

## Chapter 53

# An Enquiry into the use of Technology and Student Voice in Citizenship Education in the K–12 Classroom

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### ABSTRACT

*This chapter describes a case study conducted in a high school setting. A students as researchers' approach is used to explore the use of technology in the citizenship education classroom. The case study demonstrates how starting student learning from the perspectives of the multicultural backgrounds of the students and using technology can greatly enhance the learning experiences of the students within the citizenship education classroom.*

### INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a case study of an educator utilising student voice and technology in the teaching and learning of citizenship education. The context of the case study is within a specialised program for urban youth at risk of dropping out of high school prematurely. The chapter presents the notion that student voice can be used as a pedagogical tool within the citizenship educa-

tion classroom, which can be capitalised further by using technology as a medium for delivery of the concept.

The chapter discusses the democratic nature of student voice, which is in alignment with the underlying tenets of the introduction of citizenship education as a classroom, whilst technology as an engaging classroom tool has been supported in the literature.

The chapter first provides a background to the area of citizenship education and its intrinsic link with political theories and practices. It presents the

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foundation and rationale for its introduction into classroom as a discrete school subject. A discussion of current pedagogical approaches to teaching and learning of citizenship education is provided.

The final section of the chapter presents a brief description of the case study, which involved student voice and technology for the exploration of the concept of citizenship within the citizenship education classroom. The case study highlighted possible obstacles that an educator can encounter with regards to incorporating technology within the citizenship education classroom.

## **BACKGROUND**

Citizenship education as a subject area is difficult to define. The reason for this is its inextricable link with the ideology and definitions of 'citizenship' in its most general sense. There are two areas of debate in which the tension within citizenship education lie: the political, and the educational (Cammaerts & Van Audenhove, 2005). The political debate stems from the question of the meaning of citizenship, is it national identity and so depends on your birthplace or can it be 'bestowed' on a person after obtaining immigrant status? Davies (1999) suggests that this link between citizenship and nationality may have been formed since the 18th century. Heater (1997) expands this premise further by proposing that by the 1800s the terms, citizenship and nationality, had become interchangeable. However, this link has become a contentious one in an era of increased global migration, resulting in the cultural and ethnic tapestries formed in many countries today. Therefore, some are calling for the ideology of cosmopolitan citizenship to ensure that no student within a classroom feels alienated or excluded (Osler & Starkey, 2003; Fullwinder, 2001). The second area of debate is characterised by the argument that involves the purpose of education, with debate amongst educational theorists regarding the appropriateness of such a topic as a school subject

(Hébert & Sears, 2001). Citizenship Education, as a contested issue, can even be witnessed by the array of terminologies that have been associated with the subject area, such as Education for Democratic Citizenship (EDC) (Nussbaum, 2002; Osler & Starkey, 2006), cosmopolitan citizenship (Fullwinder, 2001), citizenship education (Osler & Starkey, 2001; Kerr, 1999), and civics education (Torney-Purta, et al., 2005).

A greater understanding of citizenship education and its many manifestations can be gained by discussing the rationale for its introduction into many western countries' school curricula, in particular the US, the United Kingdom, and Canada. Over the last twenty years (Osler & Starkey, 2006), many developed democratic nations have experienced a reduction in voting in elections. Many countries, fuelled in part by media anecdotes, believe that there is a moral deficit and lack of civic and political engagement in young people. These 'observations,' coupled with issues of religion and state in many parts of the world, have created a perceived fear of the demise of democracy (Hébert & Sears, 2001; Bennett, 2008; Osler & Starkey, 2003). In order to counteract these trends Citizenship Education was introduced as a specific school subject through which young people could be taught how to be 'good citizens' (Hébert & Sears, 2001).

However, as would be expected in dealing with such a complex concept as 'citizenship,' there is an array of theoretical conceptual frameworks for the political theory of citizenship that attempt to balance the necessary elements within citizenship education to produce a comprehensive structure for its interpretation. From exploration of the literature of the politics of citizenship, there are three main political approaches to citizenship education: liberal individualism, communitarian, and republican (Mouffe, 1992). Liberal Individualism is based on a 'rights' approach to citizenship and emphasises the political and civil rights of the individual. The communitarian citizenship paradigm is based on citizenship that is obligatory. It views the

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