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Keynote Speech
"Conflicts in and around Europe: What should be the role of citizenship education?"

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Introduction

Citizenship education has often examined the intersections between the local and the global, for example in developing concepts of global citizenship, or of European citizenship. In this paper I argue that new, key intersections between the local and global now demand a radical rethink of how we understand citizenship education. These are the growth and reach of extremist movements; and the growth and reach of social media. These have significant interlinkages.

Firstly, the Islamic State affects us all – whether in recruitment of fighters or in the rise of Islamophobia, as Muslims are once more portrayed as terrorists. Far right groups gain ground in their racism and justifications for violence. Fragile social cohesion is threatened. Secondly, the growth of social media as a prime method of communication has effects that are barely understood by conventional education. At one extreme, social media is a weapon of war. The major Islamic extremist organisations – IS, AQ, Al Shabaab – all use social media in very skilled and sophisticated ways. Opposing sides of a conflict will use social media for propaganda and recruitment to the cause – for example, both Israel and Palestine. Less conflictual but possibly just as manipulative, politicians all have Twitter accounts, and through algorithms can fabricate thousands of 'followers'. Conversely, there is evidence from across the globe of social media and networking being used for peacebuilding, or for subversion of authoritarian regimes.

But there is also an old intersection between the local and global, which demands to be centrally addressed in citizenship education, and that is gender. Decisions about war are still made almost exclusively by men. Women are still denied full citizenship in many countries, whether as political citizens or in terms of family and inheritance rights. Hyper-masculinisation is on the increase with enhanced securitisation and militarisation. Violence against women is not decreasing, with rape used as a weapon of war and Boko Haram taking girls hostage. Homophobia and threats to LGTB people still feature in many countries.

Yet some of the key international surveys of citizenship education do not address these issues. In a big IEA study of civic education, there are only six mentions of conflict in 114 pages, and all are about interpersonal conflict resolution, not major conflicts. The Eurydice citizenship education survey of 31 countries has only six mentions of violence in 148 pages,

and all are about school violence. Worse, there are only three mentions of gender. Near the back it is included as an 'other theme' for consideration together with road safety. Whether or not such surveys reflect what countries are reporting or what questions are asked, these omissions are breath taking.

I examine seven dangers in traditional citizenship education, dangers which can lead to negative conflict. I then propose six imperatives, if we are to foster positive conflict and transformation. I end with suggestions for new directions in research in citizenship education.

Dangers of old citizenship education

1. Nationalism and patriotism

A stress on national loyalty is understandable in fragile states, with the desire to underpin the legitimacy of the state. However, this has hazards. In Ukraine, for example, the push to build an independent state led to schools told to incorporate elements of Ukrainian culture, language and historical memory, the narrative of a centuries old struggle for an independent statehood in the face of opposition from neighbours, particularly Russia. There is glorification of Ukraine's short periods of statehood, of the deeds and thoughts of prominent historical figures. But a very complex interplay of ethnic, linguistic and regional identity in Ukraine makes coherence unlikely (Tsereschenko 2013). So, when building a real or imagined statehood, whose traditions do you draw on? Who do you exclude? Across the border in Russia, the Putin administration has invested huge amounts of money in founding patriotic, strongly hierarchical youth organization called 'Nasi' which is loyal to the government, whose task it is to create a conformist political environment. But as well as conformity, there is also the problem of 'belligerent citizenship' (Ben-Porath 2009), with the 'enemy-other' excluded from visions of 'shared fate' in citizenship education, as in Cyprus or Israel.

2. Identity politics

Mini-nationalisms are just as dangerous as maxi-nationalisms, as has been found for Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is divided into 'nations', manipulated by politicians, with separate school curricula, which reflect separatist ideologies through history, music and literature. Attempts at integration or shared histories have not been too successful. Identity work is revealed if we compare and unpack the discourses of citizenship education, as Helen Hanna (2013) has done. The Northern Ireland citizenship education curriculum 'helps young people learn how to participate positively in society, to influence democratic processes and to make informed and responsible decisions as local and global citizens'. For Israel, the aim is 'to inculcate a common Israeli civic identity, together with the development of distinct national identities, and to impart to students the values of pluralism and tolerance'. These all sound fine, but I worry about 'distinct national identities' in such a context.

3. Inner peace?

Is the answer then to focus on the individual, not the state or the state within a state? Yet there are problems with the ideology of 'inner peace' as seen in countries such as Sri Lanka. First, as a Buddhist concept, it is part of the privileging of that religion by the majority nationalist Sinhalese. Second, it acts to deflect attention away from the wider sources of conflict, which lie in politics, land, the demands and treatment of the Tamils and the acceptance of military solutions. The discourse is that if we all had inner peace, the country's problems would go away. The political roots of injustice or discrimination are played down in favour of a 'learning to live together' approach which places responsibility on the individual citizen or on small communities. The problem is cast as one of prejudice or ignorance, not of

power. I have a similar problem with 'character education', or moral fibre – there is nothing wrong with character but it should not be a substitute for a rigorous political citizenship education.

4. Static multiculturalism

Linked to this are the out-dated versions of multiculturalism, which ask children to learn about 'the other'. Ethnicities and religions are cast as static identities, with fixed features, rituals and cultures. Short exchanges or visits to places of worship are conducted to enable 'exposure' to the other – which can indeed be enlightening, and break down some mistrust, but they do not always portray the complexity and dynamism of cultures and group positionings. 'Membership' of a group is seen as the key identifier, not what that person engages in.
'Tolerance' is a key concept here – which has equally slippery images, usually of the majority tolerating the minority. Simply telling young people to tolerate others does not give skills in analysing what NOT to tolerate. A critical citizenship education has to impart recognition that not all actions done in the name of a culture or religion are to be tolerated, and indeed some must be challenged. This applies to FGM, honour killings and of course the barbarism and violence we see today. There has been a fear of critiquing religion in particular, with claims of 'offence'. But it is important to know that in international law, religions do not have rights, people do. An action can be challenged as violating human rights without this challenging an entire religion. The mistakes made in the name of religion (the Crusades, the Spanish inquisition, the papal positions on contraception, and now IS distortions) should be surfaced and discussed.

5. Contradictions

There can be a contradiction between the official discourse of citizenship education and what happens in classrooms. Ideologies of democracy may not be reflected in school practice, nor in pedagogy (nor in fact in the country as a whole). It is significant that the Eurydice study found a low percentage (4.4%) of teachers ranking 'preparing students for political engagement' as an important aspect of citizenship education. Mouhgrabi analysed current textbooks in Palestine and found they do examine controversial issues. Yet students repeated that notions of democracy and rights are idealistic in contrast to the oppressive conditions that people live under. They feel that politicians will do what they have to do while ordinary people have no way of changing this.

6. Silences

Surveys are also bad at pointing out and comparing what citizenship education does NOT say – or encourage. The Turkey decree in 2003 was that all principals have to obligate pupils of their school to deny (the scientifically undeniable) genocide against the Armenians 1915-1917. Other examples of silences include:

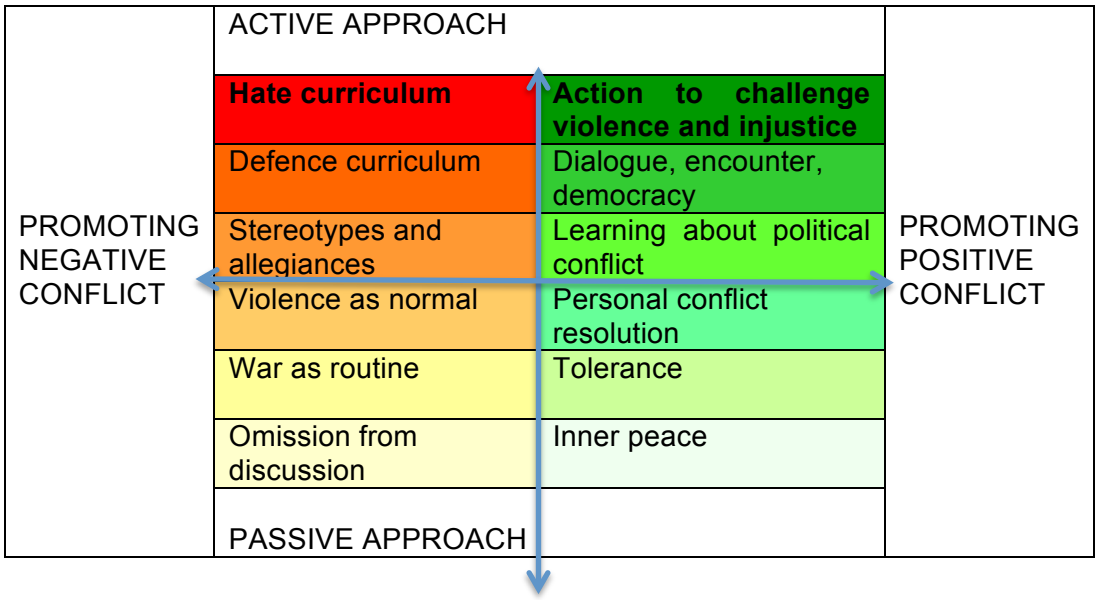
- In Spain, the major political parties had a long lasting agreement of silence about the authoritarian past and human rights violations.
- Hungary found citizenship teachers liked teaching about social cohesion and family but avoided ethnic issues and social injustice.
- In Poland there are still strictures on discussing homosexuality in schools.
- In Estonia, citizenship education denies social problems such as social inequality, injustice and discrimination.
- In Bulgaria, citizenship education is about the loyal citizen, and questions about this are not allowed in class.

7. Difficulty in tackling extremism

While official policy stresses critical thinking and current events, teachers are sometimes wary of controversial issues. In Germany it is found that the formal state curriculum may not provide much assistance to teachers who wish to address the topic of the radical right in classrooms (Miller-Idriss). In England, there has been a furore that some schools with a predominantly Muslim intake have been subject to an Islamic 'takeover' by fundamentalist governors. While this conspiracy and suspected jihadism has not been proved, there is a moral panic and demands for all schools to celebrate a lot more religious festivals. It is not clear how this is to help teachers protect against extremism.

Teaching about conflict in citizenship education

These problems of citizenship education have led me to return to a model of how schools teach about conflict. This is marked as on two axes - active to passive, negative to positive. Active/negative is characterised by the hate curriculum, militaristic teaching and promoting stereotypes. Moving down, passive/negative normalises violence and war or omits to talk about it at all. Passive/positive includes tolerance and personal conflict resolution, but it is the active/positive quadrant which would mean a political learning of being an active citizen and challenging injustice.



Imperatives

From this, my imperatives for citizenship education are as follows:

1. Dynamic secular democratic citizenship

Recent work I have been doing on religion in conflict (Davies 2014) points strongly to the need for governance to be based on a secular democracy in order to prevent religion escalating conflict. This is a dynamic secularism, not one that is anti-religion, but which protects religious freedoms while preventing any one religion getting the upper hand in the

governance of a country. There is a myth that Islam is incompatible with democracy, as demonstrated by the vibrant organisation *British Muslims for a Secular Democracy*, who well understand that secularism protects their faith in a plural society. The implications for citizenship education are to learn about secularism, especially its myths (for example that it is the same as atheism), and how a secular democracy works for equity, particularly gender equity). A global and national value base of human rights that cuts across religions is the bedrock for this. Freedom of speech and learning the power of satire are part of this rights-based approach.

2. Understanding of (armed) conflict

This is not just doing conflict resolution, important though that is, but an understanding of recent conflict and violence in the country or community. Citizenship education and history education work together here, providing alternative narratives of the past, not just the victors' version. The international project *Facing History and Ourselves* is a good example.
This then leads to the question of what new narratives of democracy or rights are called for? What were the breakdowns in the past? This then enables understanding of what new culture and politics should be built, one where conflict and gendered violence become less likely.

3. Cosmopolitan identities

As mentioned earlier, strong group identities, while providing psychological security, can be dangerous for conflict. Citizenship education does need a discussion of identity, but not in ways that lead to stereotypes. It is not just the acknowledgement of multiple identities, but that these are hybrid, whereby every individual has a unique combination. Identity must be acknowledged as something dynamic, to be made and remade, so that every individual is an agent in their identity, not presenting it as an unchanging given. The notion of an identity as a global citizen is notoriously woolly, but I like OXFAM's old definition of a global citizen as someone who is 'outraged by social injustice'. The point about global citizenship is seeing boundaries as porous, so that we have common vulnerabilities, even if we do not have common aims.

4. New networks

This leads on to the imperative of new networks and styles of networking which are now part of the social media. Doing politics takes very different shapes now. The Arab Spring is the classic example of horizontalism in creating and sustaining protest. Other examples include feminist networks in Israel/Palestine, learning about 'doing' peace together; the umbrella movement in Hong Kong; cyber-resistance in Palestine; the reform protests in Philippines, the demonstrations organized in Spain against the Spanish Prime Minister, who had inaccurately blamed Basque separatists for the Madrid bombings, and the lawsuits that the Catholic Church faced over its harbouring of child rapists.

5. Media literacy

It could be argued that the last thing schools need to do is teach media literacy, as it is the students who teach the teachers. Yet citizenship education can usefully focus on the skills and habits of questioning social media messages, but crucially also religious and political edicts, and there are some good programmes developing on this.
Citizenship journalism is growing too, defined as defined as the report of information by ordinary people, usually using online tools that professionals normally use. Crowdsourcing enables the creation of massive research bases on a range of issues. Ugandan young people have created U Report, for example, using SMS across thousands of members to report on community issues or domestic violence, and reporting this to mainstream media.

6. Skills in non-violent political change

For networking and social action, the skill base for citizenship education now takes new shapes. These include:

- Understanding the community and community organisations, as well as the more global community of the internet.
- Knowing legal limits, e.g. freedom of speech, use of satire
- Planning, campaigning, strategising
- Finance, budgeting
- Leadership – horizontal and vertical
- Media presence
- Realistic targets (i.e. not 'Join the worldwide movement against globalisation.')
- Learning from extremist movements – recruitment, cells, messaging

Switch in research and evaluation

My argument then has been that in these new times where conflict is taking different shapes, we need some equally different shapes to our citizenship education programmes – more politicised, more dynamic, much more critical, less nationalistic, and more gender-aware. These imperatives imply a switch in the way citizenship education programmes are evaluated. It is not enough to simply ask countries what they are doing; we need to detail what they are NOT doing. Do we have any evidence that their citizenship education this changes anything? What appears in the objectives then has to be translated into curriculum and then into classroom pedagogy and then into student learning and then into student and teacher civic action. We need much more ethnography, including how males and females are developing citizenship skills through the internet and elsewhere, and how older ways of doing politics through political parties, standing for office are giving way to new ways of political activity. Research is showing young people are motivated to participate, but do not rely on politicians, preferring - as digital natives - the benefits of speed, responsiveness and crowd-sourced collaboration. We need to find out whether civic action is top-down or bottom-up, what the composition of social action groups is, and how related this is to school. We need to examine Facebook and Twitter use as well as citizenship education exam results. Evaluation and surveys can assess attitudes, but need to engage in long-term work to determine whether citizenship education really helps create citizens who hold governments to account and act collectively to make non-violent political change.

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