

FAITH, INTERFAITH AND COHESION : – CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION – ADAM NEWMAN TURNER

SUMMARY

Citizenship education, within the terms set out in the National Curriculum orders, and as originally envisaged by the Crick Report,¹ provides extensive scope for learning about faith diversity and for learning through inter-faith activities. Within the National Curriculum, citizenship is unique in requiring teaching about ‘topical political, spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues, problems and events’; it requires a study of the diversity of UK society and it requires learning about the ‘the importance of resolving conflict fairly’. These requirements should make inter-faith work *sine qua non* for an adequate coverage of the subject.

Furthermore, practical inter-faith activities involving young people in (direct or virtual) dialogue and collaborative projects are ideal opportunities to fulfil the requirement at both key stages for all students to engage in ‘active citizenship’ work.

Inter-faith work maps very closely onto the citizenship orders and could provide much content for both practical and conceptual aspects of the subject. Our initial investigation of current practice in citizenship education suggests that these opportunities are largely ignored; this is confirmed in OFSTED reports up to 2004.

Seven recommendations are made for actions that would support schools and colleges in increasing the prominence of inter-faith work in their teaching of citizenship.

THE ENGLISH NATIONAL CURRICULUM CITIZENSHIP ORDERS

The table below shows the elements of the orders that relate most closely to inter-faith work. Salient differences between KS3 and KS4 are italicised. The following paragraphs discuss how inter-faith work could meet the requirements in these orders.

‘Teaching [of citizenship] should ensure that knowledge and understanding about becoming informed citizens are acquired.’²

	KEY STAGE 3		KEY STAGE 4
1	Knowledge and understanding about becoming informed citizens	1	Knowledge and understanding about becoming informed citizens
1a	The legal and human rights and responsibilities underpinning society and how they relate to young people...	1a	The legal and human rights and responsibilities underpinning society and how they relate to <i>citizens...</i>
1b	The diversity of national, regional, religious and ethnic identities in the United Kingdom and the need for mutual respect and understanding.	1b	<i>The origins and implications</i> of the diverse national, regional, religious and ethnic identities in the United Kingdom and the need for mutual respect and understanding
1f	The work of community-based		

¹ Q.C.A. (1998) *Education for Citizenship and the Teaching of Democracy in Schools* (The Crick Report), London.

² Q.C.A. (1999), *Citizenship: The National Curriculum for England Key Stages 3–4*. London QCA. p. 14.

	national and international voluntary groups.		
1g	The importance of resolving conflict fairly.		
1i	The world as a global community...		
		1j	The wider issues and challenges of global interdependence...
2	Developing skills of enquiry and communication	2	Developing skills of enquiry and communication
2a	Think about topical political, spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues, problems and events by analysing information and its sources, including ICT-based sources.	2a	Research a topical political, spiritual, moral, social and cultural issue, problem or event by analysing information from different sources, including ICT-based sources...
3	Developing skills of participation and responsible action	3	Developing skills of participation and responsible action
3a	Use imagination to consider other people's experiences and be able to think about, express and explain views that are not their own		Use imagination to consider other people's experiences and be able to think about, express, explain and critically evaluate views that are not their own
3b	Negotiate, decide and take part responsibly in both school and community-based activities		Relevant part =KS3
3c	Reflect on the process of participating		Relevant part = KS3
	End of Key Stage Attainment Target:		End of Key Stage Attainment Target:
	...They demonstrate personal and group responsibility in their attitudes to themselves and others.		Relevant part =KS3

A trawl of popular citizenship texts for KS3 and KS4 reveals the following elements.

RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The important 'Rights and responsibilities' element of the citizenship orders provides extensive scope for exploring inter-faith work. All recognised citizenship courses cover the UN Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and/or the European Convention on Human Rights. These charters are generally seen as required knowledge within Citizenship programmes but the articles relating to religious freedom are not highlighted as providing a framework for inter-faith dialogue. *If this area were to be adequately resourced, there would be considerable scope to explore inter-faith work as a central vehicle for the teaching of human rights charters and their implications for multi-faith communities.* In KS3 the chosen examples for learning about rights often relate to school rules and potential school conflicts. Mention of the significance of religious identity in schools is rare; one exception to this used the controversy over a young Muslim woman being banned from school for choosing to wear

jilbab attire in contravention of school uniform rules. Whilst this example offers scope for constructive discussion, it also risks reinforcing the association of religious differences with conflict rather than dialogue.

VOLUNTARY GROUPS AND CHARITABLE WORK

This element is often taught as an introduction to charities, NGOs and local community volunteering. The examples used in existing texts tend to relate to global development, environmental issues and poverty. The role of local faith groups, collaborative work between them and their contribution to local community capital is not generally explored, but would provide a helpful focus for part of this work. In particular, an analysis of the approaches of different religions to service in the community could promote inter-faith understanding and also help thinking about a conceptual ethical framework for this kind of contribution to society.³ This appears to be missing from current programmes of study.

DIVERSITY AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

An investigation of the relations between faith communities in the UK and the implications for community cohesion would seem to be central to this strand of the citizenship curriculum. Where the theme of diversity is dealt with in popular citizenship resources, however, it tends to be used to encourage awareness of the breadth of cultural traditions represented in the UK and the many countries of origin of our ethnic communities. With the exception of the Islamic attire example cited above, we have not found resources or programmes of study which develop this descriptive approach into a deeper exploration of the inter-relationships between religious and/or cultural traditions or practices, recognition of dynamic evolving identities, or issues raised when faith communities co-exist within our schools and wider communities. OFSTED's findings confirm our conclusions:

...areas such as public finance, the diversity of the UK and the role of the European Union are limited or absent. (OFSTED 2005).⁴

'RESOLVING CONFLICTS' AND 'ISSUES AND CHALLENGES OF GLOBAL INTERDEPENDENCE'

Citizenship learning is expressly directed to topical issues and the future development of society (OFSTED 2005). It is therefore self-evident that neither 'resolving conflicts fairly' nor 'the wider issues and challenges of global interdependence' could be studied thoroughly without reference to the role of religion and inter-faith relationships in shaping current issues. The examples of resources for these two areas which were found during this investigation do not generally explore these perspectives.⁵ Much potential remains for inter-faith learning in these areas. Providing resources that are up to date with current conflicts is problematic for publishers. Supporting schools in increased use of web-based resources for this kind of work would allow updating of source material to keep abreast with changing situations.

SKILLS OF ENQUIRY AND COMMUNICATION

³ For example, concepts of *sewa* (Sikhism), *zakah* (Islam) and similar tenets of other faiths.

⁴ OFSTED (2005) Citizenship in secondary schools: evidence from Ofsted inspections (2003/04).

⁵ Although the religious justifications used in the Israel–Palestine conflict are covered in one GCSE textbook.

Investigation and analysis of topical issues is required at both key stages. Inter-faith issues frequently feature in the media and provide appropriate material for this study, although a counter-balance to the conflict-focussed assumptions of the media needs to be built into the approach used. A generic framework of resource materials providing analytical tools that could be applied to different issues as they arise in the news media may be possible to devise. Web-based resourcing is, once again, most appropriate for content of this kind which is by definition ephemeral.

SKILLS OF PARTICIPATION AND RESPONSIBLE ACTION

Inter-faith work, if successful, will inevitably develop the empathy that is central to skill 3a. Youth participation in, and leadership of, inter-faith work (from a faith or non-faith perspective) could provide a rich seam of activities to fulfil this element of the National Curriculum orders (required in *both* KS3 and KS4). In urban areas where faith diversity is represented locally, engagement between faith groups within school, with relevant local youth groups or with other schools could provide projects to develop the skills specified in the orders.⁶ Where such diversity is not present, the increasing opportunities to create communication links with relevant groups and schools in the UK or elsewhere should now be given greater emphasis to enable this kind of work to develop. Active citizenship is currently seen as one of the more problematic requirements for schools to arrange, especially at KS3. Production of national guidance to encourage good practice in schools is limited by the fact that most active citizenship depends on local community opportunities. There is increasing concern that this essential element of the orders is not being managed well.

Participation and responsible action remain an issue in many schools. Most schools create opportunities for some pupils, but in National Curriculum citizenship this should be an entitlement for all. The recent report from the Community Service Volunteers (CSV) shows pupils' interest and willingness to participate in volunteering and community service when given the opportunity. Schools need to continue to explore how such opportunities can be made available as meaningful citizenship experiences. (OFSTED 2005)

There is currently a lack of support for the standardised assessment of active citizenship projects. The publication of 'user-friendly' assessment materials applicable to practical interfaith projects is likely to encourage more schools to take them up.

MAJOR PUBLISHERS' TEXTBOOKS AND GCSE SYLLABUSES

Most major educational publishers have covered the National Curriculum Citizenship orders at KS3 and KS4 in a suite of dedicated textbooks. These tend to be matched to the English GCSE syllabuses which have little reference to inter-faith issues or dialogue. Future books and resources at KS4 will be heavily influenced by exam syllabuses. Exam boards could be encouraged to give greater prominence to inter-faith issues.

⁶ For example using *Swapping Cultures* © youth conference activities (published by Minorities of Europe, Walsgrave Rd. Coventry).
http://www.faithandcohesion.org/index.php?option=com_docman&task=doc_details&gid=98

Q.C.A PROGRAMMES OF STUDY⁷

Topics include:

- KS3 'Britain as a Diverse Society'
This introduces diversity and multiple identities. Religious identity is mentioned but there is no investigation of interactions between religions.
- KS4 'Human rights'
- KS4 'Challenging racism and discrimination'

There is no developed work on religious identities within these recommended programmes of study.

Q.C.A. GUIDANCE

Q.C.A. has produced a guidance leaflet entitled: 'Citizenship through religious education at Key Stage 3' which sets out to map *'where the two subjects are compatible'* (Q.C.A. 2001).⁸ This suggests

reflecting on interfaith issues and resolution of conflict locally, e.g. conflicts in school and community' and 'considering the significance of the religious background in present-day conflicts, e.g. the conflicts in Ireland, Israel

as ways of fulfilling citizenship component 1g (*'importance of resolving conflict fairly'*). Further guidance on how to achieve this is not given. Without further mention of inter-faith issues, the rest of the suggestions in this leaflet list ways that concepts and content from typical RE syllabuses could be used to 'deliver', or enhance the delivery of, elements from the citizenship orders. The absence of ideas to develop inter-faith work in this leaflet may reveal the limitations inherent in setting out to 'deliver' citizenship 'through' other subjects. As in this case, the organising concepts are firmly rooted in the 'host' subject (RE) rather than citizenship. It might be that considering religious education issues from the perspective of citizenship (rather than the other way around – as in this case) would lead thinking more directly towards issues of inter-faith relations.

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

Citizenship, RE and their underpinning values

Citizenship in the National Curriculum emerged from the original report of the Crick working party.⁹ Critics of Crick accuse him of confused thinking over the issue of cultural and religious diversity. It is suggested that his report implicitly favours a 'one nation' assimilationist model; some suggest that this has permeated the implementation of the subject in schools and thus weakened its potential to tackle inter-faith dialogue in an appropriate way. In considering citizenship as a suitable vehicle for developing inter-faith learning it is necessary to recognise some of these criticisms as they suggest a key question over

⁷ Q.C.A. (2002) available electronically:

<http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/schemes2/citizenship/cit04/?view=get>

⁸ Q.C.A. (2001) Citizenship through religious education at Key Stage 3, London:

http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/word/secondaryschemes/citsubject_re.doc

⁹ Q.C.A. (1998) *ibid.*

whether those in charge of citizenship education within schools see it as inculcating normative shared values or encouraging respectful dialogue between different value positions.

Osler and Starkey feel that, in the Crick report '...difference is portrayed as problematic, ignoring the reality that in any society there are likely to be tensions and that tensions can be creative and not necessarily destructive'.¹⁰

Watson levels a number of criticisms at the introduction of citizenship which are of relevance to the role it may play in promoting community cohesion.¹¹ According to Watson,

The Crick Report...argues citizenship education should encourage young people into accepting shared values in order to prevent the 'alienation and cynicism' which leads to ...vandalism...crime and habitual drug taking. Citizenship education appears to equate with conformity to one-nation values, while religious education celebrates diversity and encourages dialogue. (Watson 2004)

According to Watson, religious education has '...[a] world faiths context, examination of issues of global justice, and familiarity with dialogical classroom methods' more appropriate for a 'broader, global and more challenging form of education for citizenship'. Watson characterises citizenship as 'worrying about national unity' whilst the more mature subject of RE engages in a 'dialogue with diversity'.¹²

Whether or not we accept Watson's criticisms of Crick, they remind us of the need to clarify the values underpinning citizenship education with regard to diversity, assimilation and community cohesion. A simplistic 'one nation' model that assumes the need for conformity to shared social norms will not be adequate. Indeed it will be necessary to agree what are the minimal common values required to make sense of inter-faith learning in any context, to ensure that these are openly stated — and also to offer guidance to staff over managing activities where differing values of differing faith positions come into sharp relief... and possibly clash.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **GUIDANCE FOR CITIZENSHIP TEACHERS**

Guidance is provided to clarify and clearly set out the essential values which underpin interfaith work and also to guide staff in developing this work and handling situations in which conflicting values are under discussion during work with young people. The misplaced view that a conformity model ('one nation assimilationism') is implied in the

¹⁰ Osler and Starkey (2000), 'Citizenship, Human Rights and Cultural Diversity', in Osler (ed.) *Citizenship and Democracy in Schools* (Stoke on Trent, Trentham Books), p. 12.

¹¹ It is important to note that Watson is engaging in a debate about the role of RE in the face of the introduction of citizenship, viewed as a potential usurper to RE's curriculum role – fears perhaps exacerbated by Professor Crick's overt humanism.

¹² Watson, J., (2004) 'Educating for Citizenship – the emerging relationship between religious education and citizenship education', *British Journal of Religious Education*, 26/3 (September 2004).

citizenship orders should be dispelled. Where official QCA guidance recommends delivery of citizenship 'through other subjects' the dilution of essential concepts should be discouraged. Appropriate guidance should be disseminated to all those responsible for initial teacher education for citizenship and those specialising in citizenship continuing professional development.

- **EASY ACCESS TO CASE STUDIES**

A web-based directory of collaborative projects between faith groups and others should be developed to allow schools to identify interesting local and national projects for use in citizenship teaching. In some cases these would provide opportunities for practical involvement as part of the 'active citizenship' requirements of the National Curriculum. In other cases they could contribute to the knowledge and understanding elements of the citizenship orders.

- **TOPICAL, ACCESSIBLE WEB-BASED LEARNING RESOURCES**

Further investigation is needed to explore the use of web-based resources that are both accessible to young learners and able to remain up-to-date with changing news (for example to provide focussed information about topical issues, collaboration and conflict resolution relating to effective inter-faith work in global and national contexts). Much news coverage on the web is too difficult for young people to read.

- **STRUCTURED METHODOLOGY TO APPLY TO TOPICAL ISSUES**

Generic resource materials should be developed to assist in the study of topical issues by providing an analytical framework that can draw out inter-faith dimensions if they are present. The inadequate use of topical materials is a weakness in the teaching of citizenship.

- **NEW RESOURCES TO MAKE ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP EASIER TO ASSESS**

To encourage schools to take up interfaith activities within their active citizenship programmes, resources to support assessment of such activities in line with QCA recommendations and GCSE specifications should be developed.

- **NEED FOR SPECIFIC LEARNING RESOURCES**

Learning resources in citizenship education suitable for KS3 and KS4 should be developed in a variety of media to support interfaith learning with specific reference to:

International Charters of Human Rights and UK implementation of rights and responsibilities legislation.

Practical conflict resolution simulations and games illustrating conflict resolution methods

Case studies of community-based and inter-faith activities that illustrate collaboration and cohesion

- **INCREASE PROMINENCE OF INTER-FAITH ISSUES IN GCSE EXAMS**

QCA and the GCSE examination boards should be approached to phase in more questions relating to community cohesion and interfaith issues in citizenship examinations.

Other available material

1. A brief analysis of KS1-2 Citizenship and Inter-faith, see page of this report.
2. Secondary RE and Citizenship – Towards an Open Frontier, edited by Iat Blaylock, published by CEP, 1020 Britol Road, Selly Oak, Birmingham B29 6LB; ISBN 1-904024-16-5 (2002)
3. Primary RE PSHE & Citizenship – Positive Partnerships edited by Pamela Draycott, published by CEM, 1020 Bristol Road, Selly Oak, Birmingham B29 6LB; ISBN 1-904024-15-7.
4. International Perspectives on Citizenship, Education & Religious Diversity edited by Robert Jackson, published by Routledge Falmer; ISBN 0-415-27440-0 (2003).