Chapter 13
Policy and Research on Citizenship Education in the United Kingdom (1998–2018)

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ABSTRACT

This chapter explores citizenship education in the United Kingdom with a particular focus on the major policy and research trends of the last 20 years (1998-2018), particularly in relation to school and non-school based citizenship education. This discussion is articulated in relation to dimensions (i.e., global and national), approaches (i.e., character, social justice, and democratic education), and spaces. The last section of this chapter illuminates some key issues for citizenship education in the UK and how these can help us to understand what might happen everywhere else.

INTRODUCTION

This chapter explores citizenship education in the United Kingdom. The particular focus is on the major policy and research trends of the last twenty years (1998-2018), particularly in relation to school and non-school based citizenship education for primary and secondary school students.

The question of citizenship –and citizenship education- in the UK has been highly convulsed during these two decades. In 1998, the Good Friday Agreement between most of Northern Ireland's political parties, the British and the Irish Government lead to a greater stability in Northern Ireland ending with the thirty-year periods of violence and repression often known as the 'Troubles'. Simultaneously, the Labour Government of Blair had been recently elected (1997) with the promise of 'devolving' autonomous institutions to Wales and Scotland. The process of devolution transferred competences from central government to the 'national' governments of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland (Andrews & Mycock, 2007). The jurisdiction in England was kept on the hands of the UK Parliament. Since then,

the relevance of national/regional parties have grown. Arguably, the most well-known case has been Scotland where a Referendum for the Independence took place in 2014[1]. Devolution, however, has not satisfied everyone. Since 1997, some English nationalists have argued that the process is unfair, with rules applying to England been decided in the UK Parliament including political representatives from the 'four nations' (see e.g. Seth-Smith, 2013). English nationalism has also grown feeding parties and organizations such as UKIP, avant-gardes of Brexit. This has more recently led to the results of the United Kingdom European Union membership referendum (2016) showing clear in-country differences (e.g. whilst 53.38% of the English voters voted 'Leave', only 38.00% of the Scottish voters did).

UK is a highly diverse country, in both social and regional terms. Let's take as an example the different ways in which Britons relate with the (often) controversial notion of Britishness (see e.g. Smith, 2016). Although questions of national identity are always complex, Britishness in the UK appears to be distinctively conceived by ethnic and regional groups. Kymlicka (2011), for instance, explains:

when the 2003 UK Home Office Citizenship Survey asked 'how strongly you belong to Britain', 85.95 per cent of Indians, 86.38 per cent of Pakistanis, and 86.85 per cent of Bangladeshis said that they belong either 'fairly' or 'very' strongly to Britain – numbers that are essentially identical to the 86.7 per cent of whites who said they either fairly or very strongly belong. (…) By contrast, only 8.5 per cent of Catholics in Northern Ireland identify as British (Coakley, 2007). That may be an exceptional case, but Scots too are less likely than immigrants to identify as British – a seemingly stable 33 per cent of Scots reject even a partial British identity (Bond and Rosie, 2002). (pp. 284-285)

Diversity in the UK does not only apply to the social, political and economic landscape but also to educational policy, practice and research. Educational policy, practice and even research are very different in each of the four nations. The UK does not have a common policy but rather each region has its own educational jurisdiction (Colley, 2007). Key principles such as compulsory schooling entry age, higher education fees and the primary and secondary curriculum have historically differed (and still do) from one nation to the other (Phillips, 2010). In this context, citizenship education policy and practice are highly diverse, and this diversity also impacts upon research conducted on this area.

This chapter is structured as follows. The educational policy related to citizenship education for each of the four nations is first examined. The analysis begins with the Crick Report's recommendations of 1998, often named as one of the key frameworks framing citizenship education in England but also elsewhere (e.g. Farthing, 2010; Husbands, 2007; Maes & Vanheeswijck, 2005; Rodrigo, 2014). This is followed by a consideration of the key themes emerging from citizenship education research conducted in the UK context. Particularly, the focus is on highlighting the dimensions, approaches and spaces articulating educational research in citizenship education. We conclude by exploring some key issues for citizenship education in the UK and how these can illuminate what happens everywhere else.

POLICY: THE CONTEXT FOR CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION IN ENGLAND, WALES, SCOTLAND AND NORTHERN IRELAND

In this section, an overview of policies related to citizenship education (from 1998 – 2018) for each of the four nations is provided. Although there are some similarities (for instance between Scottish and

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