

Implement Civics and Citizenship Education

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Abstract: *The renewed interest in Civics and Citizenship Education (CCE) in schools. Debates about how CCE should and can be implemented have diversified, as teachers have developed their views about appropriate classroom and whole school approaches. Their rationale for CCE goes far beyond the 'civic deficit model' as a justification for curriculum space for CCE and as well, important links to other curriculum priorities have been identified. The teachers argue that the development of civic knowledge is an important part of CCE, they also express strong views about the role of CCE in empowering students to be able to participate as active and informed citizens in their own local, national and global communities. In the paper, we present and analyse the opinions of teachers, and discuss their views of CCE.*

Keywords: implement, civics, citizenship, education, teachers

1. Introduction

Civics and citizenship education is an important national priority. Our democracy depends on informed participation. Schools play a crucial role in helping to foster such participation. Young people need to understand the workings of our political and legal system, and our history as a democratic nation, so they can take their place as confident and open-minded citizens in a twenty-first century India.

Debates about how CCE can and should be implemented have diversified, as teachers have developed their views about appropriate classroom and whole school approaches. Their rationale for CCE goes far beyond the 'civic deficit model' as a justification for curriculum space for CCE. While teachers differ in their views on the priorities, content and teaching methods for CCE, discussions continue about the scope of CCE now, and how it should be implemented in the future. Teachers argue that the development of civic knowledge is an important part of CCE, but they also express strong views about the role of CCE in empowering students to be able to participate as active and informed citizens in their own local, national and global communities. Teachers make important links between CCE and other curriculum priorities such as middle schooling, the thinking curriculum, literacy, and student welfare. Teachers also suggest a range of strategies to achieve these goals into the future. In this paper, we interpret the voices of teachers and their views on CCE, we discuss cases of their practice in schools, and suggest where CCE might be headed in the future.

2. Methodology

The paper draws on action research the authors have conducted as part of our work in CCE teacher professional development in Delhi. In that time, we have worked with over 200 teachers to explore and define the scope of CCE. Teachers have been encouraged to articulate their views on the core goals for CCE, and their desired learning outcomes for their students. They have shared their views on the various ways they are defining and implementing CCE now, and their plans for the future.

In each CCE professional development program, teachers were asked to firstly define 'who is a citizen', the concept of

'citizenship', and the current scope of CCE in their schools and classrooms. Their initial views and discussions with colleagues were recorded. Second, individual teachers and groups in school teams were invited to complete analysis of CCE in their schools. As teachers shared and discussed the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to CCE programs in their schools, their views about the scope and concept of CCE grew. The professional development program was based on accepted key principles of effective teacher professional development, emphasising that the focus should be on the defined needs of teachers and allowing them to validate and extend their existing practice. The program was delivered over an extended time frame, and was grounded in teachers' current work. This was to ensure that the experiences could be translated into actual school practice, and therefore have a tangible impact on improving student learning outcomes in CCE. As the teachers returned to the group each time, there were opportunities for them to share their practice and learn from the experiences. These findings are recorded in the paper.

3. Context of the Study

The re-emphasis on Civics and Citizenship Education (CCE) amongst policy makers, the development of the Discovering Democracy program, and the subsequent new initiatives in CCE in the past five years, have led to a great deal of thinking about CCE, and the development of many innovative and engaging CCE programs.

Soon after the launch of Discovering Democracy, the baseline study of Delhi schools showed that for approximately 50% of schools, CCE was a 'low priority,' and of 'little importance'. Teachers reported that 'their level of understanding and enthusiasm for CCE was very low'. Almost 100% of schools surveyed reported that they were aware of the Discovering Democracy curriculum materials, but there was considerable variation in the use of the materials. Nevertheless, 'the study revealed that teachers are now much better informed about resources for CCE, and are more likely to creatively select a range of resources from commercial publishers and the public domain'. Teachers are now more positive about the inclusion of CCE into the school curriculum. Only 14% of primary schools and 10% of secondary schools categorised the attitudes of teachers to CCE as 'indifferent'.

4. Teachers' Views on the Concept and Scope of CCE

Civic knowledge

In the CCE professional development program, teachers are asked to contribute their views about what CCE is, why CCE is back on the agenda, and why CCE should claim space in the curriculum? The first area teachers always identify as being a core element of CCE is 'civic knowledge'. Teachers believe that CCE must include 'the development of a body of knowledge, skills and understandings of the workings of society', they argue that 'young people need knowledge of India political and social heritage, democratic processes, and public administration'. In every program group, teachers wanted their students to know about their local community and their nation, but they stressed that 'global citizenship is crucial in today's world'. But teachers echo the view that,

Secondary teachers demonstrate that both 'minimalist' and 'maximalist' models (Evans, 1995) of CCE deserve space in schools. Some teachers are clearly more focused on ensuring that their students developed 'minimal' knowledge of civil and legal status, the constitution and politics, rather than a ..contextualised maximal model, looking particularly at consciousness of self as a citizen, a self with rights and with the responsibilities to gain civic virtues and capacities to use that in relationship with others. (Dalley, 1999)

Active citizenship

Teachers promoting a 'maximal view' of CCE say that 'schools have a core responsibility to encourage active citizenship in our young people'. They agree with the statement from more than a decade ago in the findings of the second Senate Inquiry into Active Citizenship that concluded,

An active citizen is not someone who has simply accumulated a store of facts about the workings of the political system - someone who is able to perform well in a political quiz. An understanding of how the political and social systems work is an essential element, but equally important is the motivation and the capacity to put that knowledge to good use... An active citizen is willing and able to translate that belief into action... (Senate Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training, 1991).

Teachers express the view that students should understand how participation and decision-making operate in contemporary India, and how the nations' civic life might change in the future, and they must be given chances to participate and make decisions themselves.

Teachers argue that 'all students need learning opportunities to empower them to be active and informed citizens in local, national and international contexts'. They are firm in the view that these experiences 'don't only take place in subject classes and formal studies'. Opportunities must be provided in extra-curricula activities, student leadership programs, whole school programs and community activities requiring active participation. This view is consistent with conclusions formed by academics involved in the study, Citizenship and

Education in Twenty-eight countries: Civic Knowledge and Engagement at Age Fourteen (IEA, 2001) who argue that,

If we want greater understanding in civics, then students need the opportunity to engage; which in turn promotes their belief and understanding that participation and engagement are worthwhile (Mellor, Kennedy & Greenwood). Civic education should be based on important content that crosses disciplines, and should be participatory, interactive, related to life, conducted in a non-authoritarian environment, cognizant of the challenges of societal diversity, and co-constructed with parents, the community, and non-government organizations, as well as the school.

Values education

Teachers also stress that young people must learn how to understand and evaluate differing points of view in the community, so they may live and work with each other. They recognise and articulate the need to promote core values in our young people. Many comment that values and citizenship education should be strongly linked, and they list the promotion of these values as fundamental; 'tolerance, respect, cooperation, open-mindedness, compassion, fairness, responsibility'. All groups of teachers emphasise the values dimension stated as an aim of Discovering Democracy materials which says students should develop personal character traits, such as respecting individual worth and human dignity, empathy, respect for the law, being informed about public issues, critical mindedness and willingness to express points of view, listen, negotiate and compromise.

Teachers say that 'schools can have powerful influences on the lives of young people' and 'we must provide them with learning experiences to clarify values and model good citizenship'.

CCE links to student welfare

Teachers place a great deal of emphasis on the links between CCE and students' well being. Many argue that effective CCE programs can help students where there is social dislocation in school communities resulting from family breakdowns, disengagement with community, and a sense of youth powerlessness caused by rapid world changes. Teachers say that young people need to be able to develop understandings about the formation of their own identity. Teachers believe that students' self esteem and active participation can be enhanced 'through engagement in school-based democratic practices', 'peer support programs which encourage older children to support younger children', and community service schemes. They say that student leadership programs are important, particularly where the learning experiences are 'real,' and lead to positive outcomes and social action, but the 'decision making must take account of students' opinions'. Importantly, schools should work to achieve wide participation in leadership opportunities, to avoid the involvement of only the privileged few. Students' sense of genuine involvement in school governance and real life issues in the community are defined as critical factors in the development of positive

feelings about the community, so this dimension needs to be addressed in schools.

Linking CCE to students' own experience

Not surprisingly, primary teachers supported a model where young people 'learn first to understand the concepts of rights and responsibilities in their own families and at the local level'. As they progress into the upper grades of primary, they begin to tackle more complex 'civic understandings about contemporary issues in their own and the wider global community'. Many teachers commented that 'we don't provide enough opportunities for young people to learn about issues which they really care about'. They made the point that CCE issues such as 'rights and responsibilities', 'teenagers and the law', and contemporary social issues are of vital relevance to young people, and 'we should be trying to build in opportunities to negotiate the curriculum, at least some of the time, with our students'.

In 1995, a study of one thousand West Australian teenagers' (Phillips, 1995) asked them to consider 'what makes a good citizen'? The young people ranked 'respect for others, regardless of age', 'respect for equality', 'concern for disabled people and the environment', far more highly than knowledge of our history or understanding the constitution to be a good citizen. Teachers often said that we aren't tuning the curriculum to students' interests enough.

5. How teachers are implementing CCE

Varied Approaches and Models

Listening to teachers in the extended professional development program, it was clear that their experiences reflected the IEA study views that 'civic knowledge, citizenship skills, civic attitudes and civic engagement' are all important for the delivery of effective CCE outcomes (Mellor, 2001). Teachers articulated a number of approaches to achieve coverage of these varied dimensions of CCE in schools. There were three major 'big ideas' or themes which primary and secondary teachers use to organize approaches and models for CCE in their schools; classroom teaching and learning themes, ideas for whole school approaches, and strategies to develop school-community partnerships.

Classroom teaching and learning strategies implemented by teachers include specific subjects, such as 'Understanding the law', using units of work from Discovering Democracy materials, and teaching, learning and assessment approaches which encourage active citizenship/participation. Cross key learning area initiatives have been developed in many schools, for instance in 'environmental citizenship programs'. Our research showed that teachers believe that one of the most important aspects of promoting positive CCE outcomes is associated with specific teaching and learning pedagogies. In some schools, the incorporation of specific skills such as inquiry, teamwork and problem-solving have been the focus of classroom practice. In the classroom, teachers believed the success of CCE is associated with staff modelling of CCE principles where students take active and 'real' roles concerning their learning, where students are involved in negotiating the curriculum, and in experiential learning.

The second way primary and secondary schools often frame CCE programs, is through whole school approaches to CCE. Many teachers talk about the importance of the whole school culture in the delivery of effective CCE outcomes and argued that there should be a democratic approach to school decision-making, and democratic models should allow all members of the school community to 'live' active citizenship. Teachers questioned whether their schools involve teachers and students in decision-making enough, whether democratic principles are applied, and if students are provided with active, valuable and effective roles in their school communities. Teachers argue that opportunities for students to experience active citizenship, are important 'barometers' for CCE in their school. Teachers who reported that their schools had some of these examples in place provided case studies of best practice CCE; vibrant and effective student representative councils; the use of 'student action' teams investigating issues of concern to students; examples of student leadership involving peer support/mediation, cross-age tutoring; and inclusion of action dimensions as important aspects of learning outcomes for students. The Australian analysis of the IEA study also confirms that 'experiencing democracy appears to be a good way to build civic knowledge and gain some commitment to civic processes like voting' (Mellor, 2001).

Teachers also talked about the importance of school-community partnerships and links in CCE. These links allow students to become involved in 'real' and purposeful projects. Often these projects are developed across key learning areas, and it is beneficial for students to apply their learning to real contexts and experiences. Teachers identified examples of these links as joint projects developed with local community groups, for instance, working with local industry to monitor water quality in creeks. They cited social service projects and programs such as the Duke of Edinburgh awards, Plan your own Enterprise, and YouthParliament, as leading to active learning and 'real' CCE. Another teacher encouraged her students to put together business and service directories for school families and the local community. In another school, the students' representative council devised a marketing strategy for their school. Students collected data from school stakeholders as well as the local community to research these groups' views about the school. This informed their recommendations about how best to promote the educational opportunities at their school. This strategy was showcased at a school assembly and presented to the School Council. In a tangible example of CCE being linked to enterprise education, students conducted a study of their school's purchasing patterns and procedures. This information was made available to local merchants and economic development groups.

Implementing CCE through teacher 'champions'

For CCE to be successful in schools, our research has shown that the school needs teacher 'champions' of CCE. In the extended professional development program, it became clear that where there was evidence of strong teacher leaders providing vision, generating enthusiasm, and sharing ideas with colleagues in their schools, successful implementation of effective CCE was bound to occur. Further, it seemed that the success of programs depended on the teacher 'champion'

or small group of teachers influencing school leaders and curriculum managers, and educating them about the value and importance of CCE.

These 'champions' were able to explain to school leaders and other colleagues ways that CCE can 'value-add' to school outcomes, and were able to link CCE to other important curriculum initiatives including: CCE as a National Goal for the 21st Century, the Discovering Democracy program, in the India . In a session of the professional development program, teachers brainstorm, and then discuss their views about how CCE can be linked to other issues on the education agenda. All groups we have worked with identify links with the India Department of Education and Training initiatives such as; focus on the Early years, Middle years, Literacy and Enterprise Education. Teachers see CCE being linked to teaching and learning issues including the thinking curriculum, focus on learning styles, key competencies, information and communications technologies, negotiated curriculum, inquiry, and assessment issues.

Teacher champions encourage their schools to recognize the value of CCE and include CCE outcomes in their school charters and goals. These teachers articulate the view that professional development needs to target Principals and other school leaders including curriculum co-ordinators, to ensure the long term sustainability of CCE and its inclusion in school programs.

Implementing CCE in the future

Discovering Democracy and teacher professional development

While the Discovering Democracy program has funded a great deal of teacher professional development and promoted lively debate about CCE, the momentum needs to be maintained if quality CCE programs and improved student outcomes are to be achieved in the future. Clearly, there is an ongoing need for further effective teacher professional development in CCE that focuses on teacher-defined needs, and makes links to current school practice. It should allow teachers time to clarify the scope and content of CCE, and include local, national, and global curriculum content. CCE policy makers will need to keep a focus on pre-service teacher education, and to the professional development needs of the influx of beginning teachers entering the teaching force in the next few years. There should be space for both integrated, subject based and whole school approaches that include 'civics' and 'active citizenship'. Our research showed that teachers 'value the time to plan, the sharing of ideas, and the chance to trial and develop new ideas' in their schools. They 'really value the sharing of experiences with colleagues', the ideas and stimulus of 'outside experts' and professional development that is linked closely to their immediate practice.

The Erebus study (2001) of the initial implementation of the Discovering Democracy program, made some clear recommendations about the use of the materials to inform what should happen in CCE in the future. The study found that the best teaching using the materials saw the social/historical material in the kits firmly connected to

students' current real world experiences. Leading edge schools have ensured the sustainability of Discovering Democracy by integrating it as one part of a broader CCE focus across the school's curriculum, reinforced by many aspects of classroom and school community life. These schools have taken a sophisticated approach to 'un-crowding the curriculum' by linking CCE to other school curriculum priorities. Discovering Democracy materials are most successfully used as the basis of integrated studies in SOSE. Many schools adopt a cross key learning area (KLA) approach to CCE, so the program material is included for example in English, (debate, written exposition) and even maths, with for example, analysis of voting systems. The school planners work on the assumption that learning activities can be connected to a range of KLA's and competencies. The teachers carefully define the links to build on students' understandings, rather than simply providing multi-purpose activities. In these schools, Discovering Democracy is not just a program, but a holistic approach to developing students' understanding of CCE concepts.

Clearly, students need opportunities to study the past, but also they need to be actively involved in relevant and authentic learning experiences about contemporary and futures issues, in their own and the broader community.. To be active and informed citizens in today's world, our teachers agree that they sometimes need to change curriculum 'on the spot' so that students can make sense of issues unfolding around them.

Both teacher professional development and school CCE programs should include 'civic knowledge', 'civic realities', and 'civic megatrends'. The realities are that many students are disengaged from schooling and need to be reconnected. Unemployment is a reality for many young people, youth suicide rates are rising, and there are unpleasant social realities to be confronted. Teachers need to make the links with real situations, positively, so students know they can take action, and do.

For students to feel connected to their communities, they also need opportunities for both service learning and community-oriented projects.

In working with teachers, and listening to their views about where they should be headed with CCE, we agreed that more work needs to be done to listen to the voices of students. Research in middle schooling (ACSA, 2000) shows that many young people are disengaged in their schooling, but they do want to study issues of direct concern to them and their futures. CCE is about their rights, their responsibilities, connecting to and participating in their world. To achieve these goals, more curriculum renewal in CCE is required. In the executive summary of the IEA study into Citizenship and Education, (2001), the authors conclude that we need to rethink civic education. They say that the times we are in raise both new challenges and new opportunities for countries seeking to nourish and preserve democratic values and institutions. New global realities call for a major reconsideration by educators and policy makers of how young people are being prepared to participate in democratic societies in the early 21st century.

Young people are both troubled and optimistic about their world, so they deserve the chance in their schools and classrooms to develop understandings and skills of inquiry and problem solving that enable them to take positive actions for their future.

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