

A GENERIC VIEW OF CITIZENSHIP by John MacBeath

Citizenship presents a special challenge to national priorities because it addresses fundamental questions about the purpose of schools, the nature of learning and the place of target setting. Citizenship is unlike most 'subjects' in a number of respects. It is difficult to define. It cannot easily be 'taught' and it rests on a set of premises which are essentially contested.

It is contested because there is no consensus on what kind of society we want or even on what our society 'is', and there is no simple consensus on what the role of children and young people is or ought to be in that society. We recognise that any prescriptions in these areas are specific to different contexts and cultures and their histories.

There is, however, broad agreement on a baseline of what what behaviours are desirable and undesirable, what knowledge is necessary for successful social life and what skills will most help young people to survive and prosper when they leave school. Even in the most contested area, that of values, there is a body of consensus on values which promote the interests of society, the individual and their inter-relationship.

One definition of a democracy to which teachers, parents and policy makers could equally subscribe is:

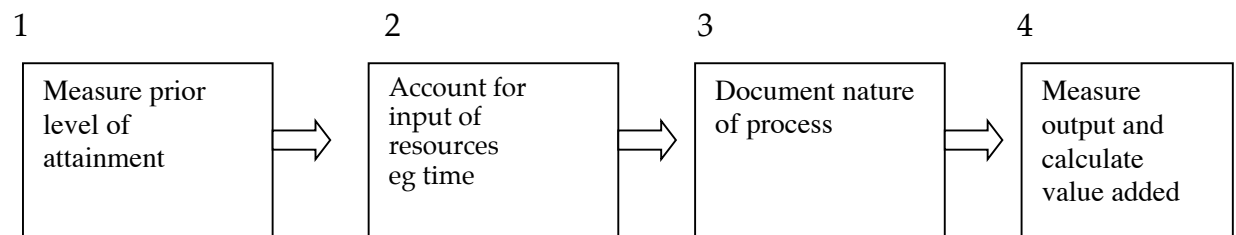
“A democratic society, or a participative democracy...is one in which its members are empowered to make decisions and policies concerning themselves and their society but where such decisions are constrained by principles of nonrepression and nondiscrimination.”

(Pearson, 1992, p.84).

It is incumbent on us, therefore, to know to what extent our schools are providing the context for that essential baseline to be promoted and to what extent we can gain evidence of children and young people possessing that awareness and exercising the skills and values implicit in that statement.

Applying the traditional 'black box' input-output model to citizenship we find ourselves in complex territory. It is difficult to apply the traditional

model as, for example, with value-added measures in mathematics - a popular measure because it lends itself so well to the model it look like this:



This model which underpins the reporting of attainment and targets tends to ignore the middle two boxes and assumes that the difference between 1 and 4 is contributed by the school or by the teacher. Support for this is provided by school effectiveness research which shows mathematics to be the most 'value free' in terms of social background and out-of-school effects (discounting private tuition of course). Mathematics is described by Pinker as 'ruthlessly cumulative' and so lends itself fairly well to this additive approach. Research shows English to be much less amenable to the school or teacher effect and art, music and other subjects prove even more elusive of the input-output black box approach.

Citizenship sits least easily within this model because it is most shaped by forces which lie beyond the classroom and beyond the school. It is also very different from mathematics because its development is neither linear nor reducible to a set of simple conceptual building blocks. Prior 'attainment' is equally elusive of measurement. Without dismissing the need to get a better fix on 1 and 4 above, the argument leads us to take greater account of 2 and 3. We must, in other words, have knowledge of structures, resources and processes which may provide insights and with some forms of proxy measures for citizenship development. For example, we might reasonably expect a school serious about citizenship to have information (data? targets?) on how it invests and evaluates citizenship which is developed through the following avenues:

- taught specifically through citizenship, PSE and other customised courses
- embedded across the curriculum
- planned into the day-to-day ethos of the school

- realised through formal structures such as pupil councils
- included within out-of-hours programmes such as study support
- built systematically into residential experiences
- dealt with through community activities and programmes
- developed through home-school, teacher-parent collaborative activities

Schools may, together with teachers and students, set targets in these individual areas and may monitor and evaluate the extent to which these do, in their own ways, contribute to specific kinds of citizenship development. The school which is highly effective will be one which is able to knit these together into a coherent whole and be able to provide evidence of student achievement relative to goals. That will necessarily be underwritten by a conceptual framework such as the following, for example:

	Understanding	Competencies	Values
Knowing	Acquiring knowledge which is processed in ways that lead to understanding	Knowing what skills and competencies are valued in different contexts and by different people (e.g. by employers)	Recognising what values are important and less important for the welfare of self and others
Feeling	Feeling that knowledge acquired is important to you	Having confidence in your own skills and a belief that they can be put to use	Internalising values and making them your own
Doing	Using knowledge to act, to initiate, to make decisions	Practising and testing competencies in real-life situations	Acting on and staying faithful to values, even in challenging social situations

With such a framework – and schools need to work on their own as this is intrinsic to their own organisational learning – target setting becomes more transparent at every level. A framework such as this promotes dialogue among staff, between staff and students, between schools and their authorities, and between authorities and policy makers/adviser at national

level. In our enthusiasm for target setting we must constantly be reminded of the primary and secondary purposes of the exercise. The first is developmental – to help children and young to grow in understanding and behaviour. The second is an accountability purpose – to hold ourselves as educators transparently responsible for promoting that goal. These two purposes are, of course, inter-related but when we fail to get the balance right we lose the commitment of teachers, and of students. When we lose sight of the primary purpose the secondary purpose becomes meaningless and subject to subversion.

So, the promotion of the dialogue around the three dimensional matrix sits at the very centre of education for citizenship. This dialogue has an intrinsic value but its effects and its success may be measured, in large part, but not exclusively, by the bottom rung – of ‘doing’ – doing understanding, doing competencies, doing values.

In a world of highly sophisticated measures we might be able to make statements about percentages of pupils at different levels of attainment in citizenship but a more secure starting point is at school level.

Targets at school level

Targets at school level are very much easier to justify and to monitor nationally than targets at pupil level. Schools may set and negotiate targets at the input, process levels and, to a more limited extent, at the output or outcomes level.

- there are clearly identified structures and strategies for the development of citizenship through all eight (or 8 - x) avenues (this gives a 1-8 scale with the possibility of further levels of differentiation at each level)
- there are rigorous and transparent procedures for evaluating effectiveness at each of these (or at 8 – X) levels

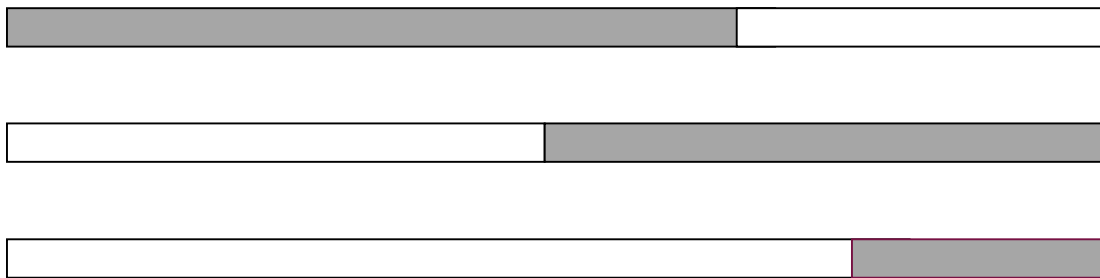
- evidence is available for students and teachers of pupil achievements and progress in understanding, competencies and values-in-action

These may be seen as 'targets' both developmental and accountability in nature.

Development and accountability

The balance between these may be portrayed differently at each of three levels.

- at school level – balance towards development
- at authority level – balance between support and accountability
- at national level – balance towards accountability



At authority level

The role of the authority is a balance between development and accountability. Its first duty is to support the schools in their process and progress, individually and partnership. The quality of its support is manifested in its nurturing of the vitality and difference from school to school rather than imposing a uniform template. The accountability purpose requires some form of aggregated reporting but the inherent danger is that the distinctiveness and individuality of schools may be compromised.

At national level

National level reporting of achievement and target setting is a further level of aggregation of schools but with a stronger accountability purpose. Targets set and achieved may be reported at school level –percentages of authorities and/or schools with structures, strategies, evaluation procedures, pupil data. It is, of course, possible to abstract from this aggregated pupil data for target setting purposes but that has much more problematic potential.