

Educating for Democratic Citizenship in a Globalizing World: Some Recent Developments in England and China

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Abstract

This paper compares the development of education for democratic citizenship in two apparently diverse nations - China and England - at different moments in their social and economic histories, but both in the process of 're-identifying' themselves globally. It is suggested that, for all their differences, there is sufficient in common between the two nations in terms of how democratic citizenship is perceived and of what might constitute an appropriate education for democratic citizenship for useful international dialogues and exchanges to be initiated between scholars and practitioners in the two countries. The longer experience of a formal citizenship education curriculum in England, including its strengths and weaknesses, are likely to be of help to Chinese scholars, teachers and policymakers in this area, especially given the current piecemeal nature of the design and implementation of citizenship programmes in China; while the 'fresher' approach to developing citizenship education programmes by enthusiastic scholars, teachers and policymakers in China is likely to throw fresh light on how citizenship is understood and 'taught' in England.

Key words: Democratic citizenship; Recent developments; England and China

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INTRODUCTION

Both the citizenship education of a country and its wider evolution are increasingly and necessarily informed by - and intertwined with - perceived political, economic and cultural needs located within a global context. As such, they offer a response to the questions: What part do we wish to see ourselves playing in the wider (economic, political, and social) world? And: How do we wish to be seen - to ourselves and to others - *in* that wider world, that 'global village' (McLuhan, 1964)? They are equally informed, however, by a nation's past: its history, its culture, its laws, its sense of what is to be valued and what is worth hanging on to regardless of what other nations might feel or what internal changes might suggest. In this way, both our understandings of citizenship and our construction of programmes of education *for* citizenship may be said to develop within a 'conversation space' between the old and the new, the past and the future, conservation and change, the local, the national and the global. Another way of putting this is to say that citizenship and citizenship education are *contested* terms and practices (Carr & Hartnett, 1996; Demaine, 1996; Kiwan, 2005): That is to say, they are contingent and open to different interpretations. This is partly because both the reasons for and the nature of citizenship *education* are likely to be influenced by many different factors. These might include, to draw on the English example, a perceived need or desire for greater participation in democratic processes, a fear of weakening social cohesion, a concern regarding the behaviour of young people, worries about crime, or a sense of diminution or 'loss' - of community, of shared values, or of a 'national identity' (Diwan, 2002). As Gilbert (1996, p.43) has observed: 'Citizenship is a broad, complex and contested term, and programmes in education for citizenship vary with the notion of citizenship which underlies them.' (Carr & Hartnett, 1996, p.114; Demaine, 1996, p.18).

If notions of citizenship and citizenship education are contested *within* individual nations - as, from the English experience (see, for example, YCC, 2009), they clearly are - then it should come as no surprise that they are also contested *across* nations (Kerr *et al.*, 2001). This paper considers some of these variations between two apparently very different countries with differing histories and political systems and at different stages in the development of citizenship education. It also identifies *similarities* in the evolving citizenship education programmes of the two countries, in terms of some of the issues that citizenship education might seek to address and to the methods and models by which citizenship education might be taught. In doing this, it asks the theoretical - we might say, the political - question: "Towards which 'kind' of democracy does either nation appear to seek to move?" along with the more 'practical' (and differently political) questions: "What, if anything, can these two countries - England and the People's Republic of China - learn from one another in the field of citizenship education?"; "what might be gained through ongoing collaborations between the two countries in this field?"; and "what form might such collaborations take?"

1. CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION IN CHINA AND ENGLAND: SOME COMMON THEMES

In broad terms, whether in practice or in public policy rhetoric or in both, and regardless of the motivations behind them, we want to suggest that the basic concepts underpinning citizenship education in China and in England - at least within what Bernstein (2000) has called the 'official recontextualising field' (that is to say, the field of official policy and related documentation in which a broad concept such as 'citizenship' is 'inserted' in modified form into a new context such as the school curriculum) - might be described as reflecting and promoting respect: respect for the individual - for their physical, mental and social development and wellbeing; respect for others - for classmates and neighbours, for local communities, for one's nation and indeed for human beings in the wider world; and respect for the natural environment. The emphasis in each programme is not quite the same, nor, necessarily are the means to bring these ends about: in England, for example, there has been a greater emphasis on community involvement, on individual 'responsibility' and on the importance of taking part in national democratic processes and developing political literacy (QCA, 1998), while China has traditionally given greater emphasis to patriotism, to respect for individuals, and to moral education (People's Education Press, 2002). Furthermore, the concept of citizenship in the UK, a democratic monarchy, cannot, unlike the case in China, be said to have arisen from a

shared and pre-existing conceptualisation, understanding and practice of being 'a citizen.' Thus, in answer to its own question 'What do we mean by citizenship?' the recent Final Report of an in-depth and far-ranging study chaired by Professor Jonathan Tonge for the UK's *Youth Citizenship Commission* (YCC) (2009) found it necessary to supply the following part-definition: When we say *citizenship* we mean both a person's membership in a political community and the rights, privileges and responsibilities associated with that. For the YCC, citizenship includes the activities that individuals undertake for the benefit of their community. This includes activities like political engagement, public service, volunteering and participation.' The Report adds: People of all ages do not identify with the concept of citizenship. Citizenship learning and, more importantly, *experience* needs to be embedded from a young age. Real value needs to be placed on the pride associated with citizenship in order for people to feel a sense of identity, and ownership of their roles as citizens. Most often, citizenship is associated with "national identity" or limited to belonging in the most formal sense, such as being born a UK citizen or being granted citizenship, rather than being an active member of a community' (YCC Final Report: *Making the Connection: Building Youth Citizenship in the UK* June 2009). We will return to this emphasis on the importance of 'doing' and 'experiencing' citizenship later. For now, and to balance what we have suggested regarding potential and actual differences in understandings of citizenship and citizenship education between China and England, it is important to note those elements of citizenship education described in the YCC Report - for example, a broadening understanding of community; an expansion of citizenship beyond the confines of nationalism; active involvement in a range of sites; an emphasis on both rights and responsibilities or duties - that may be seen to be common across the two programmes. To go a little further, and to address the two programmes from the perspective of some of the major theory underpinning the nature of citizenship education globally, we might also agree that, by and large, both programmes draw to various degrees on the three basic models of citizenship and citizenship education defined (Annette, 2009) as 'civic republican' (with an emphasis on political literacy and engagement); 'liberal individualist' (with an emphasis on individual rights); and 'communitarian' (with an emphasis on moral and social responsibilities linked to action mainly within local communities). We might also suggest that both the English and the Chinese approaches can, to a greater or lesser degree, be seen as reflecting the three elements of citizenship identified many years ago in T. H. Marshall's work, very influential in the West (e.g., Marshall, 1950; Marshall & Bottomore, 1992), which promote citizenship within a clear principle of social justice and equality: That is to say, the 'civil', the 'political' and the 'social' - or, as reconfigured in the equally influential 'Crick

Report' (QCA, 1998), which has formed the basis of citizenship education programmes in England: a social/moral/'responsibility' component; a community-focused component; and a political literacy component - the latter two underpinned by an imperative for citizenship to be 'active', whether in terms of local voluntary work or in taking part in national democratic processes such as exercising one's right to vote. Of particular interest for both China and England in this conceptualization is the balance to be drawn within citizenship education between the development, discussion and exercising of *rights* and of *responsibilities*, and of the relationship and 'balance' between the two - a balance which may or may not be comparable across the two nations.

2. CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION IN CHINA

2.1 Globalisation and Democratisation

To begin our comparison with the relatively recent development of citizenship education as a specific curriculum area in China, it is important to remind ourselves that for nearly three decades ongoing reforms and the official 'opening up' of Chinese society has meant that China has undergone changes on a scale significantly greater than most other countries - socially, economically and in terms of how it perceives itself and is perceived by others as a nation within the wider world. The development of an evolving market economy, along with no less significant changes to democratic and legal processes, have resulted in a mixture of change and development of existing social structures but have also nurtured and shaped a new culture - a new philosophy, we might say - in relation to life and to the environment (Bi, 2003). One result of this national and global re-identification has been an increasing interest in and focus on the inevitably changing relationship between the individual and the state, including, centrally, questions concerning developments in democratic arrangements and activities, and questions concerning the desired extent of individual and collective rights: an interest that has, in turn, kick-started the early development of *education for citizenship* in Chinese schools (see below).

A sense of where this development is, where it has come from, and what its current emphases are can be traced in the following extract from the report of the 16th Congress of the Communist Party of China's Central Committee held in January 2005. China, the report said, should: 'improve its democratic system; ... increase the orderly participation of citizens in political affairs; ensure through education people's involvement in ... democratic elections, democratic decision-making, [and] democratic management ...; and [promote] extensive rights and freedoms, and respect for and protection of human rights.'

The subsequent report of the 17th Congress (October 2007) further argued the need for more effective protection

of people's rights, and to encourage involvement in an increasingly democratic system as one of the most important aspects in promoting the building of a 'socialist democratic system based on social harmony and stability'. The relationship between the cultivation of a civic society and the nation's economic and democratic progress and development, that is to say, has been given more and more attention in official policy and debate, and, as the fundamental expectations for individual development have become clearer, so too has the understanding that education provides the key site for developing what might be called a 'new citizenship' fit for an evolving democracy.

2.2 Overseas Influences

Current conceptualisations of citizenship and citizenship education in China may have arisen out of changes in the wider social and economic structures within China, but their development has been considerably influenced by concepts and models elsewhere in the world, and in particular in some Western countries where democratic-citizenship education programmes are more advanced in their development and practice. The rapid development of economic globalization, more frequent international cultural exchanges, and potential tensions between local, national and foreign culture, has encouraged a surge in citizenship education world-wide (see, for example, Torney-Purta *et al.*, 1999; Kerr, 2002), and as China's own ideas about citizenship and citizenship education have become increasingly linked to its continuing development as a democratic society, Chinese scholars and officials are more and more inclined to look abroad as they think about what citizenship education should look like, what role citizenship education should play, how education might develop citizens to meet the changing social needs of its population, and what role Chinese 'global citizens' might play both at home and in the wider world (Huang & Huang, 2009). Not surprisingly in light of this, citizenship education in China has become one of the most important elements in current education reforms. (When the Beijing Academy of Educational Science held its second *International Forum on Citizenship Education of Children and Youths* in October 2008, for example, it is significant that expert speakers from America, from Australia and particularly from England were as in evidence as those from China itself. The final keynote speech, indeed, given by one of the authors of this current paper, comprised an analysis and critique of current developments of citizenship education in England and their applicability to parallel developments in China and elsewhere in the world.)

2.3 Research and Emphasis

In parallel with *policy* development, early *scholarly* writing about citizenship education in China, starting in the 1990s, has also reflected this interest in what is

happening elsewhere in the world (Huang & Huang, *ibid.*), as a result of which the concept of citizenship education in China continues to be debated and has yet to take shape. In 2001, however, the CPC Central Committee issued an *Implementation Outline for Moral Construction*, marking the genesis of citizenship education in China as focusing on moral education - an aspect of formal education in China (as, for example, in the USA) already having a history and an educational status that it has not (formally) had in England. Encouraged and influenced by this initiative, research into citizenship education in China continues to accelerate and to grow (Huang & Huang, *ibid.*), linking an ongoing willingness to learn lessons from other countries with a recognition of the importance of a continuing adherence to the values and priorities embedded in its previous history of informal citizenship education residing within its moral education programmes. Those values and priorities, with clear similarities to (as well as some differences from) the three strands of citizenship education referred to already in the *Crick Report* (above), can be summarized as follows: Raising awareness of what it means to be 'a citizen' and of the importance of a shared citizen-ship - emphases here being on independence of personality, equality, and the cultivation of civic democracy in the modern world (Lam, 2007).

A related emphasis civil *rights* and *responsibilities* and the essential unity of these - a strand which takes as its premise a view that not to enjoy *and exercise* rights and responsibilities leads inevitably to unquestioning obedience and symbolic slavery, and which in practical terms leads to the suggestion of a 'five-levels' division in the citizenship education of the citizen as individual, within the family, in society, nationally, and globally (Liu, 2006).

An emphasis on the development of *civic skills*: That is, as in parallel developments in England, teaching young people how to actively participate both in wider social affairs and in the local community - here, the *skills* of citizenship, including communication, negotiation, presentation, participation in meetings, making contracts, association, invention and creation, being inevitably underpinned and accompanied by essential *knowledge* about such things as how meetings work, changes and developments in democratic processes, or social traditions and protocols in processes of negotiation.

3. THE STATUS OF CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION IN CHINA

China's interest in citizenship *within* education, as well as its *research* into citizenship education, precedes its development of citizenship education programmes as such. The status of citizenship education as a subject in its own right has, however, been raised through a number of

recent events during the course of which people have been impelled to act together and, in particular, to offer services voluntarily in ways that may be said to demonstrate an ideal of *active* citizenship. Most prominent and well-known among these are the hosting of the Olympic Games in Beijing in 2008, individual and collective responses to the Wenchuan earthquake disaster in the same year, and the hosting of the World Expo Exhibition in Shanghai and the Asian Games in Guangzhou, both in 2010. At the same time as these high-profile public events, citizenship education programmes and activities have also been taking place in primary and secondary schools throughout China, albeit in a somewhat scattered, fragmentary and idiosyncratic way with little formal advice on such matters as how much time to devote specifically to citizenship education, curriculum content, scope, process, assessment and results (Zhang, 2009). There is also a dearth of research into the nature and effectiveness of such initiatives. However, recent contributions to Chinese journals, magazines and websites throw into focus a number of issues on which we might draw tentative conclusions in relation to curricular and pedagogical developments as well as to future research needs. These are summarised below under the headings attitudes toward citizenship education in schools; the status of citizenship education in schools; the curriculum and the textbook.

3.1 Attitudes Toward Citizenship Education in Chinese Schools

The piecemeal nature of citizenship education developments in Chinese schools, allied to the current lack of coherent national or regional policies and materials, inevitably means that, from the perspective of planning, organization, leadership and systems, citizenship education in China is still relatively weak. Any development activity in China's schools normally follows the same prescribed steps: first, a report to the local or sometimes national authority; then, once approval is obtained, implementation of the initiative. Education for citizenship, however, is still at the trial stage, as a consequence of which it is not always conducted with the same degree of seriousness or care as would be the case with a curriculum reform or quality education initiative instigated by the Ministry of Education and implemented and monitored by local education authorities. Because of this, many schools perceive citizenship education as optional and, in the absence of an overall rationale, many school leaders fail also to see the connection between citizenship education and the wider development of the school itself. Not surprisingly, perhaps, online surveys of citizenship education in 81 schools published by Jinxia Liang on April 2nd, 2010, showed that in only 18 (c.22%) of these schools did education for citizenship have a substantial presence, while in the remaining 63 it was paid very little attention at all.

3.2 The Status of Citizenship Education in Schools

In response to the situation outlined above, the formal introduction and development of citizenship education in Chinese schools can be envisaged as proceeding on two fronts: first, the establishment of a formal curriculum; second, guidance on encouraging and enabling students to participate in civic activities. Liang's recent study (ibid.) has revealed that of the 81 schools surveyed only 56 (around 69%) across the Eastern, Western and Central regions of China had citizenship education-related courses in place, mainly focusing on civic awareness, civic participation, civil rights and responsibilities, major national political and economic issues and events, and community involvement. In relation to enabling and motivating student *activity*, what little evidence there is indicates that this has tended to be initiated by or revolve around individual school-based or education authority-based projects or projects initiated by individual research scholars or (in a few cases) through national or international initiatives that are relatively local in implementation. An example of this latter kind of initiative is the citizenship education cooperation project launched in 2005 as a joint enterprise by the Chinese Ministry of Education and the US Centre for Citizenship Education, in which a number of schools in Beijing, Shanghai, Jiangsu and Yunnan provinces participated. This project encouraged schools and participating students to engage in practical activities within local communities within a context of more focused citizenship education in the classroom. By and large, however, the pressures on teachers' time, including their time to coordinate and organize activities in ways that do not compromise students' safety, as well as pressures of time on students and communities themselves, have made it difficult for such programmes to succeed. An additional problem, within an abiding culture in which academic work and achievement continue to be more highly regarded than subjects aimed more specifically at personal growth, is that parents have often been reluctant to support such activity, feeling, despite evidence to the contrary (Dong, 2010), that it takes time away from academic homework.

3.3 The Curriculum and the Textbook

In the past, and in the absence of a formal curriculum for citizenship education supported by textbooks and other teaching materials, citizenship education was taught in most Chinese schools in the nine-year compulsory stages of education via other subjects: most notably, what roughly translates as Moral Character and Life Studies, Moral and Social Studies, and History and Society. The People's Education Press, between June 2002 and December 2003, published a range of 'citizenship-related' related course materials under these headings. In December 2005, however, the Peking University Press published *The New Citizenship Education Reader*, which

for the first time provided primary and secondary school students and their teachers with a clear sense of what citizenship education might mean. While no formal, centrally mandated curriculum was produced at this time, schools were encouraged to devote some of the 16 hours per week available to them for school-based curriculum development outside the formal curriculum to citizenship education, and in September 2006 dozens of schools in several provinces, including Jiangsu, Shandong, Hunan, Heilongjiang and Shanxi, were selected to trial the *New Citizenship Education Reader* as a key part of their school-based teaching materials.

The *New Citizenship Education Reader* covers both civic and moral matters, including civic values, civic knowledge and civic participation skills in four areas of content⁷: civic *virtue*, including love, tolerance, gratitude, friendship, manners, integrity, responsibility, dignity and cooperation; civic *values*, including freedom, equality, human rights, democracy, the rule of law, justice, peace, patriotism, the pursuit of truth, living in harmony with nature; civic *knowledge*, including knowledge related to the state and government, to democracy, to the communist party system, justice, social and public life, individual rights and responsibilities; and civic *skills* linked to active participation in public life, including communication skills, presentation and discussion skills, organizing activities, to participating in elections, handling disputes, protecting one's interests, and critical readership of the mass media. These themes and topics are returned to and explored in a progressively complex and sophisticated way as students move through school from elementary to middle to high school, with the aim of disseminating civic knowledge, fostering civic awareness, and promoting civil rights and responsibilities appropriate to the development of informed citizens for the 21st century.

3.4 The Ideal of Citizenship Education in China

In order better to understand the current situation regarding citizenship education in China, including its motivation and underpinning rationale, it is necessary, as in any country, and as has already been suggested, to understand the wider context of Chinese development, evolution and change as a nation state. China, as has been widely acknowledged (Wei, 2001) is currently experiencing a period of significant social transition as it continues to nurture a mature market economy which inevitably impacts on its relationship with the wider world but which also has striking implications for the governance of its individual citizens and communities and their relationships with the State: in particular, introducing a process of giving individuals and communities more say over how their lives are governed within a system of central and local regulation rather than of central control (Zhou, 2007). For individuals not used to such a situation, citizenship education takes on particular significance, both reasserting existing values within a changing context

and providing citizens with the new skills and knowledge required to take a full, active, personally and collectively productive role *in* that changing context. Linked to the development of a new *democracy* in China, we might argue that the principal aims of citizenship education are to foster individual responsibility, freedom, self-regulation, self-discipline and self-improvement at the same time as ensuring collectively a prosperous, happy and socially just China - a project which, we might also suggest, will only be successful through the collaborative will of central government, of educators and of local communities.

4. CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION IN ENGLAND

As will be immediately clear to English readers, the development and practice of citizenship education in England has much in common with that in China, though with different emphases and against a rather different political and social background, within the context of some key differences of rationale. One particularly significant fact concerning Citizenship Education in England is that, at the time of writing this article, it is under threat by a new central government of being removed as a compulsory curriculum subject from schools, only a few years since its much-heralded introduction by the previous government following a lengthy and costly consultation and development process and the equally time consuming and costly production of support materials. There is no space here to go into the reasons for such a policy change; however, it is perhaps important to note that there has been a strong lobby in central government to 'replace' citizenship education with community volunteering (or even compulsory community service) for sixteen-year-olds - a move which may be seen to indicate a sceptical attitude toward many of those aspects of citizenship education described above, including knowledge of political and economic systems ('political literacy'), moral development, active engagement in civic life (the possibly false assumption being that local community involvement will inevitably result in wider political involvement), and the global-environmental aspects of citizenship.

That said, it seems clear that many schools - in particular those that have sought to encourage students to pursue citizenship education beyond what is mandatory (see below, in *The practice of citizenship education in schools*) - will continue to offer and to develop citizenship education in some form regardless of official policy, and that most of the themes and activities identified by Chinese scholars and educationists will continue to be reflected in corresponding citizenship education programmes in England. These include, in no particular order of importance: informed participation in civic life

locally, nationally and perhaps globally; an understanding of individual rights and responsibilities, leading to responsible action; an understanding of and active involvement in local communities; an understanding of nation, nationhood and internationalism; issues of identity - personal and 'national'; tolerance and respect for others - especially significant, perhaps, in an increasingly multicultural environment; environmental education.

England does not, perhaps, have quite the same experience of shared values or commonly understood 'virtues' as China (though some may question this), and its history and current position in the world might suggest a reason for some of the differences in emphasis between the two developing programmes. Like China, the UK is currently in a situation of what might be called 'global repositioning' (though for different reasons), and is consequently involved in a reflexive project of forging a new sense of self or 'identity' both nationally, in relation to the wider world, and individually, in relation to communities and neighbours. As has already been suggested, the development of any national citizenship education programme cannot be divorced from that nation's past or its wider present, and this is no less true of the UK than of China. In this regard, the citizenship education curriculum of England is inevitably affected by a quite rapid change in the UK from being a colonial power to an increasingly multicultural, multiracial nation state - but it is also, arguably, affected by a 'rightward' shift in its neoliberal policy and practice, in that it continues to witness a systematic reduction of the role and influence of the state (though not necessarily of central government) in public affairs, along with a concomitant support for individual and community autonomy, private business and the privatisation of previously state-run services (Ball, 2004, 2009; Molnar, 2005). What follows is a summary of the current state of development and practice of citizenship education in England, written with specifically in mind the possibility of making comparisons with parallel developments in China.

4.1 A Brief History

Though the introduction of the citizenship education curriculum is relatively new in England, both the concept of citizenship (one concept, at any rate) and the suggestion that it might have a place in formal education are by no means new and can be traced back, indeed, to the earliest years of public education and before (see, for example, Joseph Priestly's *Essay on a Course of Liberal Education for Civil and Active Life*, 1765, which argued for the formal teaching of the national constitution, laws and knowledge about trade) and seen in several discussion documents such as the NCC Report of 1990 which identified five cross curricular themes of economic and industrial understanding; careers education and guidance; health education; environmental education; and education for citizenship. It could also be argued (Moore, 2002)

that some aspects of what is currently called education for citizenship have always been present in our schools, through the so-called 'hidden curriculum', relating to manners and conduct, through Personal, Health and Social Education, and through subjects like English and (in recent years) history, in which students have opportunities to discuss moral and social issues. It is only in the early years of this century, however, that Citizenship Education has appeared on the English school curriculum as a discrete curriculum subject with a formal and national curriculum content.

The principal architects of this new curriculum were David Blunkett, who was the Education Secretary at the time, and his ex-university tutor Sir Bernard Crick, who shared not only a personal history but a common vision and a concern that too many people - in particular, too many young people - appeared either uninterested in or reluctant to take part in the democratic processes that others in the past had fought so hard to bring about (Kiwani, 2002). Having brought together a committee of experts to discuss the desirability of responding to this perceived 'crisis in democracy' in 1997, a report of its findings - popularly known as 'The Crick Report' - was published in 1998, a new National Curriculum for Citizenship Education was published in 2000, and by 2002 Citizenship Education had become a statutory subject in the English National Curriculum. Though Blunkett and Crick had been initially and perhaps mainly driven by a desire to expand informed participation in democracy and civic life through the development and promotion in schools of 'political literacy' (op.cit.), Kiwani (ibid.) records that members of the Crick Committee revealed additional reasons for wanting to introduce citizenship education into the National Curriculum, including, most conspicuously: a feeling that people - in particular young people and more particularly young people of recent immigrant backgrounds - had lost a sense of 'national identity', threatening 'social cohesion'; a view that traditional morals and values were under threat and that young people showed a lack of respect to erstwhile authorities (typically, family, church, teachers); and a sense of 'loss of community', with individuals leading lives that were increasingly isolated or restricted to small groups of work colleagues, family and friends (Kiwani, ibid.). What the Crick Report recommended, and what formed the basis of the new citizenship curriculum, consequently comprised three broad elements based on Marshall's (1950) identification of the 'civil', the 'political' and the 'social', re-cast in the new curriculum as social/moral; community-focused; and political - with, as indicated earlier, a desire for citizenship education to be both theoretical and *active* (QCA, 1998, p.13). (The Report had also recommended that Citizenship Education should be compulsory for secondary-school students, and that it should be taught as a separate subject rather than as a cross-curricular theme). The curriculum devised has been followed by all English

secondary public schools and many private schools since 2002 to the present day. An indication of its content and purposes is given below.

4.2 The Current Curriculum

Though currently under threat, the underpinning rationale and requirements of the Citizenship Education curriculum for English school students continues to be set out in some detail in the *National Curriculum Order for Key stages 3 and 4* (that is to say, the 11-14 and 14-16 age groups in English secondary schools). The Order for both Key Stages tells us that: 'Education for citizenship equips young people with the *knowledge, skills and understanding to play an effective role in public life*. Citizenship encourages them to take an interest in *topical and controversial issues* and to *engage in discussion and debate*. Pupils learn about their *rights, responsibilities, duties and freedoms* and about *laws, justice and democracy*. They learn to *take part in decision-making and different forms of action*. They play an *active role in the life of their schools, neighbourhoods, communities and wider society as active and global citizens*.' (DfEE/QCA, 1999)

The phrases we have highlighted encapsulate almost the entire range of suggestions found in the original Crick Report (op.cit.) on which the curriculum is based: it combines the acquisition of knowledge of the country's democratic systems with the discussion and debate of controversial and topical issues, underpinned by a pedagogy that is part didactic, part student-centred; it teaches students about rights as well as responsibilities but also encourages and provides opportunities for the exercise of those rights and responsibilities through local community involvement as well as through taking part in national processes such as informed voting at elections; and it has a global (including, by implication, environmental) aspect in addition to a national one. More than that, it places a strong emphasis on what we might call moral development: including aspects of respect, tolerance, friendship and so forth - all with a clear acknowledgement of the changing nature of British society including its increasingly multi-ethnic, multi-faith makeup. As the Order continues:

'Citizenship encourages respect for different national, religious and ethnic identities. It equips pupils to engage critically with and explore diverse ideas, beliefs, cultures and identities and the values we share as citizens in the UK. Pupils begin to understand how society has changed and is changing in the UK, Europe and the wider world.

Citizenship addresses issues relating to social justice, human rights, community cohesion and global interdependence, and encourages pupils to challenge injustice, inequalities and discrimination. It helps young people to develop their critical skills, consider a wide range of political, social, ethical and moral problems, and explore opinions and ideas other than their own. They

evaluate information, make informed judgments and reflect on the consequences of their actions now and in the future. They learn to argue a case on behalf of others as well as themselves and speak out on issues of concern.

Citizenship equips pupils with the knowledge and skills needed for effective and democratic participation. It helps pupils to become informed, critical, active citizens who have the confidence and conviction to work collaboratively, take action and try to make a difference in their communities and the wider world.' (ibid.)

It is worth noting that, although the call to 'make a difference' is itself open to interpretation and boundary-setting, its inclusion does offer schools, teachers and their students an opportunity to explore forms of active citizenship that go beyond such things as voting in elections and community or school volunteering, to include what Isin (2008), Little (2010) and others have called 'activist' citizenship; that is to say, citizenship that is not confined to reproduction or to operating only within systems as they currently exist and are typically responded to, but that can embrace a notion of societal *evolution* in which citizens seek to modify or replace some of those systems through argument and through various forms of legal politically-motivated action that may go beyond simply casting votes in elections.

4.3 The Practice of Citizenship Education in Schools

Despite a detailed and compulsory national curriculum for citizenship education in English schools, along with an abundance of support materials, evidence suggests that citizenship education across England is extremely variable - including in terms of the seriousness in which it is approached by teachers and students (see, for example, the YCC Report referred to above; also Whitty *et al.*, 2007; Whitty & Wisby, 2005; Moore, 2002; Kerr/nfer n/d). Thus, while some schools have fully functional school councils in which student inputs are genuinely heeded and responded to, have well-developed community links, and may insist on all students taking Citizenship as one of their required GCSE examination subjects at age 16, others, (Whitty & Wisby, *ibid.*, Moore, *ibid.*) have very 'tokenistic' school councils, forge community links responsively rather than proactively, and make it very clear to students that for all its status as a compulsory subject, citizenship education has the status of a non-examination, enrichment subject rather than a central plank in their overall education. Even in schools that have taken citizenship education seriously, key issues often remain unsolved or unaddressed: for example, although some students may have experience of sitting on a school council, they are likely to make up an extremely small percentage of the student population and are not necessarily representatives of a wide range of student opinion (Moore, *ibid.*, Whitty & Wisby, *ibid.*). Related to this, citizenship education continues in many schools to

have a very 'taught', academic nature offering students little or no opportunity to 'experience' citizenship as (for example) recommended in the YCC Report (op.cit.).

Against this background, there are genuine concerns about the future of citizenship education in England - particularly given the current UK government's apparent lack of enthusiasm for the subject and its support for a narrower, communitarian approach involving volunteering. These concerns suggest a number of challenges for the future of citizenship education in England that might include, though not exclusively, the following: *Some issues and imperatives (England)*

- *To continue to highlight the importance of respect for diversity education, with the aim of developing a more harmonious, more inclusive society.*

This continues to be a challenge for citizenship education in England and elsewhere in the UK - not least in terms of its attempts to square the idea of a common 'national' identity with a respect for what might be called 'local' identities, and in terms of evolving (or non-evolving) conceptualisations of identity, community and indeed 'nation' itself. This issue has been thrown into sharper relief recently by the current British Prime Minister's suggestion - not one the authors would wish to support - that 'multiculturalism [in the UK] has failed.'

- *To continue to critically debate within citizenship education and elsewhere what we understand by the terms and concepts 'identity', 'community' and 'citizenship'.*

Given that a national curriculum for citizenship education is already in place in England, this might seem a curious suggestion. However, it is very evident from political debates (much less so in classroom materials) that a fundamental disagreement continues to exist as to whether 'identity' is something fixed, 'essential', with a central unchanging 'core', or whether it is flexible, shifting, able to coexist happily, both interculturally and intraculturally, with other 'identities'. This becomes a particularly important issue when discussions are held about multiculturalism (see above) and about the prospect of nurturing a 'national identity'. At the core of multiculturalism is a belief that, although we may identify certain core values, different cultures, different 'identities' can coexist and can also enrich one another. This clearly is not a view held by people who believe that a 'core Britishness' has been in some way threatened or altered by citizens who have arrived in the country (or whose parents have arrived in the country) from overseas. The multicultural position is summed up neatly in the Crick Report: 'a main aim for the whole community should be to find or restore a sense of common citizenship, including a *national identity that is secure enough to find a place for the plurality of nations, cultures, ethnic identities and religions long found in the United Kingdom. [...] Citizenship education creates common ground between different ethnic and religious identities.*'

The concept of community, referenced in the above

quote, also remains open to interpretation and debate, both within and beyond citizenship studies. Traditionally, for example, communities in the UK have tended to be defined geographically, referring to groups of people living together in 'neighbourhoods'. Although this kind of community is frequently and nostalgically referenced in the oratory of politicians and some elements within the mass media in England, many of us now understand community more in terms of *acting together* and having things in common, than of occupying the same physical space, and are more inclined to understand our interactions with others in terms of 'networking' - a term which may have, for many, unfortunate connotations, but which has become an increasing aspect of 'the way we are' as digital technologies have enabled conversations to be had instantly and at virtually at any time of the day or night with other people bound by common interests rather than by geographical 'accident.' We would argue that this changed fact of life itself cries out for citizenship education to help young people to operate as happy, safe and effective citizens not just of the physical world but of the virtual world too.

- *To ensure an appropriate balance between elements of citizenship education that might be perceived as taught or as academic, and elements which may be perceived as practical - including providing all students with genuine opportunities for active democratic participation in school decision-making.*

As has been suggested above, there is an ongoing and as yet unresolved debate in England concerning the extent to which students need to be 'taught about' citizenship and the extent to which they should be able to experience it. It could be argued in relation to political literacy and the possible 'end products' of political literacy (for example, greater involvement in democratic processes at local and national levels), that knowing about systems will not in itself 'activate' students if their early experiences of democracy - particularly in the school setting - merely confirm a view that their voices will be marginalised or ignored, that they cannot 'make a difference', or that the word democracy itself has very little meaning. This is partly addressed by creating more democratic schools and classrooms in which students feel that their opinions are genuinely listened to (for examples of this, see Apple & Beane, 1999) - although this evidently needs to be a cross curricular initiative in which inclusive pedagogies are taken on board by all teachers in all subject areas. However, there is a wider issue for us to address too, which may prove rather more difficult. This is the commonly held view among young people that there is little point in being politically active either nationally or globally, since the evidence is that their actions will achieve nothing in the face of far greater forces at work in the world-beyond-their-control. As Osler and Starkey have put this:

'Although trends in world trade, travel and

communications have brought us closer together than ever before, the crisis in democracy rests on a feeling among ordinary people that although they can watch what is going on in the world they are unable to change it. Through television or through the internet, they can watch world events evolve, but they feel powerless to influence them' (Osler & Starkey, 2005, p. 5).

A continuing challenge for citizenship education is to convince young people that they *can* make a difference - particularly if working together in 'communities' of citizens - and that there are areas and ways in which perhaps they *should* make a difference. This, we suggest, might include broadening the scope of validated social action beyond doing 'good work' in local communities and imparting to young people a sense of responsibility for helping to improve society more widely and shape a better future world.

- *Ensure through appropriate links with local communities that citizenship and citizenship education are not seen by young people as simply school-based matters but as something that transcends formal education.*

This need for 'joined up' thinking and practice may be more of an issue for English than for Chinese schools, communities and policy makers. Despite the isolated successes of some projects, (Kerr/nfer n/d), the UK does not have a good experience of forging strong links between schools and local communities or even between schools and parents - and there seems little point in promoting citizenship values and practices in school if these run counter to what is happening in the wider society. For many years, for example, schools in England have actively sought to oppose racism and other forms of prejudice in their students; however these are too often counteracted by equally strong views experienced on a more regular basis within families and communities (Kerr/nfer, n/d), and it could be argued that the efforts put into combating prejudice and intolerance within schools have not been matched by a similar, well-resourced drive 'outside' school.

- *Broaden students' horizons so that their sense of citizenship takes on a truly international or 'global' perspective - balancing national concerns, needs and issues with global ones not least through educating students to understand the relationship between poverty and wealth and to push a little further the current curriculum's imperative for pupils to 'reflect on the consequences of their actions both now and in the future' (op.cit.).*

As Ahmad has recently argued (2010, p.107):

'The world has reached a unique epoch of mutual interdependency, in which states can no longer expect that the effects of their actions in some distant part of the world, or amongst the global community, will not at some level come back to affect them; and where regional instability can lead to global insecurity. To embrace the shift towards a more integrated globalised world in a

progressive fashion, a new generation of global citizens is needed, who will act with, and seek to change society through, a sense of global moral responsibility.’

(See also Dervis, 2010; Rischard, 2010).

Pertinent and important as such observations are, we might suggest that rather than politicians seeking to sort out the world’s problems on their own, a more appropriate approach - prevention rather than cure? – is via changes in the education of school-students around the globe, with a greater emphasis not simply on being ‘responsible’ and ‘caring’ in local and national contexts but in the much wider arena too, as human beings and global citizens. It might not be too far-fetched to suggest that such an education might help prevent possible ‘solutions’ to perceived problems being reduced to measures that have more to do with moral panic and knee-jerk short-termism than a genuine desire to help fashion a better, safer, more socially just world.

5. CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION IN CHINA AND THE UK: SOME MODEST PROPOSALS

A point was made at the start of this paper that citizenship education in England and in China are at different stages in their development and are born out of very different histories.

With this in mind, it would be overly ambitious (and not necessarily feasible or desirable) to suggest anything like a common citizenship agenda and teaching programme across the two countries. We want to suggest, however, within the spirit of global citizenship promoted in this paper, a number of possible ways - we have called them ‘modest proposals’, leaving them deliberately undeveloped for others to consider and flesh out - in which our two nations might either collaborate in our continuing efforts to develop and refine robust citizenship education programmes, or take advice from one another on matters such as pedagogical approaches, the development of curriculum materials, how we conceive citizenship in terms of its scope, and - perhaps most crucially of all - whether we understand citizenship education as being mainly about reproducing the *status quo* or mainly about encouraging social evolution, development and change, or about both of these things: decisions which, in fact, sum up how we view our young people and how much trust we are prepared to give them in terms of securing our local, national and global futures. We present these as two broad areas of potential mutual support and collaboration.

5.1 The Ongoing Exchange of Information on Citizenship Education

One of the key differences in citizenship education between China and England is precisely that in England there is already an established curriculum for citizenship

education with clear aims, objectives and required content but also allowing for some degree of teacher autonomy, while in China there is as yet no formal, universal citizenship education curriculum.

From China’s point of view, there is clearly much to be learned from a study of the way in which citizenship education has developed in English schools, including its successes and failures (one of which [Kerr, *ibid.*] is a reluctance on the part of some schools and many students to take it seriously), its efforts to balance political, moral and communitarian elements within the same programme, its endeavour to include the local, the national and the global aspects of citizenship, the curriculum materials produced to support the programme, and evolving modes of assessment (still a matter of some debate in the England - for how does one assess ‘success’ in citizenship, let alone give it a grade?) With this in mind, Chinese policy-makers and school principals might consider the potential value of organising face-to-face or online discussions and debates with some of those teachers and principals in England whose schools have taken citizenship education most seriously and found ways to ‘tailor’ the mandated curriculum to their own students’ interests and needs. For English teachers, scholars and policy makers, meanwhile, the study of the developing citizenship education programme as it rolls out across China offers a fresh lens on the subject of citizenship, encouraging us to revisit some of our own abiding questions and concerns through eyes that might discern alternative possibilities. To what extent will the Chinese citizenship curriculum differ from the English one? How far do historical, social, economic and cultural differences necessitate such difference? Are there absences in the English curriculum that can be detected in the Chinese one - or emphases that might be shifted? And what possibilities might there be for collaborations that enhance the global dimensions of citizenship, perhaps through the development of shared support materials, exchange visits, or web-based discussion sites?

5.2 The Specific Sharing and Discussion of Problems and Difficulties, in Order to Develop the Theory and Practice of Citizenship Education

Despite the existence of some international studies of citizenship education (e.g., Kerr *et al.*, 2001) most published theory on the subject is either at a high level of abstraction or relates very specifically to the developments in one country. The desirability of scholars from different countries coming together is so self-evident as to demand little justification: Those same potential benefits to the practical implementation of programmes outlined above should certainly apply to the development of *theory* - both to underpin such developments and to continue to critique and evaluate them. China and England are particularly rich in scholarly work on the topic, and indeed there have already been several academic collaborations between the

two nations: for example, the BAES conferences referred to above, and the recent International Conference on *Education for Democratic Citizenship in a Globalising World* co-organised by Beijing Normal University and the Institute of Education University of London in November 2010.

This latter conference indicates a particular way forward for ongoing discussions between Chinese and English academics, teachers and policy makers that, while taking citizenship education as a starting-point, has the potential to move far further, in exploring possibilities for agreement in facing global challenges and opportunities against a background of differing cultures, needs, economies, constraints, contradictions and individual national challenges. If two heads are better than one when it comes to problem-solving, how much might be achieved in advancing social theory via the intellectual endeavours of two different nations working together within a globalising world which, by bringing us closer together economically and in terms of interpersonal communications, and through the proliferation of programmes which have seen increasing numbers of English students and academics studying in Chinese universities and vice versa, renders such activity itself far more possible than it has been in the past.

NOTES

1) Annette (2009) suggests that 'it could be argued that the conception of citizenship underlying UK lifelong learning for citizenship should be a civic republican one which emphasizes democratic political participation', this reflecting the views of the key initiators and drivers of citizenship education in UK schools, Sir Bernard Crick and David Blunkett.'

2) England, and the UK generally, has of course also undergone considerable changes of its own during the past fifty years, as it has shifted from being a colonial power to a more multicultural nation – changes which have affected both its relationship to the wider world and its domestic policies. Inevitably, these changes have impacted its conceptualisations of citizenship and citizenship education, just as China's development from a 'closed' to 'global' nation have impacted its.

3) As we shall see when we consider parallel developments in the UK, this view of the relationship between education and society is not necessarily a universal one, however obvious it may appear.

4) This broad element of citizenship education focuses on the development of social consciousness, based on a belief that through citizenship education students develop consciousness of citizenship, an awareness of civil rights, a sense of responsibility and obligation, legal understandings connected to rights, and moral awareness (Lam, 2007). Not simply an understanding of one's part in a functioning society, but also one's personal sense and understanding of identity are considered to be

prerequisites for developing those other understandings and skills required of citizens, on the basis that if there is no understanding of individual identity there can be no such concepts as society or country. As a result, citizenship education in China is likely to have a greater emphasis on self-understanding than perhaps in some other countries, where the current parallel emphasis might be more on understanding others and on individual *action*.

5) See, by way of comparison and contrast, in relation to the UK's development of citizenship education, Prime Minister Tony Blair's assertion in 1999 that 'The basis of this modern civic society is an ethic of mutual responsibility or duty. It is something for something. A society where we play by the rules. You only take out of it what you put in. That's the bargain.'

6) Interestingly, Citizenship Education in the UK is also reported as being very uneven in quality and in terms of the enthusiasm with which it is practised by headteachers and classroom teachers and experienced by students (see nfer, n/d).

7) See for comparison of structure, including the identification of themes, skills and areas of study developed through 'key stages' in schooling, see the National Curriculum Order for Citizenship Education for England and Wales. The citizenship curriculum for England, for example, comprises the 'key concepts' of democracy and justice; rights and responsibilities; identity and diversity, along with 'key [processes]' (critical thinking and enquiry; advocacy and representation; 'taking informed and responsible action'.

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