POLICY PAPER

The political and policy responses to migration related diversity in Britain's education system

A European Approach to Multicultural Citizenship: Legal Political and Educational Challenges
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Overview

Current data shows that the percentage of ethnic minority pupils in state-sector schooling in England makes up 20.6% of all children aged 4-11yrs (in *primary* education), and 16.8% of children aged 11-16yrs (in *secondary* schools). At the primary level, the largest ethnic minority group is Pakistani which accounts for 3.3% of pupils, followed by White Other pupils (2.6%) and Black African pupils (2.5%). At secondary school level the largest ethnic minority pupils are Pakistani (2.5%), followed by Indian (2.4%) and White Other (2.3%).

It is important to know something of the ways in which this migration related diversity has given rise to educational challenges in Britain; how these have been addressed in the past, and how the responses to present challenges maybe indicative of a broader approach to minority cultural differences in Britain. One way of understanding this is to look at examples of 'difference' specific education as inclusion - not separatism - that have assumed the greatest prominence. These include those cases or mobilisations that have been/are concerned with the promotion or recognition of minority differences with a view to pluralizing or 'broadening' the national culture.

Anti-racist and multicultural education

Britain is known for possessing a citizenship culture that is inclusive of minority of differences, and education is one of the arenas in which this is particularly evident amongst the profound debates between advocates of anti-racist education and multicultural education. These approaches differ in their specific political imperatives and their policy implications.

Anti-Racist education is premised upon the idea that education should confront and challenge prevailing societal attitudes and practices marked by racial dynamics. It is argued that because racial biases will exist amongst all students, teachers and institutional practices, racism is not just a problem that ethnic minorities should have to address alone.

Throughout the 1980s this view was supported by evidence showing that children with African-Caribbean backgrounds were failing to achieve basic qualifications that were necessary for employment, let alone the social mobility aspired by their parents. This was particularly the case with African–Caribbean boys who were increasingly found to be in conflict with teachers, or unemployed, and/or disproportionately present in the criminal justice system.

Anti-racist education sought to redress these tendencies by promoting a positive image of 'black' people through such means as the teaching of 'black' history, promotion of 'black' role models, explicit recognition of the continuing existence of racism in society, and a greater awareness and sensitivity amongst educators of racial issues. What this ultimately comprised, then, was a political education that highlighted the processes and effects of racism within society, along with other forms of discrimination, and its implications for all students.

It was not applied in education policy, however, until the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA) became receptive to its ideas. Indeed, much of what we know as both anti-racist and multicultural education has been enacted at the local education authority level. This is because LEAs are responsible for education within the jurisdiction of county councils and metropolitan boroughs, which includes responsibility for all state schools with the exception of those that apply and are afforded 'voluntary aided status' (and can therefore opt out) under the terms of the 1944 Education Act.

As such, because of these and other powers, not least section 11 of the Local Government Act (1966) which afforded local authorities additional funds to support the presence of significant numbers of ethnic minorities requiring language and other access assistance, in many multi-ethnic urban areas LEAs have been able to encourage anti-racist and multicultural initiatives in the face of – and at the cost of – some vociferous opposition.

This might be characterised as 'municipal drift'; a further example of which can be found in one of the earliest adoptions of multicultural praxis. This follows Birmingham LEA's introduction in 1975 of a new Agreed Syllabus which required that pupils learn about and learn from the great world faiths present in the city. Some other LEAs promoted innovations including the provision of *halal* meat in schools in 1983. Indeed, the guidelines issued by Bradford LEA professed (i) equality of treatment; opportunity and services in shared educational settings; alongside (ii) an equal right to the maintenance of distinctive identities and loyalties of culture, language, religion and custom. Both of these positions were set out in their LEA policy statement and it is important to emphasise that both anti-racist and multicultural education were diffuse conceptions of educational reform, and to that extent it is difficult to present either as entirely distinct from the other.

Both of these positions were set out in their LEA policy statement that aimed to prepare all children and young people for life in a multicultural society, to counter racism and racist attitudes, and the inequalities and discrimination which result from them, to build on and develop the strengths of cultural and linguistic diversity, and to respond sensitively to the special needs of minority groups.

Centralisation and the move to Citizenship Education

This praxis was effected by a centralising government that introduced a compulsory national school curriculum which accounted for the majority of what would be taught in schools; embedding the use of national school league tables as a measure of a school's success and strengthening the role of 'parental choice'.

While anti-racist and multicultural educational concerns have sometimes amounted to internally contested debates; they have had a continuing impact on educational policy and discourse. This is most evident in the view that educators should be proactive in ensuring that ethnic minorities are not disadvantaged by ethnic and racial 'difference', and that one way of ensuring this is to promote and recognise the positive benefits of diversity. Furthermore, the challenges posed by migration related diversity in education are more frequently discussed in terms national concerns, where in the past they may have been more regionally focused in issues relating to local education authorities.

To some extent this was precipitated by the introduction of the Education Reform Act (ERA) (1988) which curbed the operation of anti-racist and multicultural education but also incorporated some of their concerns. This ambiguous relationship between the imposition of a prescribed unity alongside the recognition of difference and diversity continues to be apparent in the recent introduction and mandatory teaching of citizenship education as a core national curriculum requirement.

Citizenship education is a contested idea and set of policies that denote a variety of implications in different contexts. Its formal introduction into British schools is a recent development that was preceded by a process of consultation undertaken by the Advisory Group on Education for Citizenship and Teaching of Democracy in Schools, which was chaired by Professor Sir Bernard Crick.

Some have said that the avoidance of any overt official government direction in schools concerning political socialisation and citizenship education can almost be seen as a national trait, and this may be witnessed in the equally late adoption in England of the National Curriculum.

Similarly, Sir Bernard Crick himself states that "we were the last civilised country almost in the world to make citizenship part of the national curriculum. I think we thought we didn't need it being the mother of all parliaments and a model to the world of parliamentary government; I think those ideas lingered on and long past reality (Interview with Crick). As his report recommending the introduction of citizenship education put it, part of the groundswell for its recent emergence is undoubtedly a sense of 'civic deficit' epitomised by voter apathy amongst young people which the report claims is inexcusably bad and should and could be remedied.

To this end the government Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA), under the commission chaired by Crick, recommended the implementation of a co-ordinated national strategy for the statutory requirement for schools to spend around five per cent of their curriculum time teaching three interdependent elements of citizenship education. These would comprise (i) social and moral responsibility, (ii) community involvement, and (iii) political literacy.

Whilst these reiterate elements multicultural education they perhaps also constitute a modification of earlier approaches. It is noteworthy that there is no explicit reference to anti-racism and multiculturalism, confirming to some that citizenship education represents a disengagement from these issues.

Others go further in charging the QCA report with 'institutional racism' for demanding that minorities must learn to respect the laws, codes and conventions as much as the majority. This need not be evidence of an assimilatory 'retreat' from anti-racism or multiculturalism, however, but, something that might be characterised as a 're-balancing' of broader discourses of anti-racism and multiculturalism. Indeed, the entire idea of 'citizenship education' is in itself surely evidence of this.

The movement for Muslim schools

The issue that really cuts across the development of antiracism, multiculturalism and citizenship education is that of state-funded faith based schooling. It is worth noting that anti-racism has often been stridently secularist and implicitly, if not explicitly, ambivalent or opposed to faith based schooling, and that educational multiculturalism has ruled out religious schools sought by recent religious minorities such as Muslims and Hindus (but maintained the status quo as per more established Jewish and Catholic state funded faith based schools). The Crick report, meanwhile, did not really engage with the issue of faith schooling because it fell outside its remit.

These dismissals and policy oversights are problematic when we recognise that there are currently over 4,700 state funded Church of England schools; over 2100 Catholic; 35 Jewish and 28 Methodist schools, dwarfing the 7 Muslim schools, or the single Sikh school or Seventh Day Adventist School. Some have described this as an indication of a modern society which is widely perceived as increasingly secular but is paradoxically increasingly multi-faith.

Of all newer minorities that have mobilised for faith schools, Muslims have perhaps been the most vocal, and there are several broader factors informing Muslim mobilisation for faith schools.

The first and broadest factor is paralleled by the interest in other religiously informed faith schooling, and stems from the desire to incorporate more faith-based principles into an integrated education system, so that the 'whole person' can be educated in an Islamic environment. This would *presuppose* faith rather than treating it as something extraneous to education and external to its major objects.

Secondly, and through an interpretation of Islam which posits that after puberty boys and girls should be separated, there is a concern to develop 'safe' environments for post-pubescent children, and in this regard single-sex schooling undoubtedly appeals. This need not be an expression of separatism since respondents tell us that in many

ways they want their children to be raised in a safe environment but still aspire to what successful people aspire to in the west - namely social mobility through education.

A third factor concerns the current lack of specialist training in the Islamic religious sciences in conjunction with general education, so that young people might be educated to serve their communities as potential religious leaders. This includes the desire to have more British trained theologians who can discuss theological issues with a contemporary resonance to the lived experiences of being Muslim in Britain.

Fourthly, in order to impart more accurate knowledge of Islamic civilisations, literature, languages and arts (both past and present), there is a desire to see more aspects of Islamic culture embedded within the teaching and ethos of school curricula that are otherwise normatively couched within a Christian-European tradition.

Finally, there is the concern over the lower educational attainment of Bangladeshi and Pakistani boys in particular, and the belief that greater accommodation of religious and cultural difference will help address this low achievement and prevent further marginalisation.

Recommendations

- There should be continuing national level support for the promotion of local school level policies and strategies directed at accommodating and mainstreaming the needs of ethnic and religious minorities.
- The move to citizenship is to be welcomed where it is able to accommodate issues of ethnic, racial and religious diversity in its prescribed and mandatory national level content within the syllabus and range of topics. Its democracy strand should integrate issues raised by minority diversity within democratic procedures.
- There is a risk that citizenship education may slide into the teaching or imposition of singular histories and experiences, and both policy makers and educational practitioners should be alert to this danger.
- One means of preventing this is to make more publicly visible how each school is adhering to their statutory public duty to promote good race-relations which was made mandatory in the 2000 amendment to the Race Relations Act (1976). This should include having a written policy that is monitored for effectiveness and amended as new challenges arise.
- Other measures should include further endorsement of the local level negotiation and accommodation achieved on matters of uniform, dietary requirements and other cultural needs such as pupil absence for religious festivals.
- An increased support for minority parental engagement with their children’s education and the school, specifically through both translation services and English as an additional language (EAL) requirements
- Moreover, we would like to see a working strategy for the specific allocation of language translation and teaching resources from central government to local education authorities to support of the school aged children of recent migrants from EU accession countries

- This should be informed by further research into the incorporation of all recent migrant children through accurate and reliable data-set on matters including
    - the demographic concentration of recent migrant children in particular school wards;
    - academic and educational outcomes amongst recent migrant children;
    - particular cases of successful or unsuccessful incorporation into the education system in order to help identify the strengths and weaknesses of particular approaches.
- In terms of the curricula content of what is taught in schools, we would like to see greater flexibility in the teaching of the humanities, particularly history, geography and religious studies. By flexibility we mean both the topical content of what is taught as well as the methods of teaching to encourage experimentation where conventional methods have not succeeded.
- As such we would like to see educators and school practitioners afforded greater autonomy, in a manner that can take on board the wishes of parent associations and other stake-holders.
- With respect to faith-based schooling, we would recommend that educators and the government departments should continue to work in partnership in generating networks between faith groups and educational practitioners.
    - This would include bringing more established Independent Muslim Schools into the state-sector through the category of Voluntary Aided schooling in line with Jewish and Catholic Schooling.
    - The Faith Schools inspectorate, a joint group of Muslim and Christian educators, should be used as an example from which to bridge out in terms of inter-faith networking on issues of religion and education.