

EDITORIAL

Education for democratic citizenship: diversity and national identity – Introduction

This special edition of the *London Review of Education* is based on the proceedings of the first conference held in July 2007 of the International Centre for Education for Democratic Citizenship (ICEDC), a joint centre of Birkbeck College and the Institute of Education, both of the University of London. It brought together the work of national and international researchers across interdisciplinary boundaries, policy makers and educationalists.

2007 saw the publication of two highly relevant reports commissioned by the British Government. *The curriculum review on diversity and citizenship* or 'Ajegbo review' (Ajegbo, Kiwan and Sharma 2007) found that 'issues of identity and diversity are more often than not neglected in citizenship education'. It calls for critical thinking about ethnicity, religion and 'race' and explicit links to active learning for citizenship. The *Report of the Commission on Integration and Cohesion (CIC)* chaired by Darra Singh, attempts to develop a new model of integration that is not just an issue for minority ethnic communities but raises important questions about citizenship and social capital (Singh 2007). Finally, the British Government report *The governance of Britain*, which has called a Youth Citizenship Commission, raises some important questions about what constitutes a British national identity. All three of these reports raise some very important challenges about how issues of diversity and national identity are central to the theory and practice of an education for democratic citizenship in the UK, in Europe and internationally.

The papers presented at the conference ranged over a variety of topics concerning citizenship education in schools, higher education, adult and community education, etc. A number of the papers concentrated on pedagogical issues concerning the teaching of citizenship, looking at both classroom practices and also more experiential forms of learning. What was particularly interesting was that some contributors, from a variety of academic disciplines, raised theoretical issues about citizenship, diversity and national identity and others reflected upon their empirical research studies which included both quantitative and qualitative research. The editorial committee found it very difficult to choose which papers would be selected for publication in this special issue but we believe that we have chosen papers which combine theoretical analysis, the use of original research and important reflections upon key policy issues.

The first plenary session of the conference featured Sir Keith Ajegbo and Professor Audrey Osler (University of Leeds) and was on 'diversity and citizenship in the curriculum'. Dr Hugh Starkey, co-director of ICEDC, has written an article for this issue which provides an analysis of the key issues raised in this plenary session. He considers the issues of diversity and citizenship education from the Crick report (1998) to the recent 'Ajegbo review'. He goes on to consider the themes of cosmopolitan citizenship, patriotism and how diversity is essential to democracy, which are more fully analysed in the important paper by Professor Audrey Osler which follows (cf. Osler and Starkey 2005). The second plenary session of the conference on 'national identity and citizenship education' included Professor Sir Bernard Crick (Birkbeck, University of London) and Professor Tariq Ramadan (St Anthony's College, Oxford). Dr Dina Kiwan, Programme Director of ICEDC, has written a review of this plenary session and has considered the issues of diversity and identity, the integration of minority communities with special reference to Muslims

and finally multiple identities and the public/private sphere debate (cf. Kiwan 2007). Her paper is followed by the text of the lecture of Professor Sir Bernard Crick on 'Citizenship, diversity and national identity' which provides an historical understanding of the changing national identity of the British.

Underlying discussions about the nature of diversity, national identity and citizenship education during the conference was the issue of what a 'British national identity' might be. In his speech to the British Council in 2004, Gordon Brown argued that citizenship education was part of a wider national debate about British political identity and argued that:

The values and qualities I describe are of course to be found in many cultures and countries. But when taken together, and as they shape the institutions of our country these values and qualities – being creative, adaptable and outward looking, our belief in liberty, duty and fair play – add up to a distinctive Britishness that has been manifest throughout our history, and shaped it. (Brown 2004, cited in Lee 2006)

While these are quite acceptable qualities and values they are also contestable and should be discussed and debated by students as part of the national curriculum for citizenship education. I would argue that the theory and practice of deliberative democracy should be an important part of the citizenship education programme of study and that critically thinking about diversity should be key part of this curriculum. Students should have the opportunity to participate in the civic activity of deliberating about what should constitute a British political identity necessary for a more participatory and democratic politics. (cf. Crick 2000; Gastil and Levine 2005; Annette 2004, forthcoming).

In this special issue *citizenship education* is central to a vision that creates spaces for difference but also puts and emphasis on the similarities that bind us together. These papers consider not only issues related to diversity and citizenship in the curriculum but also to the interrelationship between citizenship education, diversity and national identity.

John Annette^a with Hugh Starkey^b and Dina Kiwan^a

^a*Birkbeck College, University of London;* ^b*Institute of Education, University of London*

Acknowledgements

In writing this introduction I have been influenced by the co-editors of this issue and fellow directors of ICEDC, Dr Dina Kiwan and Dr Hugh Starkey. We are all grateful to Elaine Kitteringham for the administrative assistance that she has provided.

Notes on contributors

John Annette is Professor of Citizenship and Lifelong Learning, Dean, and Pro Vice Master at Birkbeck College, University of London. He is a co-chair of the International Centre for Education for Democratic Citizenship. He is an advisor to the Department for Children, Families and Schools and the Department for Communities and Local Government. His recent publications in this area include *Education for Democratic Citizenship* co-edited with Professor Andrew Lockyer and Sir Bernard Crick, 2004; and *Active Learning for Active Citizenship*, co-ed. with Marjorie Mayo, NIACE, 2008.

Hugh Starkey is Reader of Education and programme leader for the MA Citizenship and History Education by distance learning at the Institute of Education, University of London. He is Co-director of the International Centre for Education for Democratic Citizenship.

Dina Kiwan is an Academic Fellow/Lecturer in Citizenship Education at Birkbeck College, University of London, and Programme Director of the International Centre for Education for Democratic Citizenship (ICEDC), a joint international centre of Birkbeck College and Institute of Education, University of London. She is also Programme Director for the MSc Citizenship Studies.

References

- Ajegbo, K., D. Kiwan and S. Sharma. 2007. *Curriculum review: Diversity and citizenship*. London: DfES.
- Annette, J. 2004. Community politics and citizenship education. In *Education for democratic citizenship*, ed. A. John, B. Crick, and A. Lockyer. London: Ashgate
- Annette, J. Forthcoming. Deliberative democracy and education for democratic citizenship.
- Crick, B. 1998. *Education for citizenship and the teaching of democracy in schools: The final report of the Advisory Group on Citizenship*. London: Qualifications and Curriculum Authority.
- Crick, B. 2000. *In defence of politics*. London: Continuum.
- Gastil, J., and P. Levine. 2005. *The deliberative democracy handbook*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.
- Kiwan, D. 2008. *Education for inclusive citizenship*. London: Routledge.
- Lee, S. 2006. Gordon Brown and the 'British way'. *Political Quarterly* July/September: 369–78.
- Osler, A., and H. Starkey. 2005. *Changing citizenship: Democracy and inclusion in education*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.
- Singh, D. 2007. *Our shared future: Final report of the commission on integration and cohesion*. London: Commission on Integration and Cohesion.