A critical examination of the Teaching Citizenship in Higher Education Resources for Academics

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Introduction

Since the introduction of Citizenship Education into Secondary Education, academics in Further and Higher Education have developed themes on citizenship in a number of fields of study. In light of this, a project funded by the Higher Education Funding Council of England (HEFCE) was created to support a new on-line area of resources for HE lecturers. This was led by the University of Southampton in partnership with Keele University and Liverpool John Moores University between 2005 and 2007. Based on Heaters (2001) work, this project aimed to give educators access to courses and materials to teach 'about' and 'for' citizenship. Although they stipulate a focus on political citizenship, they place the context within HEFCEs strategic plan, thus embracing active and global citizenship traits. The Teaching Citizenship in Higher Education (TCHE) on-line resource, (available at http://www.soton.ac.uk/citizened/index.shtml) gives educators access to 11 different citizenship learning activities. Although based on-line, the activities are not solely for internet use and the authors stress that they are flexible and adaptable for any educator. An example of TCHE's application in HE is given, showing that it can be implemented into a 12 week teaching programme. This is used within a unit entitled 'Demands of Citizenship' for the Political and International Relations Department. Nevertheless, the authors do clarify that it is not "a full course on citizenship" (TCHE, 2010). Although TCHE concentrate on citizenship education as a whole, this poster will focus on global citizenship education as this is a cornerstone of the current Development Education literature.

Methodology

Subsequent to discourse analysis of Citizenship Education (CE) in the UK, the 11 on-line resources were critically analysed in comparison to pedagogical drivers of CE and current resources published for CE in UK education.

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Pedagogic Drivers of Citizenship Education

From review of current literature pertaining to CE, the following were identified as the main pedagogic drivers for CE:

1) *Progressivism* – enhancing education, global civil society (Dewey, 1985; Freire,1970; Armstrong, 2006)
2) *Reconstructionism* – using contemporary education mixed with local culture and modern skill and knowledge development (Dewey, 1985; Giroux, 1988)
3) *Neopragmatism* – pragmatic philosophy re-introduced using linguistics in revealing how historical events have significant effects on current social practice (Rorty, 1982)
4) *Essentialism* - relates to specific characteristics and skills either needed, or inherent in specific groups of people (Beauvoir, 1949).
5) *Perennialism* – only teaching areas that are believed to have significant longevity and impact for future generations (poverty reduction and sustainability debates)

In light of this, the 11 TCHE activities were matched to these drivers as noted in the following table:

DE Philosophy	TCHE Activity
Progressivism	Disability and Citizenship
	Rights and duties
Reconstuctionism	Apathetic Generation
	Global Citizenship
	Making Citizens
Neo pragmatism	Active Citizenship
	Global Citizenship
Essentialism	Citizenship, Equality and Culture
	Gendering Citizenship
	Measuring citizenship
Perennialism	Environmental Citizenship
	New Media and Citizenship

New media and citizenship is the only activity that I have difficulty in categorising as it is actually a task based on research methods and enquiry rather than active CE. The activity on global citizenship reflects two philosophies as it requires students to explore meaning concerning different perspectives of global citizenship, therefore being both reconstructing and also influenced by prior experience.

The learning outcomes from the TCHE resource were also analysed via a Wordle, as shown below:

Citizenship is clearly the most prominent outcome required, with political and difference being the second and third primary outcomes from learning in this resource.

Conclusions drawn

By critiquing the Teaching Citizenship in Higher Education Course a number of conclusions can be drawn;

- TCHE educates in a variety of philosophies within CE, encompassing all pedagogical standpoints,
- Focussing on Political elements of citizenship, TCHE often negates the social and cultural action required for global learning and, thus Global Citizenship,
- In concentrating on cognitive facts it does not promote nor enable the encounters and action necessary for GCS or Global Citizenship Education,
- Although there are no actions specific in TCHE, I think there is a presumption that students will participate once given the information, whether this be on-line or in person,
- It focuses on the local and individual identities, rather than global ones,
- I found the activity, Apathetic generation, unique for citizenship teaching resources as it allows direct critique of the laissez-faire attitude seen in many an undergraduate student. This directly questions whether they see themselves as empty vessels or, even, dormant citizens,
- The resources given in support of the activities all use appropriate sources and accurate documentation, ensuring that programme development for Citizenship maintains academic rigour and integrity.

Overall the TCHE on-line resources offer a variety of sources for academics to develop. However, whether this engages students in social and political action for effective local and global citizenship will depend upon whether they are used as on-line reflective exercises, classroom discussion points or social engagement.

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