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Teacher interpretations of citizenship education: national identity, cosmopolitan ideals, and political realities

AUDREY OSLER

Citizenship education typically focuses on the nation and citizens' supposed natural affinity to the nation-state. In this global age, this is challenged by cosmopolitans who propose a form of education which encourages a primary commitment to fellow humanity and/or the planet Earth. However, citizenship education has been re-emphasized by those who assert that in a globalized world and nation-states characterized by diversity, one requires a primary commitment to the nation-state. The latter group proposes a renewed focus on civic education which promotes national belonging and loyalty, often targeting, either explicitly or implicitly, students from minority or migration backgrounds. Within EU member-states, this binary between education for national and global citizenship is troubled by the issue of European citizenship and belonging. This article analyses the official citizenship curriculum for England and reports on qualitative research with teachers, designed to explore their perceptions of the curriculum and their students' needs as learner-citizens. The teachers reflect on local, national, European, and global dimensions of citizenship. Expressing concern about the ethno-nationalistic attitudes of some students, they work to engage with and extend students' experiences. The article proposes education for cosmopolitan citizenship to meet students' needs, whether their affinities are apparently fixed or flexible; local; national; global; or multiple.

Keywords: citizenship education; cosmopolitanism; national identity; European citizenship; pedagogy

Introduction

Cosmopolitan discourses, which have their origins in Enlightenment philosophy, notably that of Immanuel Kant, have been gaining ground within the field of citizenship education. Following Nussbaum's (1996) call for civic education to be extended beyond national boundaries so as to acknowledge a shared common humanity and a commitment to the wider global community, scholars have begun to explore frameworks of education for democratic

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citizenship which are tied directly to learners' shared status as holders of inalienable human rights, rather than their presumed status as citizens, or aspirant citizens, of the nation-state in which they are being schooled.

Although the term 'cosmopolitan' is most readily associated with those who identify with transnational commonalities, there is a growing body of theoretical work on education for cosmopolitan citizenship (Osler and Vincent 2002, Osler and Starkey 2003, 2005, Banks 2008) which does not equate 'cosmopolitan citizenship' with 'global citizenship'. Osler and Starkey (2005) follow Dewey (2002) and others (Held 1995, Habermas 1996, Hutchings and Dannruether 1999, Beck 2000, Kaldor 2003) in preferring the term cosmopolitan citizenship, a concept that links the local, the national, and the global. As Osler and Starkey (2005) argue, it allows us to conceive of citizenship as a status, a feeling, and a practice at all levels, from the local to the global.

In emphasizing a common humanity and human solidarity, cosmopolitanism does not seek to deny local or regional identifications. As Nussbaum (1996) and others, such as Appiah (2006), have noted, local identities remain important for cosmopolitans. It is at the local level that we have the opportunity to practise our citizenship on a day-to-day basis. Demonstrating solidarity with others in the global community has limited value, if we are not ready and able to stand up for justice and defend the rights of others in our own locality. Global solidarity:

is insufficient if we cannot establish a sense of solidarity with others in our own communities, especially those others whom we perceive to be different from ourselves. The challenge is to accept shared responsibility for our common future and for solving our common problems. (Osler and Starkey 2005: 93)

Cosmopolitanism does not, moreover, imply a rejection of other identifications related, for example, to ethnicity, faith, or sexuality, but seeks to build upon them and extend them. Such identifications often develop out of a struggle for justice and equality, and such struggles are, for many people, a starting point in recognizing solidarities and differences across boundaries. Members of privileged groups, no less than the disadvantaged or oppressed, need first to recognize a common humanity before specific injustices can be addressed. As the US civil rights leader Malcolm X (1964) observed on a visit to Egypt: 'We can never get civil rights in America until our human rights are first restored. We will never be recognized as citizens there until we are first recognized as humans.'

Citizenship education has traditionally focused on the nation and has often assumed that learner-citizens will have a natural affinity to the nation-state. In a globalized world, and in nation-states characterized by diversity, there have been calls for a renewed focus on forms of civic education which promote national belonging and loyalty; such calls often target, either explicitly or implicitly, students from minority or migration backgrounds. An apparent binary is established, between those who see the primary purpose of citizenship education as nation-building, and those who want to promote global solidarity. Within EU member-states, this binary between education for national and global citizenship is troubled by the issue of 'European citizenship' and 'European belonging'.

While education for cosmopolitan citizenship does not necessarily imply a tension with education for national citizenship, it does require a different approach to national citizenship and a critical rather than unthinking patriotism. Since cosmopolitan citizenship is based on feelings of solidarity with human beings wherever they are situated and acceptance of diversity, it necessarily challenges ethno-nationalist and other exclusive definitions of the nation: 'Education for cosmopolitan citizenship ... implies a broader understanding of national identity; it requires recognition that British identity, for example, may be experienced differently by different people' (Osler and Vincent 2002: 124).

Across Europe, in different nation-states, education for European citizenship may be perceived in many different ways. Just as there is no inevitable tension between education for cosmopolitan citizenship and education for national citizenship, so there is no reason why there should necessarily be a tension between education for cosmopolitan citizenship and education for European citizenship. Citizens of EU member-states enjoy the benefits of European citizenship, and these citizens need to learn about their rights and obligations as European citizens. Beyond the EU, yet encompassing all EU member-states, is the wider Europe, embodied in the Council of Europe.¹ The Council of Europe exists to promote and develop throughout Europe common and democratic principles based on the European Convention on Human Rights, derived from the Universal Convention on Human Rights, which protects all within its jurisdiction, whether citizens or non-citizens. A conception of education for European citizenship based on the mission of the Council of Europe and its ideals is necessarily cosmopolitan, promoting human solidarity.

In this paper, I analyse the citizenship education documents for England, examining the ways in which they portray the nation; Europe; the broader global community; and different scales of identity and belonging; as well as justice, (in)equalities, and diversity. Having reviewed the official curriculum, I then present qualitative research with teachers in the north of England, designed to examine their perceptions of their students' needs and identities as learner-citizens, with the aim of understanding how these perceptions influence pedagogical choices and preferences. I wish to explore the degree to which their current conceptions of citizenship education are compatible with a framework of education for cosmopolitan citizenship which can be applied at all levels from the local to the global.

The teachers had all recently participated in a European Commission-funded curriculum development project² which sought to promote young people's conceptual understandings of the EU and its processes and procedures.³ I consider the relative importance teachers assign to local, national, European, and global aspects of citizenship and the reasons for this.

Marshall (2009: 248) has posited that European and national forms of citizenship education present challenges for teachers working within multi-cultural contexts in a global age, since both are based upon 'overt types of exclusion'. She suggests that teachers are more comfortable with the local and global aspects of citizenship education for this reason. In presenting this hypothesis, she acknowledges that relatively little is known about the ways in

which teachers in the UK engage with European agendas or the EU. My aim is to explore how teachers interpret and mediate education policies and curriculum guidelines and how they make choices about curriculum design and pedagogy in learning for citizenship. In particular, I wish to explore how they engage with local, national, European, and international scales of citizenship and belonging.

I begin by outlining recent policy developments in England, relating to citizenship, diversity, social cohesion, and the school curriculum, discussing these within the context of broader political developments. I argue that recent and current political and media discourses on citizenship, national identity, and belonging have influenced teachers' understandings of students' needs as learner-citizens with potential to engage at local, national, European, and global scales.

I then present the qualitative research and discuss the findings, examining teachers' beliefs about their students in order to explore the relationship between these perceptions and their choices about curriculum design and pedagogy in learning for citizenship. I review the potential of education for cosmopolitan citizenship as a theoretical framework which might support teachers in their work in the light of these findings.

Curriculum policy, citizenship education, and social cohesion

Citizenship education is a relatively new element within the school curriculum in England. A national curriculum was first introduced under a Conservative government in the 1990s, following the Education Reform Act 1988. Before this, curriculum development and innovation generally took place at local levels, with schools and teachers exercising considerable autonomy over curriculum design and content. The original national curriculum was heavily criticized for its narrow focus and its failure to recognize Britain as a multicultural society (Tomlinson 2009), and was characterized as a nationalistic curriculum which failed to prepare young people for life in an interdependent and globalized world.

Citizenship education was given consideration in the early-1990s within the framework of a national curriculum for England (Edwards and Fogelman 1993), but it was not until the late-1990s, following the election of a Labour government, that education for citizenship and democracy was placed centrally on the agenda. The publication of the official Crick report (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority [QCA] 1998) sought to achieve cross-party consensus on the need for political education within the school curriculum. The Crick report acknowledged long-standing cultural, political, and religious diversity within British society and stressed the need for tolerance by the majority population, but it presented democracy as a completed project rather than as an ongoing struggle, where race, gender, and other inequalities persist (Osler 2000). The overwhelming emphasis was on the nation-state, with a passing acknowledgement of Europe and European institutions, international human-rights norms, and the wider global community.

Citizenship education was introduced in 2000 and became mandatory in secondary schools in 2002. The official report of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry⁴ led the government and the major opposition parties to acknowledge institutional racism as a feature of British society, committing themselves to address racism within public services, including the police force and education. The consequent Race Relations [Amendment] Act 2000 requires schools and other public bodies not only to address discrimination but also to promote race equality. Citizenship education was identified as the main vehicle through which this would be addressed within the curriculum. Race-equality initiatives in schools would be monitored through the inspection system. Research with school principals, conducted at this time, revealed a degree of scepticism about the potential of the school inspection system to support race equality and the level of commitment from within government to make this happen (Osler and Morrison 2000). Research carried out a decade later shows this scepticism to have been well-founded (Ullmann 2009). Political consensus on the need to tackle institutional racism was, in any case, short-lived. Some 10 years later, there is evidence, both in government and in key institutions, of widespread denial of the ongoing impact of institutional racism on British society (Rollock 2009).

Initiatives to introduce global and development perspectives into the school curriculum in England have been led largely by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) (Starkey 1994, Hicks 2003, Ibrahim 2005, Marshall 2007). Since the late-1990s, such initiatives have enjoyed some official support from the UK government, but, as in other European countries, this support in England has come not from the ministry of education, but primarily from the Department for International Development, which has led to a marginalization of this global dimension of citizenship education within official education policies. This is despite endorsement of such perspectives from international organizations of which the UK is a member-state, including the Council of Europe and the EC (Osler and Vincent 2002, Marshall 2009). Exploiting the resurgence of interest in citizenship education, both in the UK and internationally, NGOs have increasingly used the term 'global citizenship' to describe the global education curriculum projects and materials they have developed (cf. Oxfam 1997).

In the decade since the publication of the Crick report (QCA 1998), there has been heightened debate in the UK about citizenship, multiculturalism, and national identity. In particular, following the 2005 London suicide bombings, senior government figures have both encouraged and provoked public debate about so-called 'British values' (Osler 2009). Concerns about security and the prevention of extremism were added to the list of official justifications for the teaching of citizenship in schools (Osler and Starkey 2006); such concerns are codified in the Education and Inspections Act 2006 which requires schools to promote community cohesion.

The Ajegbo report (Department for Education and Skills [DfES] 2007), commissioned in response to such concerns, proposed a new strand to the citizenship curriculum, entitled 'identity and diversity', and a closer link between history and citizenship learning, extending the framework of the Crick report, but largely avoiding a critical examination of race and racism (Osler 2008). This strand has since been incorporated into the revised

national curriculum, published in 2007 and which came into force in 2008. Schools have thus been pinpointed as playing a key role in strengthening social cohesion, most notably through the promotion of ‘British’ values that include duties and obligations to a common community (Brookes and Holford 2009) through the teaching of citizenship and history.

Within publicly-funded secondary schools, history is mandatory at key stage 3 (for students aged 11–14 years) but optional beyond the age of 14, whereas citizenship is taught at key stages 3 and 4, from age 11–16 years. Both subjects are expected to contribute to the broader aims of the national curriculum, a central goal of which is to enable young people to become ‘responsible citizens who make a positive contribution to society’ (QCA 2007a, b, c). Citizenship is deemed important as it ‘equips young people with the knowledge, skills and understanding to play an effective role in public life’ and ‘encourages them to take an interest in topical and controversial issues and to engage in discussion and debate’ (QCA 2007a: 27, 2007b: 44). Although this introductory statement mentions ‘global citizens’ and the differing scales in which young people can take an active role, namely, ‘schools, neighbourhoods, communities and wider society’ (QCA 2007a: 27, 2007b: 44), the overriding emphasis is on the nation. The concept of European citizen is notable by its absence.

References to students’ identities within the citizenship programme of study are largely related to learning to live together in a nation characterized by diversity. Commonality and social cohesion are stressed, as are respect for and learning about different ‘ideas, beliefs, cultures and identities and the values we share as citizens in the UK’ (QCA 2007a: 27, 2007b: 41). The history curriculum also aims to encourage ‘mutual understanding of the historic origins of our ethnic and cultural diversity’ and the development of students’ ‘identities through an understanding of history at personal, local, national and international levels’ (QCA 2007c: 111). There is no explicit reference to students’ identities as European citizens. Britain’s relationships and interconnections with the EU, the wider Europe, the Commonwealth, the UN, and global community all feature (QCA 2007a: 27, 33, 2007b: 41, 2007c: 111); however, they take a second place to students’ understanding their role as citizens within a parliamentary democracy; the fundamentals of the justice system; and exploring the concept of community cohesion. For example, students should learn about ‘strategies for handling local and national disagreements and conflicts’ and ‘the needs of the local community and how these are met through public services and the voluntary sector’ (QCA 2007a: 32).

At key stage 4 (i.e. age 14+), there is slightly more emphasis on learning about international engagement, including ‘actions citizens can take in democratic and electoral processes to influence decisions locally, nationally and beyond’; ‘other forms of government, both democratic and non-democratic, beyond the UK’; and ‘challenges facing the global community’ such as international conflicts, inequality, and sustainability (QCA 2007b: 46–47). Nevertheless, the focus remains primarily on what it means, politically and socially, to be a UK rather than EU or global citizen. The overriding emphasis is on *active* citizenship: for students to ‘take action and try to make a difference in their communities and the wider world’ (QCA 2007a:

28, 2007b: 42). The starting point for such action is the school community and local communities, where it is expected that teachers will encourage participation.

The official curriculum addresses citizenship as a status, feeling, and practice. Citizenship education, in England, as elsewhere (Keating *et al.* 2009) remains focused on the nation and on citizens' supposed natural affinity to the nation-state. Citizenship as a status, i.e. the responsibilities of citizens, rights and duties, including voting, is addressed at the national level and to a lesser extent the local level. European citizenship as a status is implicit. There is no formal status as global citizen, although we are all holders of human rights. There is coverage of human rights within the official curriculum, but an individual's status as a holder of universal human rights and an exploration of what this might mean in terms of global citizenship remains implicit. Within the official citizenship curriculum for England there is a strong emphasis on citizenship as feeling (student identities, with particular attention to national identity) and on citizenship as practice (active citizenship, engagement in the local community). The new ways in which citizens can engage actively as citizens, across and beyond the boundaries of the nation, as a result of information technologies, are not explored, and so the emphasis on active citizenship or citizenship as practice remains largely confined to the school and local communities.

The empirical study

Research context

The empirical data presented here is drawn from interviews with eight teachers working in three contrasting schools, situated in the north of England. The interviews were carried out in autumn 2008 and spring 2009, shortly after the teachers and their students had completed a short series of lessons focusing on the EU and on concepts and processes relating to European citizenship. The framework of the teacher interviews extended beyond the original focus of the EC-funded curriculum development project to encompass local, national, European, and global scales of identity, citizenship, and belonging.

The teachers all had responsibility for some aspect of citizenship learning, but had generally received little specific training in citizenship education. Some identified themselves as teachers of citizenship, whereas others saw themselves primarily as teachers of a related subject, such as history or geography. The three research schools are all co-educational and non-selective in their student intake, but they differ in significant ways by social class, ethnic composition, and student attainment.⁵

Lambton School is situated in a market town and serves students aged 11–18 from the town and surrounding villages. Although the school draws students from a wide range of social backgrounds, the intake is largely white British, with few students from other ethnic backgrounds, reflecting the composition of the local population. Middle-class students are over-represented, and the number of students eligible for free school meals (a

proxy indicator of relative poverty) is very low. The school was recognized as a High Performing School by the Department for Education and Skills in 2005, and the most recent inspection report, from 2006, states that the average attainment of school entrants is high and the proportion of students with learning difficulties below the national average. Citizenship at Lambton is offered as a discrete time-tabled subject, but citizenship issues are also addressed in other curriculum areas, most notably history. In addition, there is a range of opportunities for students to learn citizenship skills through extra-curricular activities.

Coalthorpe Community College serves students aged 11–18 and is situated in a former mining town with high levels of social deprivation and unemployment. This is reflected in the student population, which, according to the latest inspection report, is working-class, with an above-average percentage entitled to free school meals. Students enter with below-average attainment levels, and the proportion of students with learning difficulties is higher than the national average. In 2006 OFSTED described the school as largely white British, with no students having English as an additional language. Since this time, Coalthorpe has admitted a number of migrant students from Poland and elsewhere in Eastern Europe. Citizenship at Coalthorpe Community College is largely taught through a new subject, 'Learning for life'.

Hornby Road School serves students aged 11–18 in a large multicultural city and, according to its most recent 2008 inspection report, has a balanced mixture of students from middle-class and working-class families. There is a significant number of students from minority ethnic backgrounds (over twice the national average and growing) and also a high number of students for whom English is an additional language. The percentage of students entitled to free school meals is slightly above the national average, but the proportion with learning difficulties is below average. Citizenship education at Hornby Road is not time-tabled as such; it is incorporated into other subjects using a cross-curricular model and through extra-curricular activities.

Teachers' perceptions of students' identities and learning needs

Neither education policy nor education practices can be understood merely through document analysis, since teachers are constantly interpreting official policies and adjusting their own professional practices in the classroom. Teachers are thus engaged in the processes of policy formation. This analysis considers the interconnections between education for cosmopolitan citizenship and the various scales of citizenship and identity teachers address in the curriculum: local, national, European, and global.

Four of the eight teachers in our study, across all three schools, referred to ethno-nationalist, xenophobic, and racist attitudes among some students. These observations were made in response to questions about European citizenship. This tendency was most pronounced among the Coalthorpe teachers and was explained largely in terms of social deprivation and insular and xenophobic tendencies within the relatively homogeneous former

mining community where the school is situated. The town had experienced a recent influx of Eastern and Central European migrants, following EU enlargement in 2004 and 2007.

Students were felt to have exclusive regional and national identities: 'They're British ... they're English, they're very much Yorkshire—our kids are so narrow in their own identity, in their own reaction to people' (Ms Clark). This teacher thought it unlikely young people in this community would see themselves as European until 'the next generation'. Racism and xenophobia were linked, according to the teachers, to economic disadvantage. 'They' (formerly Black and Asian people, more recently Eastern Europeans) were said by the Coalthorpe students to be 'taking jobs away'. Intolerance was believed to be growing as economic conditions worsened. Students were said to be uninterested in experiencing another culture or language:

Many people haven't been further than Spain, and when they go to Spain they expect to eat British food and everyone to speak English ... There's an arrogance ... that everyone should be able to speak English and ... [eat] fish and chips when they go abroad. (Ms Clark, Coalthorpe Community College)

Teachers suggested that none of the Coalthorpe Community College students had any sense of European identity, as illustrated in this observation by Ms Shepherd: 'I've never, in all the years I've taught, had a student say "I am a European citizen"'.

Racist and xenophobic beliefs were sometimes coupled with support for the far-right British National Party (BNP), which is active in the area and fielded a large number of candidates (but won no seats) in the May 2008 local elections. Ms Clark, herself of mixed white British and Pakistani descent, noted how one of her students openly argued for 'repatriation' of non-whites, carefully adding that he would not include her in this policy.

At Lambton School, with a broader social intake and significant numbers of middle-class students, teachers sought to explain away Eurosceptic attitudes and xenophobic responses, arguing that students were 'not really racist'; they were 'good kids' but simply lacked the experience of living in a diverse community. There is no long-standing tradition of BNP activity in the area, although the party fielded a large number of candidates in the 2007 local election, probably with the goal of building support in preparation for the 2009 European elections. Teachers acknowledged that students might also be influenced by xenophobic tendencies in some newspapers, coupled with minimal TV coverage of European affairs, and a significant degree of Euroscepticism among families and in the community.

At the multicultural Hornby Road School, perhaps not surprisingly, teachers did not link xenophobia with lack of exposure to other cultures, yet felt that examining features of the EU in class was enough to trigger xenophobia: 'Start talking about the Euro and even quite young kids will start to get agitated and xenophobic' (Mr Thompson). Ms James felt that students 'took the European Union for granted' and, since it had come into being long before they were born, they were not familiar with the benefits that membership brings. She added: 'The kids actually don't think ... we *should* belong to Europe', suggesting that this rejection of the EU stemmed from

ill-informed families and negative media coverage, but noting that students risked adopting more extreme xenophobic positions.

Teachers at Hornby Road felt that students had limited knowledge of Europe and the European Union; one suggested it was an important part of the curriculum for these city-based young people because:

You take them out even to another part of [the city] and they'd be lost. Take them to the Dales they'd freak out. ... [M]ost kids have only ever been to seaside resorts, you know, even quite well-off kids. They go to Spain and they seem to lack appreciation of how it's different in other parts of Europe. They think Spain is how it is. (Mr Ingram, Hornby Road School)

This lack of information leaves students vulnerable to the propaganda of the BNP or, indeed, any political party, and ill-prepared to make a proper assessment of their claims. Within the city where Hornby Road is situated, the BNP scored 11.4% of the total vote in the 2007 local elections, fielding candidates in all wards and winning one seat. The interviews with teachers took place in autumn 2008 and early spring 2009. In June 2009 the BNP achieved the first parliamentary success of a far-right party in Britain in the European elections, with two Members of the European Parliament elected from the region in which the three research schools are situated.⁶ From the accounts of teachers in this study, it seems likely that the BNP not only secured the votes of a significant number of adult citizens, but also made an impact on a number of young people in all three research schools.

Concerns about insularity, xenophobia, and racism were the motivating factors prompting the Coalthorpe teachers to develop a form of citizenship education which addressed identity, promoted tolerance and respect, and intercultural skills. For them, it was important to explore the possibilities of European identity and citizenship in order to develop skills and attitudes which foster social cohesion. They saw teaching about Europe as one way of extending young people's identities and horizons. They did not perceive European citizenship to be exclusive (Marshall 2009); it was instead a means of enabling young people to recognize commonalities with those from other EU nation-states and to understand the presence of Eastern European migrants in the school and local community.

The teachers at Coalthorpe felt that students' very insularity threatened to undermine their opportunities to share in the project of a peaceful and prosperous Europe and the benefits of EU membership related to freedom of movement and access to the EU job market. Nevertheless, global solidarity appeared to trump European identity in the curriculum choices the teachers made, even though examining global structures and institutions might also prompt jingoistic responses:

I think we're making some progress [in developing a European dimension and] making them aware that they're not just English and British but they are members of the Commonwealth—although they all want the empire back when you start talking about that. (Ms Clark, Coalthorpe Community College)

At both Lambton and Hornby Road Schools it was assumed that students would learn about Europe through history and geography and that study of European institutions and structures, or the means by which decisions are

reached in Europe, although part of citizenship education, was far less appealing to students, and therefore something to be avoided or minimized.

On the one hand, teachers across all three schools see the value of teaching about European citizenship and belonging; on the other hand, the topic of the EU raises a host of challenges. From the perspectives of the teachers, some young people have identities which need to be expanded through the processes of education. It is these same identities, however, which pose real challenges to teachers wishing to find common ground on which to open up dialogue and learning. A tension remains between what these teachers wish to address and what they do for the sake of expediency.

'Active citizenship', local community, and pedagogy

While the teachers in each school were quick to criticize the insularity of many of their students, it was students' local identities and experiences which were cited as important in providing the basis for learning for citizenship. The teachers' emphasis on the local appears to have significant implications both for curriculum content and pedagogy. Within teacher discourse and in the examples they cite, curriculum content and pedagogy are closely interrelated.

One reason teachers emphasize the local is because they see local concerns as most relevant to students' lives and interests. Teachers stress the familiarity of local issues as a reason to focus on these; this familiarity allows them to adopt pedagogical approaches where students are collaborating with teachers, to a certain degree, in setting an agenda for learning:

We start with them going out into their community and taking two photographs—one of something they really like about their community and one of something they don't like—and we use that as a lead-in to anti-social behaviour. (Ms Shepherd, Coalthorpe Community College)

Ms Shepherd was willing to let students take the lead, but she had already decided the focus of the follow-up lessons, namely, examining the consequences of anti-social behaviour. Her colleague, Ms Jessop, also devised an exercise which invited students to think about their concerns, but with an explicitly political agenda of recognizing human interdependence, working from interpersonal concerns to international ones:

I've been using this diagram for students ... a globe just with concentric circles and in the middle is them. 'Right, here's you, this is what's important to you, we'll start with that and then we'll think about your immediate friends and families, your hobbies, school.' But then let's think about the local community, and the national community, and the global community ... Always with them at the centre ... how everything relates to them and their lives. (Ms Jessop, Coalthorpe Community College)

What is not clear, however, is whether this spatial model of affinity, working outward in linear fashion from inner-to-outer concentric circles is, in fact, opening up new identities and ways of belonging or reinforcing existing identities. It may be promoting a sense of interdependence; alternatively it may reinforce an 'us and them' attitude rather than promote solidarity. If

the aim is to encourage cosmopolitan attitudes, then within every circle, even the close circle of friends and family, there needs to be engagement with difference. One version of this model which presents the local as homogeneous but the global as diverse sets the local and the global as opposites. It risks promoting a choice, for example, between the local and the European or between the national and the cosmopolitan. This risk increases if the young person at the centre already has fixed ideas about the superiority of the local and the national over the European and the global. Instead of promoting flexibility, so that an individual feels an affinity with the nation yet sees the nation itself as cosmopolitan, the approach risks setting up a false choice between the two.

Across all three schools, teachers emphasized student action and engagement in the local community as a first step towards political literacy:

We're ... trying to get the children to be active, to get them involved, to get them into the community and changing things ... I'm trying to get the kids working at a local level ... I do not want them to think: 'Yeah, well, I got a grade A in citizenship, my knowledge is very good but I don't help anybody. I'm just passive.' You've got to be doing it in the classroom and you've got to get them active there and then they'll be active later on. (Mr Graham, Lambton School)

At both Lambton and Hornby Road schools, active learning in the community was seen to be more enjoyable as well as effective, and therefore more motivating to students. As Mr Ingram of Hornby Road School expressed it, 'kids learn from experiences, don't they? And they enjoy it more'.

Teachers at Coalthorpe Community College had less experience of community-based approaches than those at the other two schools. Classroom work had also been largely teacher-centred. Participation in the European curriculum development initiative led this group of teachers to reflect on classroom pedagogies and on the relationship between citizenship knowledge and community engagement:

We've learned that we need to have more active lessons and that we need to have children actually taking action ... using the information that they've learned. ... It's OK to learn about it, but ... they actually need to do something about it. (Ms Shepherd, Coalthorpe Community College)

In all three schools, an exclusively academic approach to learning was seen to 'turn the kids off', whereas activity-based citizenship learning was seen as inclusive, enabling those with learning difficulties to engage on the basis of equality. A teacher at Coalthorpe, where there was a disproportionate number of young people with learning difficulties, explained that the staff were not in favour of having citizenship as an examination subject where students would receive grades; citizenship should not be a graded subject but should enable all young people to contribute to society. This was a decision about which students had been consulted:

When citizenship was introduced we had a meeting with the student council and they didn't want to do it [the exam]. They felt that citizenship was something that every student should learn; it shouldn't be dependent on whether you are capable of a GCSE [examination at 16 plus] and you shouldn't be

graded because everybody should be respected for [different] contributions that they make. (Ms Shepherd, Coalthorpe Community College)

Engagement in the local community sometimes involved students learning about local political structures and processes. This was the experience of a group of Lambton students, who campaigned for a youth shelter. They had to present their plans to the local council, lobbying the council to gain financial support. Not only did they learn new skills; the teacher who supported them also wanted them to recognize that they could make a difference:

Working on that youth shelter was really exciting. The kids did it. They did all the work; they did the research; they developed the ICT; they were developing their enquiry skills; they were developing their public-speaking skills; they were developing materials to present. All of which required us to talk about: how can we get our ideas across so that we can justify [our school] getting the £10,000? The youngsters were empowered. (Mr Graham, Lambton School)

The teacher, who taught a module on human rights, went on to explain that, for him, this was an exercise in children's rights: the students were able to exercise their right to express their opinions and be listened to in a decision which affected them, in line with Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. He suggested this was a more effective way of learning about human rights than him 'boring them rigid' by lecturing them. He set out to create a pedagogical process in which the students 'had to think'.

At Hornby Road School, students were encouraged to participate and to improve community life in a different way, not through political processes, but through volunteering: 'We give them opportunities to ... become good citizens via the volunteering opportunities we provide them in school' (Ms James). Here the concept of a 'good citizen' is someone who improves community life by serving others. The students were, nevertheless, learning a similar set of skills to those at Lambton Road, through the activities they were engaged in: planning a Christmas party for seniors and distributing gifts at Easter. They developed skills in planning and organization; fundraising; and liaising and co-operating with different interest groups. Although charitable work might seem a 'safer' option than engagement in local politics, the skills are transferable, and might be equally applied to more overtly political processes. The Hornby Road teachers did not, however, use a discourse of rights and empowerment.

Some teachers stressed political and social awareness; others gave greater emphasis to moral awareness. Those in the former group also stressed that students learn about their rights and their responsibilities and understand how political decisions affect them. Teachers across all three schools saw the importance of learning about basic political processes, such as voting, and the work of their local member of parliament.

Learning for citizenship also included studying current news and media debates, particularly if the news item had some local resonance or was seen to have direct relevance to the students' lives. So, for example, a high-profile news story of the abuse and subsequent death of a 17-month-old child, known as Baby P, in the London Borough of Haringey, offered opportunities for Coalthorpe students to consider broader issues relating to the care and protection of children and the collective responsibilities of citizens:

The whole function of school for me is how we socialize our young to function in society and ... can make that society better. ... I think we need an intellectual and social accountability, not just skills-based [teaching]. Teaching citizenship—for me it's a very positive move if we teach the sort of citizenship where we address issues like Baby P. ... It's not just a blight on Haringey, it's a blight on us in society because there will probably be Baby Ps within half a mile of where we are talking. (Ms Clark, Coalthorpe Community College)

There was broad alignment between the aims of citizenship education identified by teachers and their preferred pedagogies. Not only did they advocate project work, community-based learning, and volunteering, but they also repeatedly stressed that citizenship learning should be accessible to all students, regardless of attainment levels or learning difficulties. Active learning was seen to provide opportunities for improving knowledge and understanding, as well as skills. The overall goal was to enable students to be independent learners who can find information via a variety of sources, including the internet.

All the teachers in this study unambiguously accept two of the three strands of the citizenship education as recommended in the Crick report (QCA 1998: 40), namely, *social and moral responsibility* (that is, learning self-confidence and socially and morally responsible behaviour in and beyond the classroom) and *community involvement* (that is, learning about and becoming helpfully involved in the life and concerns of their communities, including learning through service to the community). Some teachers also stress the third strand of the Crick report, *political literacy* (that is, students learning how to make themselves effective in public life), although they tended to avoid using the term. Although the Crick report advocated student participation in schools and communities, it did not address pedagogical issues (Olssen 2004).⁷

The teachers' identification of pedagogies which encourage democratic participation by students reflect, in part, guidance from the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA). The 2008 version of the citizenship programme of study states that citizenship education encourages students 'to take an interest in topical and controversial issues and to engage in discussion and debate', and undertake their own enquiries (QCA 2007c); the 1999 programme of study used very similar language. The teachers' preferred pedagogies, while embodying these official goals, extend beyond them to reflect their own values about the need for inclusiveness and active student engagement in learning for citizenship and democracy.

Broadly speaking, the teachers state that student learning for democratic citizenship should involve democratic practices in the classroom and beyond. Their understandings are in keeping with the view of the international consensus panel convened by Banks *et al.* (2005) on citizenship education in multicultural democracies which, drawing on international research evidence, proposed as one of four key principles for educating citizens that: 'Students should be taught knowledge about democracy and democratic institutions and *provided opportunities to practice democracy*' (p. 13; my emphasis). The Banks report echoes an earlier recommendation from the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers (1985) which stated:

Democracy is best learned in a democratic setting where participation is encouraged, where views can be expressed openly and discussed, where there is freedom of expression for pupils and teachers, and where there is fairness and justice (p. 3).

This recommendation, which was not cited by the teachers, perhaps best sums up the values they articulated in justifying their preferred pedagogies.

Group work was seen to be a key means of ensuring maximum participation and co-operation between students, enabling them to take responsibility for their own learning, improve research skills, and manage their own projects. Nevertheless, projects which demanded a high degree of responsibility and independence were seen as suited to higher-attaining students, as were projects which enabled students to make connections between local, national, and international concerns and examine these different scales of citizenship. Encouraging lower-attaining students to focus, often exclusively, on the local, but higher-attaining students to extend their horizons, may result in an approach where cosmopolitanism is seen as the preserve of elites.

In the minds of some teachers, cosmopolitan ideals of co-operation and compassion towards our fellow humanity are more readily associated with charity rather than political action. The emphasis here is on fund-raising rather than on means by which young people as citizens might work to alleviate poverty by campaigning, for example, for justice in addressing issues such as international debt and international trade:

When we look at poverty ... [groups] research their own charity ... They look at poverty around the world and they do their own [fund-raising] event that they manage themselves, take the money off to the charity, and they love that kind of independence. (Ms Shepherd, Coalthorpe Community College)

At Lambton School, students engaged in political action for change in the local community (such as campaigning for a youth shelter), but when active citizenship learning was extended to the international arena, such as in twinning arrangements with a school in the Gambia, overt political objectives seem to fade, and the project focus appears to become charitable. Of course, teachers are subject to practical constraints when engaging in curriculum development, and they also rely on the co-operation of parents and the wider community. If, for example, the teaching staff as a whole or the wider community perceives a twinning arrangement with a school in a developing country to have a charitable focus (which may fit comfortably with the traditions of many schools) it may be easier to present the project in this format to parents, schools governors, and potential sponsors. It is important to acknowledge both the practical and theoretical complexities of curriculum development, particularly in a relatively new school subject, such as citizenship education. The decision to present a twinning arrangement as charitable rather than political in focus may itself be a political one.

Teachers also wish to promote discussion, debate, and the voicing of student opinions. Their thinking here is in line with official guidance. An essential component of citizenship education, according to the teachers interviewed, is the promotion of critical thinking and freedom of expression in the classroom. Teachers therefore see their role as information providers,

particularly on potentially controversial issues. Students are provided with alternative viewpoints and given opportunities to discuss these among themselves, usually in small groups, in order to arrive at their own understandings and formulate their own viewpoints: 'It's ... asking them to make an informed judgement on their own—that's the key I think (Mr Patterson, Lambton School). A colleague adds:

I want to have the children talking, I want them voicing their opinions, I want them justifying their opinions and I want them debating, you know, controversial issues. ... One of the key strands of citizenship is ... enquiry ... that's a skill we want to develop. (Mr Graham, Lambton School)

Teachers' understandings of citizenship, identity, and the nation

Following the London bombings in 2005, a number of senior members of the UK government, including Prime Ministers Tony Blair and Gordon Brown, have focused on the role of schools in creating a united and cohesive society. Gordon Brown, in particular, has suggested that the curriculum, notably the teaching of history and citizenship, should be directed to strengthen 'Britishness' and 'British values', promote patriotism, and contribute to the integration of minority communities (Osler 2009).

As discussed above, the official citizenship curriculum has a strong national focus, although within teacher discourses there is a strong focus on the local in citizenship education. The teachers justified their choices with reference to students' needs and identities on the one hand, and the ease with which the local enabled them to adopt their preferred pedagogies judged to be compatible with 'active citizenship'.

Teachers have greater freedom in selecting content when teaching citizenship, compared with history or geography, for example. Official guidelines are minimalist in relation to those drawn up for other curriculum subjects. Effectively, teachers have scope to develop the details of the curriculum at school level through their own practices. Official guidelines also encourage them to select examples from students' local communities. The choice to focus on the local was justified in both pedagogical and pragmatic terms. Local content was justified pedagogically in terms of building on the familiar. Although, theoretically, we might then expect teachers to extend students' knowledge to include national and international content, they appeared reluctant to do this, particularly for lower-attaining students. At a practical level, teachers found it easier to engage students in the local community and to work to improve the local community. What starts as a pedagogical preference for active engagement (in line with official guidelines) is maintained for pragmatic reasons, and is not readily extended on a national, European, or global scale, as teachers appear to identify few opportunities for active learning at this level. In making such choices, teachers are, consciously or unconsciously, mirroring the citizenship engagement of the wider community. The majority of people first experience citizenship in their local community.

During the teacher interviews, all the teachers were asked about the importance they attached to national identity and the national dimension of

citizenship. The teachers interviewed were familiar with the debates about Britishness, and the Prime Minister's perspective. In the interviews and within the national curriculum, there appears to be more scope for teachers to shape the citizenship curriculum than the history curriculum.

Whereas the tendency is to focus on the local when teaching citizenship skills and raising contemporary issues, the focus when considering history in secondary schools appears to be at the level of the nation. There is evidence, among some teachers, of actively resisting a national focus in citizenship education, not only interpreting political leaders' calls to promote national identity and patriotism as propaganda, but also of seeing the national as less relevant to students' lives. One history teacher felt that, since the introduction of a national curriculum some 20 years ago, history had been particularly vulnerable to political intervention:

The national curriculum we follow mostly is British history, but of course that does include Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland. ... The new A-level course [targeted at students 16–18 years] I'm going to be delivering next year is Britain from 1945 to now. ... We've had our syllabus changed over the last 20 years half a dozen times for political advantage. It's all gone British. Even [Prime Minister] Brown feels that's important. (Mr Thompson, Hornby Road School)

Other teachers interpreted the focus on national identity as helpful, providing an opportunity to show students there are many ways of being British. At Coalthorpe Community College, which until relatively recently has drawn its intake, more or less exclusively, from an apparently homogeneous white British working-class community, teachers suggested it was important to look at the topic of British identity in the classroom:

In year 8 we start off talking about our identity—what makes you British, and then we move on to: how does our culture accept people who are not British into our community? ... We look at ... why do we feel British, what makes somebody be British? (Ms Shepherd, Coalthorpe Community College)

This teacher is applying cosmopolitan values to the community of the nation, not seeing cosmopolitan and national citizenship education as alternatives. She went on to explain that, from this starting point, she examines the British justice system and laws; the impact of national politics on the local community; and ways in which students might influence decisions through the process of voting. The importance of voting was also stressed by a teacher at Lambton School, who referred to 'informed voters' who might seek to influence foreign, as well as domestic policy decisions:

I want them to understand what our country does in the world and the costs we incur doing that. I want them to become informed voters so when [political] parties are saying—we will do this and we will do that—they've got the information to make their own political decision. (Mr Patterson, Lambton School)

This observation suggests a desire to develop not just informed voters but citizens who understand the impact of their decision-making on strangers in distant places and the ways in which our lives are interconnected with others, across and beyond the boundaries of the nation. This would appear to be an effort to promote cosmopolitan attitudes among students and to

encourage political literacy which extends beyond domestic to international politics.

Ambivalence about European but not global citizenship

As discussed above, the teachers interviewed expressed a degree of ambivalence about teaching for European citizenship. Typically, at both Lambton and Coalthorpe, the citizenship curriculum had been designed at school level to begin with the local community in Year 7 moving to national and international scales as the students progressed through secondary school, while trying to demonstrate the relevance of the latter to students' everyday lives:⁸

[In] Year 9 we do global citizenship and they start off looking at the European Union and we start off by looking at the different countries. ... We then look at human rights and then we start to look at poverty around the world, and different governments around the world, and democracy against dictatorship. Then in Year 10 we revisit some of the stuff we did in Year 7 and 8, but at a higher level. ... In Year 11 we come back to global citizenship, the UN, and the Commonwealth. (Ms Shepherd, Coalthorpe Community College)

The tendency, among teachers in the schools, was to focus on different European countries and cultures rather than to consider Europe as a political or economic entity. Teachers explained that students find this more interesting than studying the EU and its institutions. Those who acknowledged the importance of the EU suggested the focus should be on the broad philosophy behind its creation, arguing that students generally find structures and processes complicated and dry. European identity was presented by some teachers as a potential antidote and alternative to the ethno-nationalism espoused by some students. In this sense, teaching about the EU is part of a process of encouraging cosmopolitanism among students.

Teaching a series of lessons about the EU certainly encouraged debate among the teachers about the importance of the topic within the citizenship classroom, but the teachers remained ambivalent, largely because they found it difficult to make the connection between the EU and students' everyday lives. Given the low profile given to EU matters in the British media, this teacher ambivalence is understandable. In the face of Eurosceptic sentiments within each of the major political parties and a consequent avoidance of European issues among spokespersons for these parties, a silence either reinforced or filled with antagonistic viewpoints by journalists, teachers face a difficult task.

Those few teachers who had previous experience of teaching about the EU, through history, confirmed that some students were resistant:

If I do Britain [19]45 to now ... we'll talk about the European Union because it's impact ... over the last 36 years has been significant. Kids find it boring. They find it boring. They don't find it interesting, *other than to vent prejudices*. It's quite a good one for starting an argument if you want to raise it. (Mr Thompson, Hornby Road School; my emphasis)

Teaching about Europe was therefore a challenging task, particularly in terms of finding an effective methodology to encourage students to be open-minded

and engaged. In addition, teachers felt that they lacked adequate training and resources.

Teachers did not express the same ambivalence about teaching global issues. The interviews suggest that history teachers were at ease, for example, in addressing the Arab/Israeli conflict and the US civil rights movement from the 1940s to the 1960s. Within geography classes, they mentioned population, development, and environmental issues, including carbon footprints and the Kyoto agreement. Complex economic and political issues in countries such as Rwanda and Zimbabwe were also part of the curriculum. Within designated citizenship classes students studied human rights, poverty, and an examination of different forms of government, comparing and contrasting, for example, democracy and dictatorship. They also examined the institutions of the Commonwealth and the UN. All these global issues contain their own complexities, tensions, and challenges.

It is possible that some teachers lacked sufficient understanding of Britain's position as an EU member-state, which might contribute to the concern, raised by a number, about suitable teaching materials to support them in this work. Some may have also shared some of the scepticism in the wider community; or recognized tensions that remain within the European project, as evidenced by this observation:

It doesn't come naturally to go from what affects us as a nation to what affects us as Europeans. That's not ever been the natural thing to think about. Mainly because Europe has much more, is made up of lots of nations that have their own identity. (Ms James, Hornby Road School)

Conclusion

It is within the local community that most individuals first engage as citizens. Teachers from all three schools were conscious of this and, given that they stressed the need for 'active citizenship', it is perhaps not surprising they gave considerable weight to the local dimension of citizenship during the interviews and in the selection of curriculum content. The pedagogical choices they make, which depend heavily on community engagement and learning and relate to their commitment to student participation in the processes of citizenship learning, reinforce this emphasis on the local.

It is not apparent, from the data analysed, that local concerns were addressed from a cosmopolitan perspective in all three schools. At Coalthorpe Community College, where teachers readily acknowledged ethno-nationalist and racist sentiments among students, there was an initiative to discuss the local presence of Eastern European migrants and to make young people aware of opportunities and their access to an EU job market. In this sense, European citizenship can be seen as inclusive and as part of an attempt to introduce education for cosmopolitan citizenship.

The current citizenship national curriculum for England, implemented in secondary schools from 2008, places considerable weight on both national identity and national political institutions and processes. While it addresses the EU, it gives it relatively little attention, and does not address European identity. The teachers in this study, particularly those working in

predominantly white schools and communities, recognize the importance of exploring a broad-based and cosmopolitan understanding of 'British identity' and 'Britishness'. Interestingly, this was emphasized more in the working-class Coalthorpe Community College, than in Lambton School where there is a greater number of middle-class students.

Developing an inclusive concept of 'Britishness' was not such a pre-occupation in the multicultural city environment of Hornby Road School, where it was accepted as given. This is in itself interesting, given the pre-occupation of political leaders with a perceived need to integrate minorities and counter violent extremism. Teachers saw the problem in different terms, emphasizing the need to challenge the insular and sometimes extremist and racist attitudes of some white students, as a central aspect of the project of social cohesion.

The teachers in this study, living and working in the north of England, had re-orientated and subverted the national dimension of the citizenship curriculum, in favour of the local. They questioned the assumption that a national affinity is natural or even necessarily desirable, particularly when they observed the influence of far right and extremist ethno-nationalist political parties on some students. In this sense they acknowledge that different scales of belonging—local, national, European and global—are all constructed and learned, and not necessarily fixed.

Teacher ambivalence in teaching for European citizenship seems to stem from three concerns: an unfavourable political climate; student hostility or indifference; and, most importantly, an apparent incompatibility of matching a seemingly remote EU with students' everyday lives and with preferred pedagogies that focus on active, community-based learning and co-operative group work. This last concern was perhaps the strongest and was compounded by a perceived lack of appropriate teaching materials. This factor may be of particular significance, given that similar reservations were not expressed when addressing the global dimension to citizenship, for which there appear to be adequate attractive resources produced by both commercial publishers and non-governmental organizations (Ibrahim 2005).

At the global scale, a number of teachers firmly expressed their own cosmopolitan perspectives, perspectives they wished to share with their students. The teachers interviewed were all ready to contribute to the debate, addressing different scales on which citizenship learning can be conceived: local, national, European, and global. Their first priority was to respond to their students' needs, interests, and identities, but they assumed these identities, even when apparently fixed, are potentially flexible.

The teachers expressed a range of cosmopolitan commitments and were all broadly committed to education for cosmopolitan citizenship, through which young people as learner-citizens might be encouraged to express solidarity with others at local, national, European, and global levels, accepting and valuing diversity at all these levels. Interestingly, cosmopolitan perspectives were most clearly articulated at national level. Teachers were also enthusiastic to promote global solidarity, with some recognizing a shared global community of fate, and others focusing on charity and compassion for the disadvantaged.

Most interestingly, ambivalences about European citizenship stem not from its exclusive nature, nor from any perceived incompatibility with cosmopolitan ideals, but from a pedagogical challenge: How can the EU be linked directly to young people's everyday lives? This challenge connects to a widely expressed political concern across Europe. Yet, where teaching about the EU can be linked to a cosmopolitan goal, that of combating violent extremism and ethno-nationalism, teachers were ready to embrace such teaching.

In teaching for citizenship, these teachers are imagining allegiances that are multiple and flexible, while at the same time recognizing that such allegiances are contingent on local and national climates of inclusion or exclusion and on local, national, European, and global political contexts. The teachers are already encouraging cosmopolitan citizenship, particularly at national and global levels. The greatest challenges they face in enabling learner-citizens to become cosmopolitan citizens are both political and pedagogical. The political challenge lies in these learners' vulnerability to far right and extremist political parties, active at a local level. While this risk is specific to these particular communities, and cannot be generalized to all schools or students, it is one about which teachers cannot afford to be complacent, since far right and anti-democratic political parties are active and have achieved electoral successes in local elections in other areas of the country, including parts of London and the Midlands. The pedagogical challenge is in extending cosmopolitan perspectives, already in place in teaching for national and global citizenship, and to a much lesser extent in teaching for European citizenship, to students' everyday lives and to local contexts.

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Notes

1. Founded in 1949, the Council of Europe is itself a cosmopolitan project, now covering virtually the entire European continent, with its 47 member-states, from Portugal in the west to Turkey in the east.
2. The EC-funded project 'Teacher Empowerment to Educate Students to Become Active European Citizens' (TEESAEC) combined research with the development of innovative curriculum materials.
3. An edited volume (Weissenso and Eck 2009) discusses findings for Austria, Estonia, Germany, the Netherlands, Switzerland, and the UK.

4. The Inquiry investigated police mismanagement of the investigation of the street murder of a young Black Londoner in 1993, for which no individual has been convicted (see *The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry* 1999).
5. Background data concerning the schools are drawn from the reports of the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED), the school inspection agency for England.
6. With a system of proportional representation operating in European elections, the BNP needed as little as 8% of the total vote to return a Member of the European Parliament (MEP) in the North West. Yorkshire and Humberside saw the largest BNP poll in the 2009 European election, at 9.8%; the party also polled 8.9% in the North East and 8.6% in both the East and West Midlands, although this was insufficient to secure a parliamentary seat in those regions ('EU elections: BNP's Nick Griffin wins seat in European parliament'). The Yorkshire BNP MEP is a retired politics and government teacher from Harrogate in North Yorkshire, not far from Lambton School.
7. Crick (2003) himself pointed out how his report, entitled *Education for Citizenship and the Teaching of Democracy in School*, had in fact deliberately avoided any discussion of democracy or the teaching of democracy in schools.
8. The decision, at Hornby Road School, not to time-table citizenship education, but to incorporate it into other subjects, made it more difficult to confirm a clear pattern of development or to assess how teacher discourse on local, national, European, and global scales of identity were translated into curriculum practices.

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