

researchers (outsiders) and policy-makers (insiders) is largely dictated by those within the policy process. At the end of the day, learning is hard work, often uncomfortable and disconcerting, and requires a degree of self-reflection and honesty – in other words, it is not always all that attractive, and for the powerful, anything but the natural thing to do.

As various contributors note, unless there are actors, incentives and structural mechanisms embedded in the policy machinery that help to enforce a more outward-looking, reflective approach to the process of devising and implementing reform, the likelihood is that such an approach will not materialise. In many other education and training systems, one stimulus for reflection is the countervailing power of other stakeholders, an influence more or less totally absent here.

Perhaps the most depressing aspect of this volume is that it covers a single instance of failure to learn. Others that might be adduced might include vocational qualifications more generally, the work-based route/apprenticeship, performance management systems in education and training, the use of targets, and the role of employers within publicly-funded training. It will be very interesting to reread this book in a decade's time and see if the Diplomas have been able to buck the trend that it so skilfully dissects.

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Citizenship under fire: democratic education in times of conflict, by Sigal R. Ben-Porath, Princeton and Oxford, Princeton University Press, 2006, 159 pp., £19.95, ISBN 978-0-691-12434-6

The focus of this book is on education for citizenship in the context of war – an important and timely subject that has not been substantively addressed to date. Ben-Porath's approach is largely theoretical, although drawing from the Israeli and US socio-political contexts. This book makes an important contribution on two levels – firstly, theoretically, but also in a pragmatic sense – opening up a new line of inquiry, which should attract the interest of those working in the field of citizenship across the interdisciplinary boundaries of politics, philosophy, sociology and education.

The basic structure of the book is as follows: chapter 1 examines how conceptions of citizenship change in the context of war, drawing predominantly from Israeli and American experiences, where the author argues that these changing conceptions affect participation, deliberation and social unity. Ben-Porath uses the term 'belligerent citizenship' to describe this narrowing conception of citizenship that emerges in such contexts. The following chapter explores how some educational practices might perpetuate such narrow conceptions, where the author looks in particular at the teaching of patriotism in schools. She argues instead for what she calls 'expansive education' in order to defend 'democratic values' not only in the face of moral conflict, but in the face of defensive unification and belligerent citizenship. Chapters 3, 4 and 5 examine theoretical contributions from peace education, feminist theories and multicultural education, where the author highlights potential aspects that could be brought together under the umbrella term of 'expansive education' for the purposes of addressing citizenship education in the context of war. The concluding chapter attempts to draw together these themes and spell out what is meant in theoretical terms by 'expansive education' and how this might be applied.

Ben-Porath's basic argument is that during wartime, security concerns become the priority, and as a consequence, issues of 'immigration, criminal law, demography, free speech and artistic impression ... become part of the security discourse' (9). Typically most theories of citizenship do not relate to the context of war. The resulting narrowing conception of citizenship that occurs in such contexts is referred to as 'belligerent citizenship', with the focus on unity and 'common values' at the expense of expressions of diversity. The author goes on to argue that conflict, and even rifts within groups under peace conditions, can put democracy under threat, and hence the need to strengthen democratic commitment. However, the rationale for strengthening democratic commitment is not made explicit, nor is its practice critically examined with respect to diversity. There is also a danger of the reasoning becoming rather circular, for as Ben-Porath herself notes, citing Iris Marion Young, 'democratic process ... is primarily a discussion of problems, conflicts and claims of need or interest' (21). Democracy aims to provide an equitable process to serve the needs of the public, rather than simply an end in and of itself. Indeed, Crick (2002) has argued that the term, 'democracy', has come to mean "all things bright and beautiful": democracy as a civic ideal, as representative institutions, and as a way of life' (8); he also warns that politics needs 'defending' against democracy as if democracy 'seeks to be everything, it destroys politics' turning 'harmony into mere unison', a 'theme to a single beat' (Crick 2000, 73).

In addition to opening up a new line of inquiry, what is particularly useful about this book is Ben-Porath's critical consideration of peace education. She argues that typically these pedagogic approaches lack political contextuality, with an emphasis on personal rather than inter-group or international relations – what she titles 'can't we all get along?' (60). Indeed, some intercultural approaches focus primarily on skills for communication at the expense of taking account of the political context (Kiwan 2008). Ben-Porath argues against a simplistic translation of the personal-psychological to the political, warning against such connotations that can occur in some of the approaches used by some international organisations.

Whilst I am supportive of the general theoretical direction of the book, I take issue with three aspects. The first is a theoretical concern: Ben-Porath makes too sharp a distinction between 'identity' and what she calls 'shared fate' (23). She expresses concerns that citizenship framed solely as an 'identity-related matter' can lead to 'belligerent' citizenship, and as a consequence proposes an understanding of citizenship as 'shared fate'. In making this dichotomous distinction, it would seem that identity here is being constructed as static and unchanging, as opposed to the more fluid process of shared fate through shared lived experience. However, 'shared fate' is itself the process of constructing shared identities; it is of interest perhaps to note that this notion of 'shared fate' is similar to the rationale I developed as a member of the UK Home Office 'Life in the UK' Advisory Group report, which outlined recommendations for the development of a language and citizenship test for new applicants for British citizenship, and also the recent policy recommendations for the teaching of diversity and citizenship in the curriculum (Home Office 2003; DfES 2007). In both of these reports, the experience of 'living in the UK' is emphasised in contrast to abstract constructions of 'Britishness'. Downplaying the importance of identity with regard to citizenship may backfire for Ben-Porath who advocates a participatory conception of citizenship, as motivation to actively participate is logically predicated on a sense of belonging to or 'identification' with, the context where citizens are participating.

The second concern relates to lack of empirical evidence utilised throughout the book. Whilst Ben-Porath makes clear that her aim is to develop theoretical thinking in the field of citizenship in the context of war, she makes a number of claims that she does not support with empirical evidence, which makes it at times difficult to distinguish between normative argument, and opinion or ideological claim. For example, she intuitively claims that 'belligerent citizenship' is bad for minorities, for democracy and can lead to political stagnation (21). She also claims that

during conflict there is less democratic deliberation over a wider range in issues in the public sphere. Empirical evidence for these claims would strengthen the theoretical arguments.

Finally, as an educationalist, I was somewhat disappointed by the abstract nature of the final chapter outlining what is meant by 'expansive education'. The task of expansive education is outlined as 'to create and support diversity rather than respond to descriptive circumstances' (123), with suggestions of helping to 'support the ability of students to put themselves in the position of the "other" and to share the other's experiences' (125–126). It is unclear the extent to which these suggestions are new or build on existing strategies, nor is it clear whether there is empirical evidence to indicate positive support for these broad approaches.

References

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