

Symposium I

Citizenship Education Through the Eyes of Elementary School Principals: A Research Study

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The idea of sponsoring the Symposia on Citizenship Education prompted a study conducted in 1985 by a graduate education course under my direction. Historically, the goal of mandating a social studies curriculum in our primary and secondary schools has been to educate and inculcate our youngsters with the tools they need to become active, attentive, and effective citizens. In this increasingly complex world, the ability to identify, comprehend, and propose solutions to public problems is required of our nation's citizens. Social studies educators are given the task of providing these critical tools through the curriculum. The principals of our schools have been identified as the key players responsible for insuring that citizenship education is taught, and that the environment of the institution is conducive to providing significant learning experiences in this area. However, a recent study argued that the formal training given to school administrators is less than adequate in providing the tools and ideas necessary to institute an effective citizenship educational program. Dade County has the fourth largest school system in the country, with a total of 176 elementary schools. In order to discern the current status of citizenship education in the Dade County Public Schools, we surveyed principals of 70 elementary schools.

The study utilized a measurement tool from Dr. John Goodlad's *A Place Called School*, and focused on his social, civic, and cultural educational goals for schooling in the United States. Within this goal cluster, Dr. Goodlad defined four dimensions consisting of interpersonal understandings, citizenship participation, enculturation, and moral and ethical character. Each of the four dimensions was further broken down into statements of five to nine attributes. In our study, each principal surveyed was asked to prioritize the 25 standards statements. In addition, respondents were asked to provide examples of programs within their schools that contributed to furthering citizenship education.

The results of the survey provided an interesting analysis. Principals in Dade County's elementary schools consistently felt that the moral/ethical and

interpersonal understanding dimensions were high educational priorities. Citizenship participation, on the other hand, was commonly ranked as a low priority of the administrators. The lack of emphasis on this dimension was confirmed by the open-ended examples of programs offered to students as described by the principals. Many administrators cited extra-curricular activities rather than the curriculum as a key source of citizenship education. Furthermore, many of the programs identified fell into the moral/ethical dimension as opposed to the citizenship participation index.

If, in fact, our children's educational administrators rank citizenship participation as such a low priority, what can we expect from this future generation of Americans? Without encouragement from their current role models to become involved and attentive citizens, we are likely to raise a generation of apathetic residents who are unprepared to face the constant dilemmas of public life, who are incapable of analyzing policies instituted by our government, and are unable to safeguard the freedoms and liberties granted by this nation's Constitution and laws.

Although this study was limited to a survey of Dade County's elementary principals, it can provide the basis for continued discussion among educators, school administrators, and the public at large. The Symposia on Citizenship Education were designed to provide the forum for a preliminary debate on the topic of educating our future citizens to become viable, effective citizens. It is hoped that the debate and discussion continues.

A View of Citizenship Education in American Schools

Albert Shanker

Albert Shanker is the president of the American Federation of Teachers since 1974 and the official voice of 610,000 teachers in the United States. As the fourth ranking vice president on the AFL-CIO Executive Council, Mr. Shanker presides over the Department of Professional Employees. In his native state of New York, he is vice president of the state AFL-CIO and co-chairs the Municipal Labor Committee of New York City's Public Employee Unions. Mr. Shanker also heads the International Federation of Free Teachers, based in Brussels, which is an organization of teacher unions in democratic European countries. Mr. Shanker's weekly column in The New York Times, "Where We Stand," has presented labor's perspectives on education, politics, and human rights.

I do a good deal of speaking and traveling, and this is the first time I have been asked to discuss the

subject of citizenship education. I think that is a sad comment on our education system.

The question of citizenship education is a very central issue in education today, and I would like to share some of my thoughts on the topic, and perhaps some of my prejudices. I am going to share with you some of the discussions I have had and books I have read that might shed some light on citizenship education.

I studied the Dade County survey with interest and was disturbed that the goal described as developing historical perspective was among the principals' lowest ranked goals, out of 26 possibilities. The hard, scholarly work was put at the very bottom, while many of the process-oriented goals like communicating and sensitivity were at the top. I think that is very unfortunate. I would like to see change in that area.

I think it would be interesting to distribute the same survey to the principals after a period of discussion and contemplation. This process is used in some surveys that measure public opinion on a topic, follow-up with readings or discussions, and then take another survey to determine change in informed opinion.

To begin my discussion, I would like to consider the work of Amitai Etzioni, a sociologist at George Washington University, who was a White House intellectual in the Carter administration. His book, *An Immodest Proposal*, deals with two very important issues: how to rebuild the country, and the closely related question of citizenship and character development. Etzioni places what he calls "me-ism," a concern only for self, at the center of most of the problems we face today as a society. One of the questions he considers is why students are leaving school unable to read, write, and count. Is it, he asks, because these young people are not intellectually capable of doing these things? He concludes that the overwhelming majority are perfectly capable intellectually, but do not achieve because they are unable to delay gratification or restrain themselves long enough to do things that seem unpleasant. This is not a question of academic standards, but character development. Etzioni says it is not "fun" to learn how to spell words or to learn multiplication tables, and we have fewer kids who are willing to apply themselves, and fewer adults who are willing to stand firm and say that it has to be done. A major part of his analysis of failure in the schools deals with this issue.

I was impressed by a story of his that is not in the book but is related to an aspect of citizenship education. One day Etzioni was called at the White House by his son's principal and told that his child had just been in an accident. During class, the boy

sitting next to his son had taken a pencil and poked it through his son's cheek. While it turned out to be not dangerous, it was unpleasant and certainly very shocking.

A few days later he talked to the principal about the incident and the principal said he hoped Etzioni would understand that it happened on a hot, muggy day and the boy involved had many problems at home. Etzioni answered that as a sociologist he understood how those problems may have affected the boy's behavior. Then he asked the principal some questions. "Did anyone in the school tell the boy who was at fault that what he did was wrong? That it was unacceptable behavior and there was some price to be paid? That if it occurs again there will be some bigger price to be paid?" There was absolute silence. The principal assumed that if a person understood why something happened, that in itself satisfied the moral component and in a sense justified it.

This relates very closely to the subject we face here. I think there are questions we must consider before we can respond to a poll such as the Dade County citizenship study. Have we become so sociologically and psychologically smart that we have become morally paralyzed? Do we believe that what happens must happen and has reasons, and that there is no way of intervening? I think by asking these questions I give an indication where my prejudice is, but I think this is a key issue.

I was very interested in the recent 20th anniversary issue of *The Public Interest*, a magazine edited by Irving Kristol. Many of the same people who wrote for the first edition wrote articles for this issue. James Q. Wilson's piece is particularly fascinating because he compares the focus of problem-solving in the 20 year span and concludes that the magazine's pieces in the 1960s always dealt with some sort of economic or political game plan. Today, nearly every article deals with the development of character and citizenship.

He cites the welfare program as a good example of character development. The failure of the specific programs is not a result of inherently bad programs, but has developed because we have reached a point in our society where people believe that welfare is a right.

Wilson believes that we have failed to develop our individual character. He says we do not have the habit of doing things right and the feeling of guilt if things are done wrong. One of the questions Jack Gordon sent for me to ponder was whether or not we solve this issue of citizenship if every individual does the right thing. I believe the question of citizenship may not be solved if everybody individually acts in a virtuous way, but citizenship is destroyed if large numbers of people do not act individually in a correct and right way.

The same point was made some years ago by a favorite author of mine, Ignazio Silone, the Italian

novelist. Shortly before he died, he wrote a series of essays called, *The Emergency Exit*, in which he relates the case of what he calls "the Moroccanized women." Silone says that in Italian tradition, if a woman was raped, no one knew about it. She would not tell anyone and, if someone found out, her family would move her to a different town. There was shame connected to it. This was part of the national tradition that went back as far as memory. According to Silone, toward the end of the World War II a group of Moroccan Foreign Legion troops came through a certain town. They had an agreement with the French government that if they conquered a town, they had a right to rape the women in it. And when they came through this town, that is what they did. They raped many women and a protest was lodged with the Pope and the French government.

To remedy the grievous wrong done to the women, an advertisement in the newspaper announced that any woman who had been violated had the right to get an indemnity of five dollars. That was contrary to all the traditions of the country throughout history. However, not only did the women who were raped come forward, but so did thousands of others who were miles away at the time.

Silone contemplates this story of the upheaval of long-standing tradition and relates it to his own support for a welfare state. He says he is disturbed that in creating a welfare state, he helped to transform the character of individuals and their behavior, both in their personal moral roles and as citizens.

I would like to change my focus from the dilemma of Ignazio Silone to the thoughts of Sidney Hook, a philosopher, teacher, author, and student of John Dewey. In a lecture given a couple of years ago, he questioned whether our democracy can survive if we do not promote it in our educational system. He concluded that this may be the only country in the world that does not promote its governmental system.

The American Federation of Teachers is examining this issue in our democracy project. We are analyzing curriculum and textbooks, and taking a look at what we are doing on a national basis with democracy in our schools.

I think character development, individual moral responsibility, and content are some of the key issues that have to be dealt with in the area of citizenship education and moral education in our schools.

A Gallup Poll taken about 15 years ago showed that there are three issues on which the public gave schools bad marks: discipline, standards, and the teaching of values. The public continues to believe that schools are not doing enough to address questions of right and wrong. It is, then, essential to address these issues of citizenship education that are being raised in this forum.

A final issue that I think is central to the question

of citizenship education has to do with a tough political decision which grew out of a conflict in the field of literacy. There have been long-standing debates about whether reading should be taught by looking at words and sentences or by phonics. In the last few years a good deal of the reading research says that we should teach phonics, but that phonics is not enough. The reason a lot of people never really learn how to read is that while they know how to recognize words, they do not have sufficient background knowledge to understand what they are reading. That understanding is cultural literacy.

People concerned with literacy are saying that while we are teaching kids to read, we are not giving them background. Background is made up of various bits and pieces of information such as Biblical references, geographic names, patriotic references, myths, jingles, and stories that an educated person needs. When somebody talks about being "tempted by the apple," background knowledge brings the proper image to mind.

Another way to think of background is that it is something we deal with all the time. If you asked a man on the street how to get to a particular location, he would say, "Third stop on the bus," or "Second stop on the subway." He would assume all sorts of things: you know where the subway is; you know whether you are going east or west; and you have a certain knowledge of the city. If you said you were from out of town, his directions would be more specific. When talking to someone who does not have the background, it is necessary to give a lot more background information.

The question is, why do students lack a broad background knowledge? There are several reasons. One is that memorization of facts is much less popular today than it used to be. Current theory says if the teacher gets kids to memorize a lot of things, the students are not thinking. It is a prejudice against the old-fashioned method of memorization, a form which may, in fact, have been an important element in transmitting necessary background.

The second explanation is that we have replaced learning certain things with an emphasis on relevance. We say that to get Johnny interested in school, give him rock stars, sports stars, ethnic identity, sexual identity. It is true that these are all important issues for certain kinds of learning, but what has happened is that we have pushed out the traditional elements of education. The end result is that students reach a certain educational level without having the background necessary to understand our society.

Unfortunately, because of our society's history, the background that one needs is not necessarily representative of society today. Much of background is male-dominated and Anglo-Saxon. For that reason, cultural

literacy is a political issue. But we must question whether we are sacrificing both our shared values and our ability to develop literacy within our society because we are afraid of offending diverse groups by teaching traditional culture with its inherent biases.

That concern deals with a very basic question: Is it our job to adjust students to the society we have, or do we prepare them to live in a changed society? I think that if we do not teach students to live within the culture and the traditions they already have, they will be incapable of criticizing or changing them because no one can rebel without the tools of the present. Every reformer was deeply steeped in traditions, then rebelled against them and changed them; but a person ignorant of those traditions cannot speak of them. Knowledge of our shared traditions is a very strong line in the development of our society.

The points that I have made do not give the curriculum for citizenship education. They do not provide the answers. But I hope I have raised a few new questions. I think these are the things we must consider before we come to some agreement on where it is that we are to go on the issue of citizenship education.

Dialogue Participants:

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Dr. Fain

I grew up in the 1940s when it was important to be patriotic because the nation was at war, and it was a good war. I do not remember specific citizen education because everyone was trying to be a good citizen. However, as the oldest of four children, I know from personal experience that my strong commitments to this country are different from those of my youngest sibling who did not grow up in those times, who, in fact, grew up knowing a bad war, and who questioned some very basic premises about this nation.

From my work I know what people expect from educators: Horace Mann, who asked for the most virtuous of all to stand as a model; John Dewey, who looked for the teacher to create an organic whole where the democracy was not separate from the school; and Mortimer Adler, who advocated that

teachers engage in coaching students in the development of their ideas, skills, and values.

If we are to increase citizenship—not just the ability to recite dates and historical events, but to instill a sense of being a participant in this democracy—we must carefully examine those who are teaching and providing role models for our students. What happens when we eliminate certain standards from the requirements of teacher training and certification, and when we look for a minimum of course work in the content area? What happens when we do not require that democracy and patriotism are both valued and deeply cherished by educators? I am concerned.

I remember the people I talked with in the late 1960s who openly opposed the government, who suggested that adhering to the standards expected of them as citizens were not acceptable, and who said that if they could not get military deferments for teaching, they would go to Canada.

In the context of our educational experience, we recognize that criticism of the government is a right Americans have, but sometimes criticism is directed for personal interest and personal gain, not for social development. I do not know how to deal with that.

I think these are important issues and I think they raise questions that we, as teachers, have to ask of ourselves.

My last observation is on what I think is a very funny issue. The report cards my children bring home describe citizenship as the ability to be quiet. That is a curious problem. It deserves some kind of consideration.

Ms. Heise

I agree with many of the points that were mentioned here, especially with the problem of cultural literacy. But I am a practical person. I ask why is it this way? Why are we not teaching citizenship education? I think there are several reasons. Based on my observations, especially at the elementary school level, I have found that teachers and principals are not necessarily the ones who mandate the curriculum because much of it is mandated by the state.

We test every year for skills in reading, writing, and arithmetic, but nowhere does the test address social studies skills, decision-making skills, and citizenship participation. Educators are practical people. If the test scores of a school are not high enough, the solution is very simple: the school will emphasize the things for which they are accountable. We have dedicated and excellent teachers in this county trying to do their best. I heard one distressing comment from an elementary school teacher of 22 years. She said, "The reason I feel that I am not really teaching is that I am constantly

monitoring, and most of the time I am pre- and post-testing basic skills."

Sometimes we do not know how to define, or we have not given much thought to what we mean by citizenship education. Unfortunately, citizenship is sometimes interpreted as blind patriotism. We do not teach the students to examine an issue and seek alternatives. We do not really teach them thinking skills because we do not have time for that. We have a mandated curriculum, and teachers feel they cannot exercise creativity.

Teaching citizenship participation, analysis of issues, and alternative solutions to problems are just not part of the curriculum. Perhaps we ought to take a look at that.

Ms. Tribble

I work for county government, so I am seeing this from a different perspective. The light went on for me and everything became very clear when Mr. Shanker talked about cultural literacy and background. His example of the person who has to give directions to someone and the amount of information necessary, knowing the recipient is coming from out of town, is a good one. This also applies to the problem of testing in education. When we test, are we assuming knowledge that is not really there? Are we assuming that students know something they really do not know? Background is also important because how can people rebel against a tradition when they do not know what the tradition is?

I have experienced the same problems because as a director of training for the county, I have to deal with a number of people who have only recently come into our country and find themselves dealing with our government from their own sets of traditions. Our recent Cuban arrivals have come to this country steeped in their own traditions and must learn to function in ours.

I think we have a big problem in our community. It is going to take a lot of critical examination. I am going to keep in mind the question of assuming too much background knowledge when I deal with people. Thank you for that. I am going to remember that for quite a while.

Comment

I think there is a general impression from the survey Professor Tucker conducted that Dade County Public Schools are doing little or nothing in the matter of citizenship education. I take exception to that because I feel that we are. I think an important facet of citizenship education is to be informed, and that is part of our curriculum, from kindergarten right through high school. I venture to say that most of our graduating seniors are better informed about government and how it works than the average

citizen in our community. Civic participation is very important in Dade County. One of the unique things we do in the schools is register students to vote. I think voting is a very important part of civic participation, and nine out of every ten eligible students in our high schools become registered voters. In the last election there were 400 students from one high school working on political campaigns. We also have many interactions with government, and we work very closely with county government and neighboring cities. Even the elementary schools have close contacts with local government. I believe we have good programs in place.

Simine Heise talked about some of the problems of basic skills, and certainly there is a greater emphasis in these areas at the elementary school level. However, we have a balanced curriculum which means that the curriculum at the elementary level includes the arts, social studies, and science, as well as the basic skill areas. I feel that we do have these things in place, and while we are always looking for improvement, we are not derelict in our duties to teach citizenship in Dade County Schools.

Comment

I would like you to address the issues of civil disobedience and bilingual education and discuss how they relate to citizenship.

Mr. Shanker

Civil disobedience is part of any citizenship program dealing with the question of commitment to law and the development of society. One question posed is when is it right to disobey and under what circumstances does one try to change things? It seems to me there are plenty of opportunities to raise those issues when studying the American Revolution and the Civil War and as we teach about important characters in history.

You have raised the issue of bilingual education. It seems to me that the federal government should not mandate one form of instruction or another. That should come out of continued experiment. What we need is a commitment to do something special for those children who do not speak English and allow local districts to use different approaches. Those methods can then be evaluated, ineffective approaches eliminated, and effective approaches supported and disseminated.

Comment

I was interested in Dr. Fain's comments about patriotism in World War II. My students have expressed concerns over the concepts of patriotism and nationalism. They have to be made aware of who they are before they can be aware of how they are supposed to act or what their obligations are as

citizens. I think we should come back to that time when we had a majority consensus of what patriotism was about.

Comment

I think that living here in Miami with so many cultures is a lot different than living where the people are not so diverse, but every area has to deal with its problems in its own way. I am a first-year teacher, and I think we can teach students to be good citizens by stressing it in little ways in every class. We can be more creative as teachers and we can demonstrate citizenship by acting as good citizens ourselves.

My question is, will someone provide the criteria and the plan to teach, or should we do that on our own? We all have different definitions of citizenship. It is important to me because I have lived in a lot of different countries and while I am proud to be an American, it has taken me five years of living out of America and coming back to realize what an American is.

Mr. Shanker

Pride in being an American is part of what we are talking about, but I do not think it is the only answer. I think there are a lot of things that can be done, especially in the early grades, within the curriculum. I read a story in the *New York Times* recently about a student who found some money and returned it. The teachers in the child's school had discussions in every class asking students if they would return the money if they had found it. The upshot of this story is that not a single teacher in the entire school expressed an opinion to the students as to what was right or wrong.

It seems to me that the building blocks of character and citizenship come from traditional authorities and discussion of the consequences of certain actions in myths, stories, and fairy tales. That is very important at an early level. We cannot assume the neutrality that those teachers took.

Your point that being quiet is what is considered good citizenship in our schools is very interesting. The Educational Testing Service asks questions on the National Teacher's Exam about professionalism for teachers. The test does not measure professionalism, but obedience to authority. Each multiple choice question has four possible answers. If a teacher answers the questions in accordance with what he or she believes to be right in the interest of the students, or right for the profession, the score will be zero. The right choice for the test is what serves the convenience of administration, or what reduces conflicts with parents or the community. The message is, "Don't make noise."

The way the school functions is in itself a major

educational experience. If the teachers are told what to do, and the principal is told what to do, the result is a series of orders and everybody marching to carry out those orders. That message gets communicated to the students.

I also think there is no time in the way schools are currently operated to do a good job of teaching. We really have to deal with the questions that education reformers John Goodlad and TheodoreSizer raised. They questioned how, if 85 percent of the teacher's time is spent lecturing to the class, will teachers find time to get students to think, rethink, discuss, and question?

Goodlad and Sizer are now working with schools around the country where teachers, administrators, and even students are restructuring school in order to achieve a different outcome. They are looking for the ability to think, to express, and to criticize.

What is the ideal way to structure a school? Our schools are primarily custodial institutions. When the custodial function of the school comes into conflict with the educational function, the custodial function comes first. For instance, Baltimore gives a literacy examination to new teachers. If a teacher cannot pass it, he or she really cannot read, write, or count. Thirty-five percent of the teachers failed the examination, but they were hired. Why? Because what is important is that when those 30 kids come to school, an adult is standing in front of them. That is the important thing—that there be somebody teaching.

The kids cannot learn anything from teachers who cannot read, write, and count. Can we say to kids, "Come back next month because we do not have teachers of a certain quality?" Could we operate schools on a year-round basis? Could we use teachers in a different way and develop programs of independent instruction? Could some kids use video cassettes? Could we use competent people only and use them in a different relationship with students? It seems to me that we have to ask what sort of structures are necessary for teachers, administrators, and students to truly participate in the learning process. It cannot be done now.

Comment

Is it possible to train prospective teachers to teach citizenship education? Have the schools of education taken a look at citizenship education from the standpoint of the training provided teachers? Do prospective teachers learn how to teach students basic moral values?

Dr. Fain

I can only speak for my colleagues here. At FIU we consider these questions for our students, and we require basic courses to raise these questions. Ethics is a study of what one ought to do.

I look to you, Mr. Shanker, as a person who bargains contracts, and suggest that we have to be in the business of ethics together.

Dr. Tucker

Citizenship is an important part of education courses. We are asking questions about what it means to live in this urban, multicultural, and international community. The dimensions of citizenship education include the emerging traditions here in Miami. The definitions of citizenship should be developed based on critical thinking and analysis of some of the important issues that face this and other societies in the world. I see a spectrum of definitions of citizenship education.

Comment

I teach in a high school and as far as I know, every one of our 24 senior high schools has a student government where students learn about the process of government. I know for a fact that we have strong voter registration. I know that our teachers do simulation games, and critical-thinking skills are taught. Senator Gordon, what are your recommendations?

Senator Gordon

It seems to me the fundamental question we have to consider is whether the purpose of education is to socialize children to the existing norms of the society or to teach them the ability to criticize or change society. As Mr. Shanker pointed out, no one can do that without knowing history. One of the things that disturbs me is that we have given too little thought to the values transmitted through the written word. In a society where it is not unusual for children and adults to spend two, three, or four hours a day watching television, there are obviously a lot of books that do not get read. A lot of books that we should read as a society carry values that are not being transmitted. Sharing common values is one of the ways of enculturation, of Americanization.

I also believe that you cannot separate citizenship education and understanding the world around us. When learning to read, students could be reading about some of these values. That is really what a progression of books is. It bothers me when English teachers object to the amount of writing that students are required to do under prescribed standards because they say they do not have time to teach literature. I wonder what the students are writing about and why they are not writing about something they have read.