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CITIZENSHIP THROUGH THE ACADEMIC CURRICULUM

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What is citizenship and how can schools through the curriculum help? This is not a new question. For centuries how to be « good » citizen has been the concern of the home and school. Nelms and Miller argue that « The task of educating literate citizens, of raising the level of public communication, of preparing students for active commitment to and participation in the democratic process has always fallen to the schools. ... To shrink from the task is to handicap our students and imperil the future » (1993, p. 89). Quite a challenge, quite a task.

Cogan and Derricott (1998) in the large international study on citizenship give a working definition of citizen and citizenship, which may help us in our efforts to « build » a citizen.

A *citizen* [is] ... « a constituent member of society ». *Citizenship*, on the other hand, ... [is] said to be « a set of characteristics of being a citizen ». And finally, *citizenship education*, [is] ... « the contribution of education to the development of those characteristics of being a citizen ».

The characteristics of a « good » citizen have been expounded by many, but basically they involve knowing one's rights, knowing one's responsibilities and participating with ethical and moral principles in a community. In pedagogic terms, the citizen of the 21st century must be equipped with the knowledge and skills to interact and face the challenges on the local, national, and global levels. Of course, the citizen must be willing.

« A [« new »] kind of citizenship is needed for the 21st century « multicultural citizenship », Cogan and Derricott (1998) in their international study on citizenship use the term « multidimensional », but basically we as educators need as Banks (2001) points out « To help students acquire reflective and clarified cultural, national, and global identifications; citizenship education must teach them to know, to care, and to act. » Banks (2001) quotes Paulo Freire (1985) in *The Politics of Education: Culture, Power, and Liberation (New York : Bergin & Garvey)* as saying that « students must be taught to read the word and the world ». In other words, they must acquire higher levels of knowledge, understand the relationship between knowledge and action, develop a commitment to act to improve the world, and acquire the skills needed to participate in civic action. Multicultural citizens take actions within their communities and nations to make the world more humane. Multicultural citizenship education helps students learn how to act to change the world ».

Muldoon (p. 67) views citizenship on two levels, the content and the pedagogical. The content level involves students learning about their own land ; that is, basically their language, traditions, values and diversity. Second, content involves learning about one's world and the global concerns in interacting with other cultures and awareness of the technological and communication advancements. The third level involves an understanding of the cosmos, man's place as part of the universe and the philosophic search for meaning in life which transcends daily activity often to the spiritual. The pedagogy strand is that which « ... fosters and develops self-directed active learning ... developing the processes of inquiring and judging, knowing and

understanding — or teaching students to be competent learners ... the beginning of citizenship » (p. 68).

Thus the role of the academic curriculum becomes even more important in today's world. Through the teaching/learning of the subject matter material in both the arts and the sciences more than content is involved ; a pedagogy that helps students acquire skills to empower them in today's world must be in parallel. These skills are of a higher cognitive level involving critical thinking in application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation.

But where does the teaching and learning of English fit into all this. Muldoon (1991) believes that « The English classroom can be a forum in which citizenship is fostered ». Muldoon (1991) argues, however, that « Citizenship cannot be reduced simply to an activity, a lecture, or a now-then lesson. Rather, it is actualized through curriculum and instruction which emphasize learning as a process of discovery rather than a transmittal of information. Teaching then is mainly shared inquiry rather than telling » (p.61).

To put this in more concrete terms related to the English teaching/learning situation, Muldoon (1991) argues that it is important « ... to increase students » range of inquiry and level of independence by introducing them to the role that uncertainty, ambiguity, or chaos plays in the act of interpreting literature. Their range of inquiry is also increased by the complexity of problems, a challenging text poses and by the complexity of reading strategies in solving these problems » (p.62).

Muldoon (1991) gives an extensive illustration of how both content and pedagogy are combined in students' study of one text, *The Scarlet Letter* by Nathaniel Hawthorne, using the paired-student oral response approach which challenges their cognitive skills. The discussions that ensue from the activity essentially involve four types of oral responses to a text followed by written responses. He refers to these responses as initial response to the text, student responses to the presentations, self-evaluation response and revised response. Cognitive skills of critical thinking, connections between old and new information, identification of key words, connections to experience, art, history religion, psychology etc., levels of meaning – literal, symbolic, challenging opposition are considered significant in the learners' interaction with the text, peers and self. In the illustration given by Muldoon (1991), responses center on the so called « crime » that Hester has committed, whether the punishment was just and the role women have in society. It is

argued that through such activities and similar ones, the learners' will be able to participate and cope with 'life's so called « texts » and thus through similar cognitive and participatory skills develop the characteristics of a « good » citizen able and willing to cope with tomorrow's world.

The implications of the foregoing for the schools and the teachers are far reaching. Schools must revisit the objectives of their curricula in this light and have trained teachers who can also act as role models. It is in this context, that many countries have revamped their national curriculums. The Lebanese National Curriculum through the efforts of the National Council of Research and Development (NCERD, 1994) set a plan and framework for educational reform « ... which stress the role of foreign language education in developing the Lebanese student humanistically, socially, and nationally in addition to its role in developing cultural openness and exchange. » The Curricular Objectives (NCERD, 1997) of the National English Curriculum are detailed according to seven categories: reading, writing, speaking, listening, thinking skills, study skills, and cultural awareness based on a thematic content-based approach with the higher level cognitive skills being interspersed throughout each.

It is through such similar activities as Muldoon (1991) described that the textbooks were written. As a co-author of the second and third secondary texts for the Humanities and Literature Sections, I would like to share with you a few examples as to how an attempt was made to help students' acquire the cognitive skills in application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation.

A quick look through the texts indicates diversity of themes and genres. It is hoped that through this approach, students' will be exposed not only to their own culture, but also to many others, important in the development of a « good » citizen of the « world »

Before an activity is given from the third secondary text, one students' self/evaluation revised written response on *The Scarlet Letter* from Muldoon's (1991) activity is worthwhile. The teacher had asked the students after listening to other students' responses whether there was any new information they had found which might have changed their viewpoints. One student in the initial response wrote the following as part of the activity.

Hester has had to keep her feelings in, and in the process, lost some of them and has « toughened » up ... she is withering, forming an outer-shell, which protects her (as it hurts her) (Muldoon, 1991, p. 64).

After listening to other students' responses, the student included the following in a revised response.

I totally forgot about the red rose in Chapter 1 ! So the red A is definitely linked to the rose. Plus it's not really a red A but a scarlet A as someone pointed out. So you could think of Hester as a « scarlet » woman ... or a woman of passion the way she comes out of the jail and looks up, not down, and just the way she 'repels' the sheriff's arm is a ... fiery, passionate woman. I see now that she has achieved incredible status and a weird sort of personal power. (Muldoon, 1991, p.64-65)

The response shows the students' willingness to re-evaluate the supporting details and implied meaning in a text.

Let us examine some of the objectives from the third secondary text involving cognitive skills and an activity as selected by Mikati (2000).

Objectives involving application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation.

1. *Application*

Write about a personal experience.

Demonstrate ability to use different rhetorical strategies.

Recognize and apply linguistic terms and structures used for the purpose of persuading.

2. *Analysis*

Compare and contrast fiction and non-fiction techniques and methods of presentation.

Recognize and explain subtler uses of language.

3. *Synthesis*

Identify implied meaning in a text.

Quote accurately from a primary source to support an opinion.

Explain tone, mood, and attitude.

4. *Evaluation*

Assess relevance of supporting details.

Engage in critical discussions.

Discuss underlying values.

Sample Activity

To demonstrate application skills, students are asked whether it is possible to relate the theme of the text, « Peacemaking in Modern Times », to the situation of Lebanon at the turn of the century. Another relevant question here could be to try to persuade a particular audience that war is just. The student would be required to use both a different rhetorical strategy and linguistic terms.

To demonstrate analytic and synthesis skills, students are asked to comment on the relationship between the opening and closing paragraphs of the text and to produce a thesis statement. Also, the students are to give their opinions on what modern values the text reflects.

To demonstrate evaluative skills, students are requested to write their personal opinions on the importance of world peace in the twenty-first century.

Extracts from « Peacemaking in Modern Times ».

Introduction

Can history make men wise ? (p. 70)

Conclusion

In every negotiation there are turning points, at which the leaders and the diplomats they represent make vital decisions regarding their future actions. These decisions range from such considerations as how to respond to an offer, especially if it is one that was unanticipated, to whether or not to continue the negotiating for side effects. In every case, the decisions are influenced by domestic events and constraints as well as by international considerations. Particularly in today's complex international system, when the process of negotiating for peace holds so much significance for the future, the lessons and wisdom of the past should not be ignored (p.76).

We as educators know as we tell our stories and share our experiences, as many are doing in today's conference and will continue to do in tomorrow's, that it takes much more than a curriculum and the skills it attempts to develop in the individual to « build » a citizen, a citizen of the world. The challenge in this endeavor that faces the English classroom is no less than in other academic subjects — perhaps at times it is harder. I would like to close with a few lines from our « international citizen » Gibran « On Teaching » that could be relevant to citizenship.

No man can reveal to you aught but that which already lies half-asleep in the dawning of your knowledge.

For the vision of one man lends not its wings to another man.

And even as each one of you stands alone ... so must each

One of you be alone in his knowledge of God and in his

Understanding of the earth (pp. 56-57).

Perhaps this illustrates best that it is the will of the citizen in the final analysis that truly allows educators to contribute towards citizenship. How to instill and nurture this will is the real challenge that we face.

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