British values, citizenship and the teaching of history

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Introduction

This chapter should be of interest to anyone thinking about the purpose of history education in terms of developing values and promoting democratic citizenship. It firstly looks at recent changes to the curriculum in England, which have seen the importance of history as a school subject reinforced, whilst the status of citizenship as a school subject has been questioned and changes have undermined some of the key principles that saw its introduction as a subject. Thus the relationship between the two subjects is in a potential state of flux. The chapter then focuses on the issue of values, fuelled by contemporary concerns over terrorism, including 'home-grown' terrorism, and the growth of extremism, which have seen the government introduce measures to promote 'fundamental British values' as an explicit part of the education system. In many ways these have superseded debates about citizenship; these values have been enshrined in legislation and are now part of the school inspection regime. Tthe final section of the chapter focuses on how history teachers could teach about values. Although focusing on the context in England, the issues that emerge are universal for those involved in history education.

> Of all school disciplines, history appears to be the most ideologically laden and controversial subject, which is used to shape and direct the minds of people … The history curriculum reflects and transmits the political values, economic interests and cultural priorities of dominant groups, who exert hegemony over other groups and are in a position to influence what is taught in schools (Ismailova, 2004: 251)

History teachers appear to have a huge responsibility on their shoulders, not only to teach about the past, but also to consider how the study of the past shapes the thinking, actions and values of young people in the present and the future. Whilst many teachers are comfortable with teaching the substantive content of the past and the way the past is constructed, others are less confidently engaged in issues relating to the development of values, yet this is a crucial issue for history teachers to consider.

Changes to the National Curriculum

Since the previous edition of this book there has been a significant curriculum review at Key Stage 3, which has seen major changes to the history and citizenship programmes of study. In history the second order concepts (such as change and continuity, cause and consequence) and processes (for example working with evidence, communicating history) that underpin the subject are still evident in the aims for the subject. However additional aims have been stated; of particular note is the intention that young people develop a 'coherent, chronological narrative' of British history, and an emphasis on understanding substantive concepts (such as civilisation, empire). Young people should then be able to use their knowledge and understanding to 'gain historical perspective', seeing how events, themes, actions and people in the past fit together. This latter point has been part of previous versions of the history curriculum, but has been given greater emphasis and is a recognition of the need to 'knit' the past together and give students a 'bigger' picture of the past. The range of content that is to be covered within the curriculum provoked much debate during the consultation process, especially in relation to the degree of specificity and sheer amount of content to be taught, but the final version suggests a range of topics as exemplification rather than prescription.

The citizenship curriculum however has seen far more profound changes. The expert panel that advised the government during the curriculum review stated:

> Citizenship is of enormous importance in a contemporary and future-oriented education. However, we are not persuaded that study of the issues and topics included in citizenship education constitutes a distinct 'subject' as such. We therefore recommend that it be reclassified as part of the Basic Curriculum (DfE, 2011: 24)

Despite this the subject has retained its foundation status, but in a severely reduced form; whereas earlier versions of the curriculum were ambitious in their aims, the latest one focuses simply on knowledge of the UK political and legal systems, whilst 'responsible activity' and participation is couched in terms of volunteering and community based projects, with some emphasis on economic matters and personal financial management. It seems this new programme of study has stepped back from addressing key ideas in earlier iterations of the National Curriculum. The Crick Report (QCA, 1998), which heavily influenced the original citizenship curriculum, focused heavily on developing political literacy; although it was criticised for encouraging participation in the political process rather than questioning it, there was at least a clear intention to engage young people in the area of politics and political decision making. The subsequent Ajegbo Report (DfES, 2007), which helped to shape the 2008 version of the curriculum, stressed there was a need to focus more on the development of identity and diversity, with a view to promoting greater social cohesion. However this is absent from the latest version of the curriculum. Instead there is far greater stress on knowledge of a narrower range of areas, with less emphasis on developing values and participation. Whereas earlier versions of the citizenship curriculum could have been interpreted as wanting to get young people to question and challenge the world in which they live, the latest version seems more about accepting the status quo and 'fitting in', and as such is deeply disappointing in terms of promoting a healthy, active democratic society. Obviously

schools can go beyond the confines of the curriculum, but this may not happen due to the pressures on schools to improve measureable outcomes for students, and many of the values that can be developed through citizenship are not easily observable and assessable. In addition the introduction of the English Baccalaureate (which encourages schools to ensure students do English, maths, science, geography or history, and a foreign language as examination subjects) also means that the profile of history as an 'important' subject within the curriculum has increased. The consequences of these developments for citizenship are yet to be fully seen but Ofsted (2013: 4) noted:

> The quality of secondary school citizenship education was poorer in the last year of the survey compared with the preceding two years [i.e. prior to the curriculum review]. Six of the 26 schools visited in the last year claimed that uncertainty over the subject's future had diminished the level of attention they had afforded to citizenship.

The relationship between history and citizenship

The changes in the curricula do therefore impact on the possible relationship between the subjects in school. Much of the chapter in the previous edition of this book explored the relationship between history and citizenship; many of the points raised are still pertinent if schools adopt a more expansive view of citizenship than currently contained in the recent National Curriculum. As such Lee and Shemilt's (2007) analysis of the relationship between history and citizenship is still valid. They identify how history could adopt a 'cornucopia', 'carrier', or 'complement' model to support citizenship.

In the 'cornucopia' model there is little need for history teachers to engage with citizenship, because history education deals with the range of human experience, which would include

citizenship issues; therefore teachers just need to exploit appropriate opportunities as they appear. Given the recent changes to the citizenship curriculum and the emphasis on knowledge of the political and legal system, the relationship with history is in many ways very simple to conceptualise, because there are clear areas where substantive content overlaps. A study of the development of the political system in the UK can become a theme that runs throughout the history curriculum, indeed the new history curriculum suggests that students could learn about topics such as 'the struggle between Church and crown', 'Magna Carta and the emergence of Parliament', 'the Restoration, 'Glorious Revolution' and power of Parliament' and 'party politics, extension of the franchise and social reform', which would provide a view of how the political system in the UK has grown.

The 'carrier' model embraces citizenship more explicitly, with history being used to address specific aspects of citizenship, in terms of potential objectives and areas of content. This model however sees history serving the needs of citizenship and could result in a 'presentist' approach to the past, whereby the only topics deemed worthy of study would be those that deal directly with present issues or the historical 'message' could be distorted to fit into the prevailing mind set of modern society. The 'complement' model assumes that the ideals that underpin citizenship are an ethos that permeates the school and where rational enquiry and debate (seen as central democratic dispositions) are promoted. In this context history provides the opportunity for pupils to orient themselves in time and gain an awareness of how democratic institutions and ideals have developed, including their value and potential frailties. In this sense history is seen as the seedbed in which citizenship can flourish. In both these models there is likely to be a stronger emphasis on values. The notion of teaching values is however potentially contentious.

The relationship between values and history education

Values are essentially used in society to identify a range of ideas and beliefs that reflect accepted cultural norms about how things 'should be'. Values differ to morals, as the latter provide a code of behaviour to distinguish between 'good' and 'bad'. For example, if society values freedom of speech, attempts to intimidate people from expressing their views are seen as immoral behaviour. Clearly there are close connections between values and morals, as moral judgements are based in the broader context of personal and socially shared values. Teaching about values or morals does however raise a number of challenges.

Many teachers, not just in history circles, are uncomfortable teaching an explicit value-laden curriculum (Klaassen, 2002). In part this is because some teachers lack the professional knowledge and confidence to deal with such issues, and so tend to draw upon their personal experiences; consequently values are often addressed in a reactive, unplanned manner (Thornberg, 2008). Yet it is virtually impossible to avoid imparting values through teaching; the choices teachers make either reflect particular value positions (even if these are implicit) or send out particular value-laden messages. From a history teaching perspective, for example, decisions to exclude particular topics from a curriculum or choices over how to present a topic can send out strong messages; adopting a positive view about the legacy of the British Empire, whilst glossing over concerns about colonisation and oppression, may promote patriotism at the expense of a focus on the value of freedom. Instead of feeling uncomfortable with promoting values, teachers should recognise that they are involved in this explicitly and be more sensitive to what they are trying to achieve; especially in terms of the rationale for a focus on values, and what is pedagogically appropriate.

Debates about values within history education are not new, and are at the heart of debates about the rationale for teaching the subject. For some, such as Lee (1992), the point of teaching history is to get better at history and to promote greater historical literacy this requires an understanding of the nature of history, and so reflects an emphasis on the 'conceptual coherence' (Muller 2009) of the curriculum. In this argument broader educational goals, such as the promotion of democratic values, are not an intrinsic part of learning history – ultimately history teaching may serve the needs of democracy by altering the way people make sense of the world around them, but it should not be the driving force behind the curriculum. In contrast, Barton and Levstik (2004) see history as crucial to a humanistic education, which serves as the basis for participation in a pluralistic, democratic society. Drawing on the work of Dewey they argue that education should 'promote social well-being and how to care for the public realm [which] are at the heart of participatory democracy and we believe history has an important part to play in preparing students to take part in such deliberation' (Barton and Levstik, 2004: 38).

Things become more complex when entering the sphere of moral education. In the context of teaching about the Holocaust, Kinloch (2001) has argued that history teachers should focus on teaching history rather than drawing spurious moral lessons from the past. For a subject that purports to promote intellectual objective reasoning, a focus on morality promotes uncomfortable subjective and emotional concerns (although obviously the question of how objective history can be gives an additional twist to such arguments). In contrast, others (such as Short and Reed, 2004) argue that history directly addresses questions of morality and these issues need to be acknowledged. To pretend otherwise is to ignore potentially important ways of getting young people to engage with the actions of people in the past, and attempting to present history as an objective, even-handed form of enquiry can leave students feeling any

view of the past is morally acceptable. As Short and Reed (2004: 53) argue, regarding Holocaust education, any neutrality on the part of the teacher may be regarded 'as an inability to decide where truth and justice lie with regard to Nazi racial ideology' and may be interpreted as indifference by students, and potentially suggests that the topic is inconsequential. Kitson (2001) and Hammond (2001) have shown it is difficult to avoid moral questions in history teaching because we are dealing with human actions in the past, and so we are engaged in examining moral questions, and these in turn require students to understand the value systems and decisions within which such actions happened. It does seem difficult to avoid the conclusion that values will emerge through teaching history and thus teachers need to think more carefully about what they are trying to achieve.

The emphasis on values has also now been given greater prominence through the requirement on schools to promote 'fundamental British values'. This does raise a number of issues relating to how comfortable teachers are with values education generally, but also specifically with the notion of 'fundamental British values', which have been identified by Ofsted (2015) as:

- democracy
- the rule of law
- individual liberty
- mutual respect for and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs and for those without faith.

These are closely linked to the Prevent Strategy (HM Government, 2011) to combat the process of radicalisation and the development of extremism. The position of these 'British

values' has been strengthened by the Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015 (HM Government) and non-statutory guidance on promoting them as part of the spiritual, moral, social and cultural curriculum within schools (DfE, 2014). In addition they are included as part of the statutory inspection process (Ofsted, 2015) for schools now, and are enshrined in the Teachers' Standards (DfE, 2011) and thus an expected part of a teacher's personal and professional conduct. Ofsted inspections are also judging schools in relation to the promotion of these fundamental values, which are seen as a significant element in the inspection process. Schools therefore need to address the whole question of these values seriously, and although they are cross-curricular and should be part of the school ethos and culture, the contribution that can be made by history departments needs careful consideration.

Teaching about values through history

The new requirement has caused some unease amongst many teachers. There seem to be two main issues – the use of the word 'British' and the word 'values'. Although most people would find it hard to argue that such values are not important (although they do reflect a liberal democratic view of the world and how it should be organised and run), many are uncomfortable with the implication that they are uniquely British, when they are patently transnational. In many ways the 'Britishness' issue is semantic and reflective of 'political posturing' (Weale, 2015), whereas the concern about 'values' is much more fundamental. Clearly teaching about these values is not confined to history teachers but the subject can play a significant role in exploring and debating these issues.

Returning to an earlier point, teachers need to be clear about what they are trying to achieve when teaching about values. Hopwood (2007) provides a useful outline of the possible goals when relating to values as part of a topic or task. These are:

- Values inculcation – where the intention it to get pupils to adopt a particular view;
- Values analysis – where pupils are asked to assess evidence to support a view or set of views;
- Growth of moral reasoning – where the focus is exploring why particular views are held;
- Values clarification – which aims to help pupils identify their own values;
- Action learning – where pupils are encouraged to develop ideas with a view to taking some form of action.

These are helpful because it clarifies what values are being examined, whose and from which perspective. This degree of precision is necessary if students are to be clear whether they are reflecting on their own values and from where these originate, or the values of others. It also clarifies what students are expected to do in regard to this learning – do they simply need to be aware of the range of views of others or are they being expected to put their values into practice? Teachers may be wary of the idea of 'values inculcation' seeing it as akin to 'indoctrination', however teachers may often do this implicitly through the topics they teach, the perspectives they present and the answers they find acceptable, so teachers need to be aware of their own values and how these may be transmitted (Cotton, 2006; Peterson, 2011). 'Values inculcation' is also similar in some ways to the idea of 'character education', whereby students learn about the actions of 'great' people in the past, with a view to seeing them as moral exemplars. This in turn links to the idea of 'action learning' where students are encouraged to put their values into practice. Although this is a model advocated by some

educators, particularly in the US (see for example, Banks, 2006; Barton & Levstik, 2004), it does not appear to be a common part of the pedagogical practices of many history teachers. 'Values analysis', 'growth of moral reasoning' and 'values clarification' have less of an explicit intention to promote particular values or actions, instead focusing more on exploring personal values and those of others, which may sit more comfortably with many teachers. Nevertheless it does require a clear sense of purpose from the teacher in terms of both the historical and moral learning expected from the study of any given topic.

An article in *Teaching History* by Alison Kitson and Sarah Thompson (2015) provides an interesting example of how teaching difficult issues might address aspects of history and values education. Developing a sequence of lessons on the 7/7 London bombings in 2005 presents a series of challenges for history teachers. The topic is relatively recent and so the short passage of time means historical perspectives are still forming and the significance of the event is yet to be appreciated; also the immediate consequences of the event are still being 'played out'. It is also a highly emotive topic, especially if placed in the context of ongoing concerns about religious extremism.

In the sequence of lessons, Kitson and Thompson, sought to identify the specific historical learning that they wished to see and after careful consideration focused on the concept of consequences following the attacks. This provided a firm historical anchor point for the lessons. After a focus on what happened, the lessons shifted towards the impact pf the bombings, starting with the personal story of Miriam Hyman who was killed in the attacks that day, before moving onto the wider societal consequences. In many ways Kitson and Thompson keep the focus firmly on developing students' historical understanding and

actually discuss whether ‘there is a danger that this will become ‘moral’ education’. They acknowledge that there is a moral dimension to the work, especially due to the inclusion of Miriam’s story, which makes the topic both personal and emotive. They also recognise that the boundaries between history and moral education do blur, but there seems scope within the topic to explicitly focus on values education, as long as the purpose of doing this is clear. Indeed, one of the reasons why some historical topics are considered significant is due to their moral resonance through time and the value systems they reflect. History invariably involves looking at the dilemmas and decisions people have made through the ages; this in turn often requires us to understand the moral compass of those people in the past and the values that guided their decision making. Yet many of the dilemmas people in the past have encountered and the decisions they have had to make reoccur throughout history; for example how do governments, societies and individuals respond to perceived threats, to mass migration or supporting vulnerable groups in society. There is an extensive array of issues that have a strong values dimension and historical precedent. This in turn allows history teachers the opportunity to meet one of the new aims of the curriculum, namely the need to provide historical perspective. By making connections between dilemmas and decisions in the past, students are able to examine trends and reactions through time, and develop a sense of historical consciousness (Rüsen, 2004) and an ability to orientate themselves in time through developing an increasingly sophisticated framework of the past.

A focus on values can be extremely engaging for students, so teachers need to be able to plan more carefully for this dimension of history. For example, developing the ideas of Kitson and Thompson, the consequences of the 7/7 attacks could focus on what could or should be done in future to hopefully avoid similar atrocities. Taking an action learning approach and by drawing on historical examples, such as how dictatorships control people’s lives, students

could explore debates about state surveillance and individual liberties, how democracies could respond to terror threats and what is an acceptable extension of state monitoring of people's lives. And thereafter be encouraged to think about how they could express their views to those in authority. Alternatively a focus on values analysis, growth of moral reasoning or values clarification could see students examining their reactions to the events, why they feel the way they do and examining why others may see things differently. In terms of 'fundamental British values', this opens up the possibility of examining issues over liberty and democracy, as well as issues over tolerance and mutual respect, and the boundaries which need to be considered, for example how do you tolerate those who may be intolerant and so is there a limit to tolerance? Similarly you could explore how democratic are democratic systems, and why democracy, although imperfect, is seen as an appropriate way for a society to organise itself.

Chapter summary

Changes to the National Curriculum have seen relatively minor changes to the history curriculum, however citizenship, as a subject, has been radically reformed. Obviously schools may continue to provide a more expansive form of citizenship education, and so discussions about the relationship between history and citizenship still need to be considered. However the focus on 'fundamental British values' and the way in which it has been embedded into the curriculum and inspection framework means history teachers need to consider seriously how they address aspects of this within their programmes of study. Values do permeate our actions and decisions, and so teachers should be more aware of the values that shape what they do and be more explicit about the way in which they can address values through history. This is not necessarily a task with which teachers are comfortable, but it does afford

opportunities to engage students with serious issues that will affect their lives, and the study of history can provide a powerful context to help students make sense of these issues.

Key questions

- Whereabouts in your history curriculum are there opportunities for students to examine values within history?
- Where there are opportunities to examine values, what is the purpose and intended outcome (s) of this focus?
- What steps have been taken in your department to deliberately plan the history curriculum so that students are able to develop a clear framework of knowledge, on which they can draw to develop an increasingly sophisticated insight into specific values?

Further reading

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