Hanna, H. (2016). 'Everyone Has to Find Themselves in the Story': Exploring Minority Group Representation in the Citizenship Curriculum in Northern Ireland and Israel. *Diaspora, Indigenous and Minority Education*, *10*(2), 84-97. https://doi.org/10.1080/15595692.2015.1084922

Document version
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Download date: 15. May. 2025

Diaspora, Indigenous and Minority Education

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Acknowledgments: I would like to acknowledge the doctoral funding I received in support of the research related in this article from the Department of Employment and Learning Northern Ireland, and also funding for fieldwork received from the Sir Thomas Dixon Fund at Queen's University Belfast and the Council for British Research in the Levant. Furthermore, I am thankful for constructive comments on a presentation based on this article, from participants at the 'Religious "Others", Schooling and the Negotiation of Civic Identities' interdisciplinary symposium held in Hannover in June 2014 and supported by the Volkswagen Foundation.

‘Everyone has to find themselves in the story’: Exploring minority group representation in the citizenship curriculum in Northern Ireland and Israel

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Abstract:

This article explores understandings of minority group representation in citizenship education in Northern Ireland and Israel, from the point of view of students, teachers and policy-makers. It is set against the background of the minority/majority group dichotomy within societies divided along ethno-national lines, and the challenge of delivering a common citizenship curriculum to a diverse group in such a context. Starting with interpretations of international law that state that education should be ‘culturally appropriate’ and ‘flexible to the needs of a particular community’, the article considers several interrelated ideas: proportional representation of the minority in educational governance; students being able to ‘find themselves in the story’ of the curriculum; and the debate over a common versus a differentiated curriculum. Inter-jurisdiction comparisons allow for exploration of varied understandings of citizenship education as socialisation, and of potential responses to the challenge of balancing unity and diversity in a divided or multicultural society.

‘Everyone has to find themselves in the story’: Exploring minority group representation in the citizenship curriculum in Northern Ireland and Israel

Introduction: education in divided societies

Within ethnically, religiously, culturally or socio-politically divided societies, it is suggested that education may play a constructive or a destructive role (Bush & Saltarelli, 2000; Gallagher, 2004). Education may help prepare young people ‘to cope with the challenges generated by the reality of conflict’ (Ben-Nun, 2013, p. 1); but it may also play a role in ‘reproducing the attitudes, values, and social relations underlying civil conflict and violence’ (Buckland, 2005, p. 2), and act as a tool in socialisation into the ‘imagined community’ of the nation (Anderson, 1991) or into the divided status quo (Al-Haj, 2004). From such a value-laden perspective, the value, role and content of citizenship education (CE) may be contested in divided and conflict-affected societies, where conceptions of citizenship, identity and national belonging vary, and thus where divisions can be highly complex and long-standing (Niens & McIlrath, 2010). Banks (2004) suggests that in multicultural societies one of the main goals of CE should be educating for recognition and tolerance of cultural differences, and that there should be a balance struck between promoting unity and diversity within society through education. Osler and Starkey (2003) propose understanding CE as education for cosmopolitan citizenship. Despite the existence of citizenship education within schools across the globe (Davies, 2005), the task of building unity is challenging, particularly in divided jurisdictions where ‘linguistic, ‘tribal’ and religious divisions tug powerfully towards a sense of separateness’ (Oliver & Heater, 1994, p. 24). In two such jurisdictions, Northern Ireland and Israel, the aims of the common and compulsory CE curriculum include learning about diversity, equality, human rights, and respect for identity (Partnership Management Board, 2007; Cohen, 2013). Nevertheless, both societies still experience ethno-national division and inequality: in Northern Ireland, a key division persists between broadly Catholic nationalists and Protestant unionists,

and in Israel, one of the core ethno-national divisions is between Jewish and Palestinian citizens of Israel[1]. These divisions are reflected in residential separation in certain areas, and largely segregated education systems, where most young people attend school mostly alongside those of the same religion or ethnicity (McGlynn, Lamarre, Laperrière & Montgomery, 2009; Agbaria & Pinson, 2013), and where educational governance has historically lacked or currently lacks balance of representation of ethno-national groups (Graham-Brown, 1994).

Against the background of these minority/majority group dichotomies and of delivering a common CE lies the challenge to states that are legally bound by international treaties to respect, protect and fulfil the educational rights of all children and young people, at the same time as respecting, protecting and fulfilling the rights of minorities within their jurisdiction. One such treaty is the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights 1966 (UN General Assembly, 1966), by which both Northern Ireland (through the UK) and Israel are legally bound. Although there has been much research published that focuses on CE in general, and comparative research conducted on NI and Israel,[2] the potential for the purportedly universal nature of human rights and related education rights obligations to offer a fresh, unifying and interdisciplinary perspective for minority and majority groups within the common CE curriculum has received little attention. Therefore, the purpose of this article is to use an

[1] The term 'Palestinian' used to denote an Arab-Palestinian citizen of Israel rather than Arab-Israeli, or Arab, is highly contested. I have chosen to follow Bekerman (2005) among others in this. For a fuller discussion of the use of such ethno-national markers in Israel, please see Shafir and Peled (2002). However, in relation to schools, the term 'Arab' will be used to describe the sector in which the majority of Palestinian pupils study, as this is a broadly agreed and recognised term in this case.

[2] This includes large-scale, cross-national and longitudinal studies (Kerr, 1999; Torney-Purta *et al.*, 2001), some focusing on conceptions of citizenship within education (Parker, 2008), others on the relationship between CE and human rights (Osler & Starkey, 2010; Niens, O'Connor & Smith, 2013). Comparative research includes that within political science (Guelke, 1994; Knox & Quirk, 2001; Gidron, Katz & Hasenfeld, 2002), sociology (Smooha, 1997), and education (Donnelly & Hughes, 2006; Bekerman, McGlynn & Zembylas, 2009; Ben-Nun, 2013).

education rights framework as a starting point for exploring how minority group representation is viewed within the CE curriculum in Northern Ireland and Israel, by drawing on qualitative research conducted on interpretations of international law made by students, teachers and policy-makers.

Citizenship and citizenship education in Northern Ireland

Context

The differing views on national belonging in Northern Ireland (NI) originates in the British Protestant colonial settlement of the north of Ireland, the partition of the island in the early 20th century, and real and perceived inequalities between Catholics and Protestants (favouring the latter) in terms of representation in government and access to employment and housing (Whyte, 1990; McGarry & O’Leary, 1995). With regard to national identity, the majority of Protestants affiliate themselves with the UK (unionists, in political terms), and the majority of Catholics with the Republic of Ireland (nationalists), and it is this dichotomy that lies at the heart of the conflict within the jurisdiction and the subsequent difficulties faced in developing and delivering a unified CE curriculum to all students.

The late 1960s saw the rise of a civil rights campaign within NI, led by disaffected Catholic nationalists, eventually leading to overt violent conflict, civil unrest, and the rise of paramilitary groups (Cairns & Darby, 1998). Over the next three decades, a number of high-profile political agreements were signed in an effort to transform the conflict, the most recent and effective of

these being the Good Friday Agreement 1998 (Northern Ireland Assembly, 1998). The Agreement led to legislative changes and the establishment of new political structures (HMSO, 1998). Government, statutory bodies and other workplaces must abide by equality legislation that ensures equal opportunity for both Catholics and Protestants (Osborne & Shuttleworth, 2004).

Today, NI’s population is approximately 1.8 million (NISRA, 2011, p. 12), and identity and citizenship are understood in a variety of ways. Currently, 43.9% of the population are from a Catholic background, and 53.1% describe themselves as Protestant (NISRA, 2011, p. 19). Furthermore, four principal national identity markers are used by adult citizens of NI: 39% describe themselves first and foremost as ‘British’, 32% as ‘Irish’, 21% as ‘Northern Irish’, 1% as ‘Ulster’, and 6% as ‘other’ (NILTS, 2012). Statistics are similar for young people (NIYLTS, 2012). Thus, as Arlow (2002, p. 40) has claimed, in the NI context, ‘there is no agreed concept of a ‘citizen’’, and as will become clear below, this context has been reflected in the CE curriculum.

Northern Ireland’s citizenship curriculum

During the first five years of post-primary school (11–16 years), citizenship education (known as ‘Citizenship’) is compulsory, although not mandatorily examined (CCEA, 2009; CCEA, 2013). It aims to ‘help[…] 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 throughout their lives’. The curriculum is built around a number of themes; of

note here is ‘diversity and inclusion’, a theme which is to include opportunities for pupils to ‘consider the range and extent of diversity in societies locally and globally and to identify the challenges and opportunities which diversity and inclusion present in local, national, European and global contexts’ (CCEA, 2007, p. 45). Also of significance is the ‘equality and social justice’ theme, which deals with the understanding that ‘society needs to safeguard individual and collective rights to try and ensure that everyone is treated fairly’ (CCEA, 2007, p. 45). Thus, following on from Arlow’s (2004) observation that there is no agreed concept of a citizen in NI, it is of note that, within CE, citizenship in terms of the national identities mentioned earlier (Irish, British, and so on) is not defined in the curriculum, although it could be argued that this lack of overt defining of a specific national identity in itself offers a definition of sorts of how the curriculum wishes young people to understand citizenship – as diverse and inclusive.

Citizenship and citizenship education in Israel

Context

The dichotomy of views on national belonging between Jewish and Palestinian citizens of Israel originates in Jewish immigration to the majority-Arab region in the late 19th and early 20th century, and the division of land that followed the establishment of the State of Israel as a Jewish state in 1948 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1948; Segev, 2000). Problems emanating from this dichotomy have led to protracted conflict both within and outside the official borders of Israel, and endemic Jewish/Palestinian divisions within Israeli society. Although there have been many high-profile Israel-Palestine peace initiatives, they have ultimately failed to bring

about a permanent solution to the contentious issues of land, security and peace (Smith, 2013). This is in contrast to the relatively more stable situation of NI, particularly following the Good Friday Agreement 1998.

It has been suggested that Israel is an ethnocracy that reflects specifically Jewish culture and values (Yiftachel, 2002). Therefore, tensions lie in the fact that, while the vast majority of Jewish citizens believe themselves to belong to the Israeli state, for most Palestinian citizens of Israel their affiliation lies more fully with the wider Palestinian or Arab people (Shafir & Peled, 2002), and they differ from their Jewish Israeli compatriots in terms of religion, language, and culture (Jabareen & Agbaria, 2010). Although Palestinians are represented in the Ministry of Education, including within committees that concern CE, and have control over their religious bodies, it has been reported that Palestinians lack full control of mass media, government departments relating to Palestinian affairs, or education, and face inequality in social, educational, economic and political terms, despite holding formal equality (Ichilov, 2008; Rouhana & Ghanem, 1998).

Israel has a population of 7.6 million, with 5.7 million (75.5%) Jews and 1.5 million (20.3%) Arabs (Palestinians) (Central Bureau of Statistics, Israel, 2010, p. 3). Palestinian citizens exhibit much lower levels of pride in their Israeli citizenship than Jewish citizens (Arad & Alon, 2006), and Palestinian identity is particularly highly differentiated. One study claims that Palestinian citizens of Israel use seven different self-descriptors: 36.2% describe themselves as 'Palestinian in Israel', 21.8% as 'Israeli Arab', 17.4% as 'Palestinian Arab', 9.7% as 'Israeli Palestinian', 6.4% as 'Arab', 6% as 'Israeli' and 2.5% as 'Palestinian' (Lowrance, 2006, p.

175). Such statistics confirm that the concepts of national identity and citizenship in Israel are highly complex, and mirror to a certain extent citizenship issues in Northern Ireland. However, it may be argued that the level of diversity in Israel, described above, is much higher than that in NI, and therefore has a greater impact on the education system.

Israel's citizenship curriculum

Citizenship education ('Civics') is a compulsory subject in all streams of the Israeli state education system. Students in non-religious Jewish and Arab (Palestinian) schools are required to study Civics over two to three years during 10th–12th grade (age 15–18 years), culminating in the compulsory *bagrut* matriculation exam (Tatar, 2004). There is a compulsory textbook, 'To Be Citizens of Israel' (Cohen, 2013).

The official goal of Civics is as follows:

> 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, educate students to accept the diversity that exists within Israeli society, and to respect those who are different from oneself, and to help students become autonomous and conscious citizens, capable of critical thinking, of analyzing, evaluating, and forming an independent opinion … (Ministry of Education, 1994, cited in Ichilov, Salomon and Inbar, 2005, p. 40).

Civics focuses on three compulsory themes: the Jewish and democratic values inherent in the state and the tensions between them; the make-up of the government and political system in Israel; and key debates in Israel, including those surrounding cultural diversity and minorities. The key subjects to be considered include minority-majority and state-religion relations, citizenship, and civil and human rights. Students are to study and critically analyse a range of opinions from a variety of sources (Ministry of Education, 1994, cited in Cohen, 2013).

Thus, despite some similarities in terms of statutory content, the CE curriculum in Israel departs from that in NI insofar as it arguably seeks to define the citizenship which students are expected to adopt in relation to a specific state or national identity – ‘Israeli’ – but also bearing in mind the point made above with regard to the NI Citizenship curriculum, that the focus on a citizenship identity that incorporates diversity and inclusion still betrays a definition of the kind of citizen the curriculum seeks to produce. This may be explained by the seemingly higher level of cultural diversity (and distance) within Israel, and potentially a greater felt need from within the Ministry for a tighter definition of a single, national identity. These different nuances will be apparent in the findings presented later.

Education rights: a legal-conceptual framework

From the similarities and differences in terms of goals, content, and also challenges inherent in CE, the question arose regarding the potential benefit of exploring these curricula within an

international, ‘universal’ and potentially unifying framework provided by international human rights law. Although such human rights frameworks are contested, it may be suggested that human rights is one of the ‘least worst’ frameworks (Davies, 2005), and so it offered a useful starting point for an exploration of minority group representation in the CE curriculum.

This legal-conceptual framework drew on interpretations of international law on education, particularly those emanating from the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights 1966, whose interpretations include that education should be ‘culturally appropriate’ and ‘flexible to the needs of a particular community’ (UNGA, 1966; CESCR, 1999; Tomaševski, 2001). The author then drew upon this and other interpretative work (see Wilson, 2005; Beiter, 2006; Friboulet, Niameogo, Liechti, Dalbera & Meyer-Bisch, 2006; de Beco, 2009), to discern what these terms might look like in the specific context of CE in a diverse society. Based on analysis of the interpretative literature, then, a ‘culturally appropriate’ education was provisionally defined as one where the content of school syllabi is appropriate to the religious, ethnic, cultural and historico-political background and values of all students. An education that is flexible to the needs of a particular community’ was defined as one which fulfilled linguistic and other cultural needs in education (Hanna, 2014, pp. 88—89).

However, given the interdisciplinary nature of this research, combining education with international legal studies, this framework should be considered less as a traditional theoretical framework, and more as a starting point for discussions with stakeholders. It should also be noted that these definitions were provisional and were elaborated through discussions with participants. Thus, an exploratory and interdisciplinary approach was taken to data interpretation and theoretical development, drawing upon a number of different bodies of

literature. It is the two interpretations mentioned above that illuminate the challenges inherent in CE in divided societies such as NI and Israel, regarding minority group representation in the curriculum and the governance of education. These challenges are related in the responses of stakeholders who were interviewed for this research.

Methods

The qualitative research reported here emanates from a three year doctoral research project on the interpretation of education rights within CE in Northern Ireland and Israel. These two jurisdictions were selected because of their comparability in terms of being conflict-affected and divided societies, where a common citizenship curriculum is being delivered within an ethno-nationally segregated education system.

The data is approached from an interpretivist perspective that focuses on the subjective understandings and perceptions of individuals and groups, in addition to recognising the influence of both the research environment and wider social structures (Geertz, 1973; Guba & Lincoln, 1989). The purposive participant sample comprises 52 students, teachers and policy-makers involved in CE at post-primary level for both jurisdictions combined. Twelve policy-makers, 16 teachers, and 24 students were interviewed, the latter in groups of 4–8. Those from both of the two main ethno-national groups in each jurisdiction were included (Catholic, Protestant, non-religious Jewish, and Palestinian). Interviews and focus groups were conducted between December 2011 and December 2012. All interviews and focus groups, apart from one,

were conducted in English. There were no significant difficulties in communication noted, although it is conceded that conducting research where there is no common native language will inevitably pose a language and cultural barrier (see Jowell, 1998). Measures were taken to ensure informed and signed consent and confidentiality.

Participants were asked questions about their understandings of citizenship education and of education rights within CE, and their specific interpretations of each element within the international legal framework explored in the literature review stage of this research. Two of these elements were that education should be ‘culturally appropriate’ and ‘flexible to the needs of a particular community’.

Thematic analysis was carried out on interview and focus group transcripts, according to Braun and Clarke’s (2006) approach. Minority group representation is one of a number of themes that emerged from the data, and what is presented in this article should be read as a snapshot of what was shared in relation to this theme, rather than as being in any way comprehensive, conclusive or generalisable.

Findings: ‘Everyone has to find themselves in the story’

The idea of one’s identity being represented in the curriculum emerged from the interviews as a prerequisite for engaging with it. In this context, finding oneself in ‘the story’ means that the

curriculum represents one’s cultural, religious, socio-political, national and/or ethnic background and historical narrative. Related to this were views on the common curriculum and ethno-national group representation in educational governance.

Israel

Interviews with Palestinian participants in Israel indicated that they regarded the Ministry of Education as overwhelmingly Jewish, leading to an under-representation of the Palestinian narrative. As a result, they showed little support for the common curriculum. As a Palestinian teacher from a bilingual[3] school described:

> *‘the main question is, ‘Who wrote this?’ Is it … Jewish who wrote about Arabs with their eyes? Or is it Arabs who write about themselves? And I know that it is not the Arabs that write about themselves.’* (Latifa, Palestinian teacher, bilingual school)

The importance of Palestinian input into writing materials that relate to them is underlined by this teacher, highlighting the view that the involvement of the minority group in policy-making is required to ensure their narrative is represented.

Most Palestinian students stated that they did not learn about Palestinian identity (variously referred to as culture, nationality, history, and other aspects) in Civics, but rather the Jewish aspects of life: ‘*We learn … about the Jewish history, I think we [Palestinians] shouldn’t learn about that because they [Jews] don’t learn about us’* (Zaina, Palestinian student). This

[3] Bilingual schools in Israel are where Jewish and Palestinian students study together, and form a very small minority of schools (see Bekerman, 2005).

exemplifies the view that Jewish and Palestinian aspects are not equally represented in Civics, and the dislike expressed for this inequality suggests the importance to this student of being able to see her own rather than primarily another group's identity represented in the curriculum.

Palestinian teachers also referred to the dominance of the Jewish perspective in the Civics textbook:

> *… we can't teach what we think or what we believe in … And I talk with the students about many things that we live, we know that it's not included in the book. This book is the Jewish version, we don't believe in the same things that they wrote in this book, we believe in other things.* (Layla, Palestinian teacher, Arab school)

This highlights the feeling that Palestinian teachers have to self-censor their views on their national identity. Notably, however, it is of note that they did not fully self-censor, given that they still discussed issues outside those found in the textbook. Therefore, some adaptation of the curriculum was taking place in an attempt to make the material more culturally relevant to students. In this way, teachers' desire to discuss their own and their students' identity points to a sense of the importance for teachers, in addition to students, of being able to see their identity in the Civics curriculum, even when it requires going outside the curriculum goal of developing a shared 'Israeli' identity.

Among Jewish interviewees there was also recognition that narratives other than the dominant (Jewish) should be represented in Civics, and therefore, a diversity of actors should be involved in educational decision-making. One teacher said that '*everybody has to find themselves in the story'* (Gad, Jewish teacher), and a policy-maker shared their belief that this diversity already

exists within the Ministry of Education, as it involves *‘people from all branches of the society and from different kinds of schools all over the country’* (David, Jewish policy-maker).

However, some teachers did not believe it was possible to include all groups, because of Israel’s highly diverse, politicised character: *‘everything is political here… there are so many interests of different people, so you can’t really please everyone all the time’* (Aviv, Jewish teacher). Furthermore, half of the Jewish teachers and policy-makers suggested that the dominant culture of Judaism ought to be recognised in Civics*: ‘this* is *a Jewish state in the sense that it’s a state of the Jewish people and there’s a dominant culture and with it is a certain ethos that has to be studied and understood’* (Netanel, Jewish policy-maker). Given the broad satisfaction felt among Jewish participants with the level of representation of the minority cultures, then, there was a significantly lower level of felt need for a differentiated curriculum and thus a noticeably higher level of support for the Ministry-approved common Civics curriculum.

Jewish students acknowledged that Palestinians may find parts of the curriculum difficult to connect with, such as the study of the symbols of the state, like the Israeli flag (which incorporates the Star of David, a traditionally Jewish symbol):

> *In Israel you have Jewish people and Arab people and the flag is a Jewish symbol, and if it’s democratic everybody’s equal, but it’s a Jewish state … It’s [a conflict] between the democratic rights [and] the Jewish rights.* (Tobi, Jewish student, Israel)

Given that the Jewishness of the state, together with its democratic aspect, is a key element of the formal Civics curriculum, and given that it is an area that Palestinian (non-Jewish) citizens may have difficulty relating to, Tobi appears to show recognition of the difficulty that

Palestinian students may have in finding themselves in the curriculum. However, another student insisted that Civics was acceptable to all on a cultural (or ethno-national) level – *'we are a state with a lot of different cultures and it [Civics] gives space and quality to all cultures'* (Itai, Jewish student). Thus students' belief in the 'space' and 'quality' given to all cultures in the Civics curriculum implied by teachers and policy-makers may also suggest that seeing one's own culture in the curriculum is important to them.

Northern Ireland

In significant contrast to interviewees in Israel, participants in Northern Ireland at no point expressed the idea that students' religious, cultural or ethno-national backgrounds were not or could not be fully represented in Citizenship, and therefore there was no felt need for a differentiated (rather than common) curriculum. This may be partly explained by the requirement for the NI government and statutory bodies (including the Department of Education), legally enshrined following the Good Friday Agreement 1998, to appropriately represent both the Catholic and the Protestant communities, and the broader equality agenda. Therefore, the current Citizenship curriculum and materials were developed broadly proportionally by individuals from both these communities and others, a key point of distinction from Israel. Generally speaking, it was significantly more difficult to discern strong differences of opinion along ethno-national lines within NI than it was within Israel, where often the differences were striking.

It was clear from the interviews that proportional representation of the minority within educational governance was taken for granted as the most appropriate approach to managing

schooling in NI. Policy-makers indicated that there was a balance of representation of Catholics and Protestants in the development stage of the Citizenship curriculum. As for teachers, there appeared to be an assumption that both communities were represented in the governance of education, and subsequently, a trust that the curriculum would adequately represent both communities. For example, when shown the formal interpretations of education law from the broader legal framework of this research, one teacher responded:

> *these things I agree with, but I'm assuming, like I said to you, assuming that the content is acceptable, which you would imagine it's 'culturally appropriate', that it 'doesn't discriminate', 'involves diverse groups in development', it's 'relevant', it's 'good quality', all of those things, yeah, absolutely. I'm assuming that it is all these because this is a course run by CCEA [Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment] and that is their job to make sure that that is what we're dealing with.* (Laura, teacher, Catholic school)

Here an assumption is made that the statutory body (CCEA) has ensured the quality and non-discriminatory nature of the Citizenship curriculum. When compared with the Palestinian minority in Israel, it is of note that Catholic interviewees, members of what was once a less dominant minority in NI, now appear to almost automatically trust that their narrative will be represented.

It was acknowledged by all teachers that students should be able to find themselves in the story in Citizenship:

> *it’s necessary for [students] here to know about their culture.* (Robert, teacher, Protestant school)

> *looking at local identity, looking at local communities’ historical experience and why identity has emerged in the way it has.* (Nicola, teacher, Catholic school)

However, although students made a distinction between Catholics and Protestants, the occasional references they made to their cultural background as Catholic or Protestant as represented in Citizenship did not indicate a belief that their *particular* ethno-national identity was not represented to the same extent as the other. Rather, students in both schools felt that they did not get enough opportunity to discuss what was happening in their local area that affected both communities, including sectarian and paramilitary tensions, suggesting that they could not connect sufficiently with the curriculum. For example:

> Interviewer: *Do yous get to talk about that [Protestants and Catholics] a lot in school?*
>
> Hannah: *not a lot*
>
> Caitlín: *not a lot because there’s not like loads of stuff that we’re allowed to bring up about all the Troubles and all ... you don’t really go into that much depth about it*
>
> Hannah: *you just learn about how it was back then, you don’t learn about it now*
>
> Interviewer: *Yeah. Is that something yous would maybe like to feel that you could talk about a wee bit more in class?*
>
> All students: *Yeah*
>
> ...
>
> Caitlín: *Protestants and Catholics have so much history, so like we’re all sort of on the same page, we all know what’s going on*

There was a frustration voiced here, then, that the common Catholic/Protestant history and conflict was not given adequate attention, despite there appearing to be space to deal with it within the ‘diversity and inclusion’ stream of the curriculum. This adds a slightly different nuance to the idea of ‘finding oneself in the story’ that goes beyond the story of one’s own particular ethno-national community to the story of two, sometimes conflicting communities, and is perhaps only possible because Catholics are structurally represented on an equal basis with Protestants in mainstream NI society.

Going further, fairly frequent reference was also made among both Catholic and Protestant policy-makers and teachers to the importance of challenging rather than simply accepting students’ identities and cultural backgrounds. The quotation below illustrates this approach:

> *I think as well that it [Citizenship] needs to be addressing the needs of the individual in a sense that all individuals ought to have the opportunity to have their views challenged and questioned as well as expressing their views.* (Chris, NI policy-maker)

Thus, the idea of allowing a student to express their own identity in Citizenship class is shown here as only one side of the coin in terms of engaging the student with the curriculum; the other side is that their views also should be challenged. This view may, once again, spring from a confidence in the equal representation of groups in the curriculum and in society. In contrast, such a strong desire to challenge rather than accept students’ identities did not emerge as clearly from the interviews and focus groups in Israel.

Discussion: Socialisation and balancing unity and diversity in a divided society

In ethno-nationally divided societies where citizenship and identity are contested, the value, role and content of CE may also be contested (Niens & McIlrath, 2010). This is evident in the two case jurisdictions, not least in considering how and to what extent the ethno-national minority should be represented in educational decision-making and their narrative included within the curriculum.

From the responses of research participants related above, an understanding of the socialising aspects of CE emerges, particularly in Israel and particularly among Palestinian participants. Among the latter, there is anxiety that the educational authorities represent a (Jewish) national story that directs what students are learning in CE, a narrative to which they feel limited allegiance and in which they, subsequently, cannot 'find' themselves. In terms of educational governance, this links to the 'basic concern' of minorities to be included in decision-making processes and therefore to be 'part of a negotiated solution rather than one imposed by government' (Graham-Brown, 1994, p. 29). But also in terms of learners, a danger is implied that students will not be able to engage with the curriculum as it does not reflect their cultural understandings and therefore may lead to disengagement; as Osler and Starkey (2003, p. 245) have suggested, '[y]oung people are likely to feel alienated by programmes which overlook their experiences'. Representation in educational governance may be considered immensely valuable to both minority and majority groups in a multicultural society (Banks, 2004). In this case, then, the importance of a 'culturally appropriate' CE which is 'flexible to the needs of a particular community' is upheld, which requires a much more differentiated rather than common curriculum that is geared towards the needs of Palestinian students, in the case of

Israel. However, support of the common curriculum in NI and the example of Catholic students wishing to learn more about their 'common' Catholic and Protestant history takes the idea of 'finding oneself in the story' beyond the story of one's own particular ethno-national community to the story of two communities which have been in conflict. Indeed, it may also reflect the concept of identity as 'multiple, nested, and overlapping' (Kymlicka, 2004, p. xiv) rather than limited to simple categories of 'Catholic', 'Protestant', 'Jewish', and 'Palestinian', and makes space for the possibility of CE incorporating multiple ways of being, for example, 'Catholic' or 'Jewish'.

Such diversity of viewpoint, even within groups, highlights the challenge of applying an international framework to a variety of individual and internally diverse jurisdictions, not least those that have struggled or continue to struggle with the effects of conflict. However, Osler and Starkey's (2003) conceptualisation of education for cosmopolitan citizenship may be of help here. Based on Held's (1995) conception of 'cosmopolitan citizenship', Osler and Starkey propose that education for cosmopolitan citizenship sets a young person within the global context, and conceptualises citizenship to include a 'broader understanding of national identity' (p. 252), a recognition that a particular 'national' identity may be experienced in different ways by different people, and therefore an approach to CE that is inclusive of a diversity of young people in a multicultural society. In this way, then, more students may be able to 'find themselves in the story' through the 'story' being much broader and diverse.

The contrasting views on the common curriculum among Jewish and NI respondents imply other theoretical insights. The sense among both Catholic and Protestant interviewees that they are proportionally represented in governance may have informed their view that the CE

curriculum is satisfactorily representative of their (and the ‘other’) culture, and therefore not in need of differentiation. Thus, it may be proposed that in the case of NI, the assurance of minority representation in educational governance may have gone some way towards helping to permit the minority ‘recognition’ and equality with the majority (Young, 1989) within the Citizenship curriculum, and achieving the optimum (perceived) balance between unity and diversity (Banks, 2004), thereby allowing a common curriculum to emerge that can be accepted by all. This, of course, cannot be detached from the broader constitutional arrangement that recognises Catholics and Protestants as equal. In NI in particular, the common curriculum appears to be viewed as an ingredient in social cohesion. This contrasts with the views of scholars such as Apple (1982, p. 5), who challenge the proposal that a common curriculum leads to greater social cohesion in a heterogeneous society, arguing that, historically, it has been a way of maintaining hegemony by ‘incorporating under one dominant discourse as many groups as possible’, thus disempowering minorities through integrating them into the dominant ideology. Perhaps in NI the goals of CE are broad and general enough to include all students in the curriculum narrative, allowing a more cosmopolitan conceptualisation of citizenship (see Osler & Starkey, 2003, and above), but with the almost inevitable counter argument that this may lead to too broad a scope to deal with contested aspects of identity, and perhaps even omission of conflict-related content (see Davies, 2005, for a typology of approaches to teaching about conflict through citizenship education). Therefore, it may be said that this cultural confidence (and relatedly, knowledge that one’s cultural group is represented in governance and society more broadly) leads to a confidence in the curriculum.

Thus, the understanding of education as (negative) socialisation may not fully account for what emerges from participants’ responses. The interview and focus group data points towards the possibility that within a loosely classified curriculum (see Bernstein, 1975) without a statutory

textbook (as is the case in NI), despite the fact that curriculum is common, the scope for a teacher to mould or even exert undue bias on the curriculum is potentially great (Ichilov, 2008; Barton & McCully, 2010). Indeed, the interviews would suggest that some policy-makers and teachers, particularly in NI, are moving beyond the idea of minority/majority group representation in the curriculum towards *challenging* students’ cultures. In this case, the idea of a ‘culturally appropriate’ CE that is ‘flexible to the needs of a particular community’ also is challenged, highlighting, once more, the tensions inherent in using a ‘universal’ international framework, even one which derives from international human rights law. But returning to Israel, where the curriculum is strongly classified, participant responses suggest there may still be some ‘room for manoeuvre’ where teachers feel more free than the literature (see, for example, Marʿi, 1975) would suggest to express their own views in class, even where they may conflict with the dominant curricular narrative. This appears to be more in line with what Marker and Mehlinger (1992, p. 841) propose, that teachers act as ‘cultural mediators’ and therefore ‘the formal curriculum is what each teacher decides it will be’.. Indeed, some research reported in this journal (Alayan, 2012) suggests that Palestinian young people may still enjoy a positive learning experience owing to their teachers. Thus, independent of the level of equality or representation in a curriculum, or the level of commonality or differentiation, policy and curriculum actors (such as teachers) are ‘transposing’ the curriculum in a variety of ways so that what students receive may be very different from what was intended at policy level (see McEvoy, 2007; McCowan, 2008). In this way, an opportunity may emerge for subverting traditional power structures, not only in terms of ethno-national groups, but also in terms of policy-maker—teacher—student relations.

‘Everyone has to find themselves in the story’: Exploring minority group representation in the citizenship curriculum in Northern Ireland and Israel

Conclusion

This article explored students’, teachers’ and policy-makers’ perceptions of minority group representation within the context of citizenship education in the divided societies of Northern Ireland and Israel. It took an interdisciplinary approach, starting with a rather narrow international educational rights framework that states that education should be ‘culturally appropriate’ and ‘flexible to the needs of a particular community’, and expanding the theoretical discussions to consider education as socialisation and the task of balancing unity and diversity in multicultural societies. Findings suggested that group representation in educational governance, as part of wider societal representation and equality, was viewed as key to achieving representation in the curriculum, and where representation was achieved, the common curriculum was viewed more favourably. However, group representation was not always effected in practice, with some students in particular struggling to ‘find themselves’ in the curricular narrative. Furthermore, the willingness of some teachers to go outside the statutory curriculum, to challenge students’ identities, and the flexibility inherent in some forms of citizenship education, suggested that citizenship education may not hold the traditional socialising role where it is assumed that the dominant national narrative of a country will be imposed. The challenge of balancing unity and diversity was met with a reminder that sometimes students may not wish to conform to the ethno-national categories that society may assign to them, but rather may prefer to go beyond that to a more unified and, potentially, cosmopolitan understanding of what it means to be a citizen. However, the freedom to go beyond essentialised identities may depend to a large extent on whether groups feel represented in educational decision-making and curriculum content, and in society more broadly.

Although these findings are based on a small, qualitative study, from which no simple attempt should be made to generalise, they nevertheless may have implications for other divided or multicultural jurisdictions, but moulded to the particular circumstances of a particular context. The challenge of developing a suitable citizenship education that balances the representation of minority and majority groups with the need to offer students an alternative and critical perspective in a divided society remains.

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