

BOOK REVIEW

Values In Education: We're All Citizens Now

H. Maitles

Dunedin Academic Press (2005). pp.vi+90. Pbk. £11.95 (Policy into Practice Series)

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Reviewer: Graeme Nixon

Despite the brevity of Henry Maitles' book on Citizenship he has managed to squeeze a great deal of analysis, suggestions and references into *Values in Education*, which is published as the seventh in the 'Policy into Practice' series. Maitles addresses several questions about the implementation and effects of citizenship education in Scotland.

After setting the scene in terms of citizenship education as a global phenomenon and raising pertinent questions about whether the young are genuinely alienated from politics, Maitles discusses the pros and cons of citizenship as a separate subject or as infused. Who can argue about the dangers of something as important as citizenship either being 'ghettoised' as a separate subject or alternatively becoming a ghost in the curricular machine if it is infused?

Throughout the book he suggests that a participatory and active approach to learning is at the heart of effective citizenship education. This is supported by reference to case studies at subject and whole school level, and by fairly detailed references to research. Democratisation of the classroom is therefore key. Citizenship must personally engage pupils rather than be some bland phenomenological tour of political process and values.

Maitles argues that teachers must be prepared to offer pupils the opportunity to grapple with controversial issues and forego fears about the interdisciplinary nature of such issues. Indeed, this is perhaps where such issues offer real chances for cross-curricular work.

To progress citizenship beyond tokenism, Maitles suggests a democratisation of the entire approach by teachers and schools that goes well beyond the normal lip service of pupil councils. For example, in the RME case study cited pupils are allowed to become aware of their preferred learning style and

generate tasks accordingly. He feels that this is the way that schools can transmit trust and the value of democracy to pupils. Maitles even has the temerity to suggest that this would also make learning fun! However, what may carry more weight is the argument, again supported by research, that such an approach also improves attainment, inclusion and attendance.

Maitles correctly identifies the exam agenda, class sizes and poor modelling of citizenship by political and educational authorities as hampering significant progress in the field. Nevertheless, if teachers and especially newly qualified teachers accept that the medium is the message and overcome their anxieties about moving to a democratic classroom, as Maitles suggests, then education for citizenship will begin to impact much more profoundly than 'ticky box' (p.62) HMIE audits have suggested up until now.

At times the reader is frustrated by Maitles' lack of further development and expansion of ideas. For example, more detail on how to democratise the classroom would have been helpful as well as a fuller discussion of how/whether pupils should have a say in school finance and appointments. There is a brief discussion of institutional prejudice, though perhaps the real problem is institutional morality and the abdication of moral reasoning that this engenders?

Overall, this is an apposite book that serves the purpose of flagging up and calling for more research into participatory approaches to citizenship. Maitles is quick to point out the limited scale and longitude of research in the field. Nevertheless, the surveys he cites offer powerful indications that democratic, cross-curricular and whole school approaches do have a positive effect in generating pro-social attitudes and social capital. The currency of Maitles book lies in offering educationalists at all levels the means by which the 'active citizens' the curriculum review speaks of can be created.