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Conceptualising the changing nature of New Labour's Education Policy

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Background

When conceptualising the changing nature of recent New Labour education policy, ideas concerning integration and citizenship are important to increase our understandings in how notions of childhood, cultural diversity and special needs, amongst others, have evolved over the last decade. The concept of integration is defined by Modood (2007: 48) as, '... processes of social interaction are seen as two way ... where immigrants and ethnic minorities are required to do something; so the latter cannot be blamed for failing (or not trying) to integrate.' This paper will consider how the integrationist 'two-way' relationship is defined and controlled with the education system. The comparison with both a melting pot, one-way social interaction when individuals' change and assimilate their minority identity into the majority culture; and, a more multicultural pluralist approach which draws upon diversity and the need to celebrate diversity of all communities (Parekh, 2008; Banks, 2009) will be attempted.. Citizenship is defined by Pattie et al (2004: 22) as '... a set of norms, values and practices designed to solve collective problems which involve the recognition by individuals that they have the rights and obligations to each other if they wish to solve such problems.' The concept of citizenship education in England and Wales has developed with the statutory introduction of the subject at Key Stages 3 and 4 since 2002 (Osler, 2009; QCDA, 2010). This paper will examine the evolution of citizenship education, with for example the introduction of citizenship as an A / S level. But how far can a non-statutory and statutory citizenship curriculum continue to evolve when considering issues relating to diversity, multiculturalism and human rights (Race, 2008a; 2008b; 2009)?

Research Questions

This paper therefore attempts to address the above questions and issues by applying integration and citizenship to education policy. I will reflect on and examine several documents relating to New Labour's Education policy. In this regard the Department for Education and Skills (DfES: 2004) response to Every Child Matters (Home Office - HO, 2003) will be examined and compared with the Ajebo Report (DfES, 2007) and Lamb Inquiry (Department for Children, Schools and Families - DCSF, 2009). Every Child Matters (HO: 2003) and the education department's response (DfES, 2004) underlined the notion of 'integration and accountability'. Integration, in this policy context, meant joined up government of social services, including teachers, governors and schools, which was hardly new and accountability meant that social actors e.g. parents, who are involved in this relationship would be offered more support in dealing with child issues. The Ajebo Report (DfES, 2007) called for more citizenship and a more culturally diverse focus within schools and the curriculum. The issue of diversity was raised and the need to recognise and address social relations relating to the continuing and fluid nature of education and society was underlined. Parents again were encouraged to take a more active role in their children's education. The Lamb Inquiry (DCSF, 2009) into Special Education and Parental Confidence highlighted the continued important of special educational needs but recommended parents take more responsibility with their children's education.

Methods

To provide another evidence base to address the issues addressed in this paper, empirical data from a recent education research project on multiculturalism and education which focused on respondent views on citizenship and integration. (Race; forthcoming). Data will be analysed into how respondents viewed current citizenship practice in both schools and universities. Teacher trainers and trainees were interviewed to analyse their views on citizenship within schools. The author's fellowship at CRUCIBLE (Centre for Citizenship, Human Rights and Social Justice) also allowed access to colleagues and students who delivered and received a first year undergraduate module at Roehampton University, Questioning Citizenship. The methodological combination of respondent

views focused partially on integration and citizenship. Respondents highlighted the potential of citizenship both in secondary and higher education but also talked about what was and what was not taught. It was almost totally argued that the scope for issues relating to cultural diversity and multiculturalism should be increased. Interestingly, it was also argued that teacher training should expose teacher trainees to more special needs and diversity issues (Race, forthcoming).

Frame

The conceptual and education policy engagement with integration and citizenship highlights how more control has hypothetically been given to parents and children over education and takes education debates away from teachers and schools (DCSF, 2009). This highlights a general trend in education policy which began with the DfES (2004) response to Every Child Matters (HO: 2003). It is therefore important to highlight a politics of recognition and misrecognition (Race, 2010) when applying these concepts to both social and education policy. What I mean by this is that we need to recognise this general trend in policy to a more controlled 'two-way' integrationist influence within education. The state is encouraging parents to intervene more in children's education. Can all parents actually do this? It would seem that the concept of citizenship offers majority and minority communities more scope for community cohesion. Is this a reality from an educational perspective?

Research findings

As well as empirical evidence, the contemporary citizenship curriculum (QCDA, 2010) will also be analysed to see the possibility of greater culturally diverse and multicultural possibilities within secondary schools in England and Wales. This is tempered with respondent evidence of an integrationist reality of a national curriculum which still focuses on the majority rather than all communities (Eade et al, 2008). A universal rather than exclusive focus is vital when considering national and global evidence concerning cultural diversity (Cantle, 2008; UNESCO, 2009). In light of the recent General Election, this is a timely conceptual and methodological attempt to examine the legacy of the previous Government's education policy. Recent education policy since the election will also be touched upon to see whether the conceptual and policy legacy will continue or change in light of ideas, raised in this paper, relating to the concepts of integration and citizenship.