

Local Citizenship in the Global Era: Educating for Community Participation and Change, Sally Findlow, Abingdon, Routledge, 2017, xiv + 161 p., £x, ISBN: 978-1-138-85975-3 (hbk)

What clothes should the emperor be given to wear to avert suspicion that there are new clothes after all? This, in a nutshell, is the issue Findlow seeks to tackle in *Local Citizenship in the Global Era: Educating for Community Participation and Change* with reference to citizenship education in England. As the opening pages suggest, the list of problems besetting citizenship education is long and varied. Policy-wise, there is confusion as to the scope and purpose of citizenship education in the UK: it is not clear if the aim is to educate young people *about* or *for* citizenship. Evidently, these two facets are intimately related: one can only exercise the responsibilities that come with citizenship when one is sufficiently knowledgeable about its key aspects. However, enabling young people to participate in the polity takes much more than just teaching them about the institutions or the electoral system. The criticism articulated in this book is that policies around citizenship education are muddled and confused, but also half-hearted in their implementation, and this in spite of efforts by, for example, the Crick Commission and the Parekh Commission to define its content and objectives. In practice, it seems, the subject is all too often taught by teachers who do not have the knowledge, the confidence and the institutional support to promote learning in this area.

Citizenship education is nevertheless expected to deliver some very important policy outcomes, such as helping to combat terrorism, an aim that is part and parcel of the Prevent strategy, a major plank in the UK Government's anti-

terrorism policy, and sees promoting British values as a way of steering young people away from destructive ideologies. Except, of course, that 'British values' is itself an ill-defined concept: for school governors, trying to define what these mean is likely to result in a list of generic civic virtues that might equally have been compiled by school governing bodies in France or Germany. It is no coincidence, as this book makes clear, that there is a degree of slippage and confusion as to the geographical scope of citizenship: globalisation and global citizenship are buzzwords (think of Theresa May's vision for a 'global' Britain in the post-Brexit era) but the national and the local remain stubbornly relevant in the era of globalisation, precisely because they resonate strongly everyday lived experience and constitute a primary site for cultural identification.

Having outlined the 'policy problem' in relation to citizenship education, Findlow proposes the concept of stakeholder citizenship, the overarching idea being that citizenship is ultimately about 'having a full *stake* in society' (p. 19), including foremost a stake in the local community which is increasingly intertwined with the global and the multicultural. Findlow rightly cautions that the concept is not a panacea (for example, it could easily become confused with pro-consumerist discourses), but it does offer a way of looking at citizenship education through a different prism.

Each chapter proceeds to set out a different dimension of stakeholder citizenship, using a wealth of examples drawn from education systems across the world. Chapter 2 elaborates the idea of a locally situated yet globally aware form of citizenship in both English secondary and higher education that is built in notions of 'flexible' and 'fluid' civic membership. As the title indicates, how to integrate the local with the global is a question that runs as a central thread

through this book. Chapter 3 argues that education is at the heart of democracy 'for it is not *mere* participation in political processes but *enlightened* democratic participation that makes governments rational and accountable, politics less adversarial, and promotes inclusion, empowerment, health and the public good' (p. 43). The author argues, with Osler (2005), that the institution of the school itself must function in a democratic way to allow genuine local, direct participation by students, citing the Citizen School Project in Porto Alegre (Brazil) as a real-life example.

Chapter 4 zooms in further on the community aspects of citizenship education, using the Northern Irish education system as its principal case study to argue that there are ways of reconciling the growing diversity of local communities with the demand for equality, mainly by valuing diversity as a resource rather than a barrier to equality. In an educational setting this means: delivering content about locatedness, making full use of schools and universities as 'heterotopic spaces' (eg teaching values without indoctrinating) and ensuring that there is scope for engagement with society outside the classroom. In chapter 5, the focus shifts to protest as a manifestation of citizenship, drawing on the many historic occasions when education has acted as a site of protest and has sown the seeds for change in a variety of countries, including England. Interestingly, the suggestion here is that rather than suppressing dissent it should be encouraged in the classroom and lecture theatre as something that equips learners with the kind of critical thinking they need to resist extremism.

The next dimension of citizenship to be discussed is feminism: chapter 6 illustrates the role that education and higher education in particular have played in promoting gender equality, drawing principally on examples of greater female

participation in the Arab World. These examples are compelling, but the chapter does not flesh out in great detail how such strategies may also play out in relation to citizenship education in the UK. The final chapter is dedicated to issues of sustainability and environmental citizenship. It provides a perfect illustration of the stakeholder citizenship ideal at the centre of this book as it puts the intricate relationship between the local and the global into sharp relief. Sustainability requires young people to learn to work together rather than compete with one another and provides a potential alternative to the neo-liberal education mantra. However, in reality, according to Findlow, teaching about the environment in English education amounts to little more than teaching 'green house holding' which is a far cry from the kind of engaged and culturally aware citizenship that should provide the benchmark for successful teaching in this area.

The final pages of the book, through an exploration of Freire's (2005) concept of conscientisation, point to the importance of transforming students into citizens who do not just possess factual knowledge about how to participate in the polity but who also display wisdom in this regard. As a pedagogy, this sounds extremely promising, albeit one that is extremely challenging to implement in the English education environment which is dominated by performance targets and league tables. This thought-provoking book will be an inspiration to anyone who wants to take up this very challenge and is looking for ways to deliver a more imaginative and effective form of citizenship education.

References:

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