational experiences are also potentially important arenas for the development of citizenship.

The work of the Commonwealth Secretariat

The Commonwealth Secretariat should renew its focus on citizenship education, an area in which there was significant activity in the first part of the last decade. The Secretariat has carried out valuable work in uniting diverse stakeholders and groups within particular countries (e.g. the 2002 search conferences in the Caribbean), promoting broad popular participation, as well as bringing together representatives of different countries for sharing experiences. More sustained support for these initiatives, however, is important so as to enable them to move beyond the development of a viable framework and ensure effective implementation across the education system and beyond.

Most children are educated in national, public school systems, so this should remain the primary focus in terms of a citizenship entitlement. Governments, therefore, should be supported in developing national frameworks, while allowing for regional diversity. The Secretariat should also continue its valuable work in forging partnerships between countries to share responses to common challenges. In particular, the Secretariat can aid in providing continuity between governments. As Davis and Issitt (2005) argue, the successful implementation of citizenship education in Australia is largely due to the fact that the work of the Civics Expert Group continued despite the change of government in 1996. While national co-ordination in provision is important, there is also considerable merit in a wide diversity of providers, as this can lead to greater experimentation and innovation, and attending to different needs. Attention is also needed to localised innovations that can be scaled up across the system. Non-formal educational experiences in addition to schools and higher education institutions are also key sites for the provision of citizenship education.

Beyond direct interventions, the Secretariat should also extend the reach of its research in citizenship. It is essential to monitor closely the progress of the national frameworks developed, developing impact assessments, and paying attention to the full range of educational arenas, age groups and change over time. In addition to evaluation of interventions, broader research addressing civic participation, the views of young people, the experiences and effects of educational interventions and documenting innovation are also important. Secretariat publications – such as the works published on citizenship education in 2002–2004 – should also be more widely disseminated, to the policy-maker, practitioner and researcher communities.

Finally, given the close relationship between citizenship in the curriculum and social justice in relation to distribution of educational goods, the Secretariat should develop synergies between its work relating to access and that relating to the promotion of respect and understanding. A just education system in itself will enable positive relations between different social groups, and avoid fostering the feelings of resentment and exclusion that fuel conflict and extremism.