



Schools, Citizenship and Democracy: Citizenship Education for Civic Engagement and Social Justice

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My starting point is the assumption that the foundation of any education for citizenship is to provide students with the knowledge, skills, values, and dispositions that will equip them to participate in shaping the decisions that face all citizens, especially in any society that claims to be democratic. As philosophers and social scientists have reminded us repeatedly, democracy is not something we are born with; it is something we learn and that therefore has to be taught. Nor can it ever be taken for granted. One's generation's gains can be lost by its successors. As John Dewey once pointed out, democracy has to be born anew in each generation. In his words: "The very idea of democracy, the meaning of democracy, must be continually explored afresh; it has to be constantly rediscovered, re-made and reorganized...."¹

Moreover, while, historically, most political systems have resisted change, change is built into the very concept of democracy. As historians have pointed out, democratic citizenship began with the winning of legal rights (habeas corpus, the right to a fair trial, and so on); expanded into the claiming of political rights, notably the right to vote, freedom of expression, and the like; and then asserted the claim to social rights such as health care and social security. This historical progression continues in our own time and now embraces the concept of human rights and social justice more generally. Central to the practice of democracy is a conception of what democracy might be at its best and an awareness of the gap between present realities and possible futures. As one political theorist recently put it: "If there is no debate about what its future direction should be and about how further democratization might be possible, then democracy itself will be impoverished. There is an important sense in which one of the goals of democracy has to be more democracy.... The democratic life consists in large part in searching for democracy."² The implications for education are self-evident. Citizens cannot take part in the search for more democracy (which, it goes without saying, is also the pursuit of social justice) if they do not possess the knowledge, are not equipped with the skills, and do not act in accordance with the values that are necessary if their search is to be both constructive and democratic.

Citizenship Education in Manitoba

Throughout the 20th century schools have been seen as shapers of citizenship. This is why governments took education out of the hands of parents, private teachers, and churches and placed it in state-controlled schools in the first place. In 1916 Manitoba's then Minister of Education defended the introduction of compulsory schooling explicitly in terms of citizenship. "Boys and girls must be qualified to discharge the duties of citizenship," he said, adding that they must also be taught the skills they needed so that they did not become a charge on the public.³ The official version of citizenship, in Manitoba as elsewhere, was, by today's standards, often narrow and coercive. It was in the name of citizenship, for example, that in Manitoba First Nations children were sent to residential schools; that French-speaking Roman Catholics lost their right to publicly-supported schooling; that Mennonite schools were closed; that the Polish, French, Ukrainian, and Mennonite Normal Schools were shut down; that French was prohibited as a language of instruction and, in defiance of Canadian history, treated as a "foreign" language; that girls and women were confined to restrictive social and political roles. We think of citizenship as a good thing and a good word but it can have dangerous consequences. The horrors of ethnic cleansing and genocide are the obverse of a certain kind of citizenship. Mussolini, Hitler, and Stalin all thought highly of citizenship as they defined it. Mussolini's thugs administered the castor oil treatment and worse to those they deemed unworthy of

citizenship. Stalin sent them to the gulags as so-called anti-social elements. Hitler exterminated them as *untermenschen*. As these examples demonstrate, citizenship can be a very dangerous word. We need to use it carefully. Not the least of the service we can perform for students is to introduce them to the continuing debate over what citizenship means and how it has been used and abused over the years.

However defined, once citizenship had been inscribed on the educational agenda, it took on a life of its own. In Manitoba, for example, critics of the kind of citizenship education promoted by government did not so much reject as seek to redefine it. To take only one example, when the Winnipeg business elite held a national conference on citizenship education in 1919, the labour movement boycotted it, with the One Big Union calling it a “most sinister meeting” and suggesting it be renamed “Dope the Kiddies.”⁴ From the 1890s through the 1930s, the farmers’ movement, the co-operative movement, the trades unions, social democrats and socialists, feminists, internationalists, and others broadened the definition of citizenship beyond the instilling of ideological orthodoxy and character training to include the possibility of a critical examination of social realities and the exploration of social change. Some, perhaps many, teachers agreed. As the long-time principal of the Winnipeg Normal School, William A. McIntyre, declared in 1932, “The only hope for curing the ills of the world is that young people may picture a better one and strive to realize it. To frame this picture and to cultivate this ambition is the greatest duty of the school.”⁵

Over the years the nature of citizenship education changed in Manitoba, as in Canada more generally. From the 1890s to the 1920s the central theme of citizenship education, as officially defined, was nation-building and the Canadianization of the young. After the First World War, the emphasis switched to community service and character training, with a strong dose of internationalism and anti-war sentiment. By the time of the Second World War and into the Cold War, the dominant theme was the strengthening of democracy against first the Fascist and then the Soviet threats.

After the centennial of Confederation in 1967 and as a result of increasing fears that national unity was at risk, the emphasis switched to what some called “pan-Canadian understanding,” human rights, and multiculturalism. In addition, some researchers suggested that citizenship education needed to involve students in politics, not just teach them about it. In the 1980s and into the 1990s, though it never totally disappeared, citizenship was swamped by the conviction that schools must serve economic ends by training a skilled, versatile, and flexible workforce that would ensure Canada’s survival in an increasingly competitive global economy. And throughout all these changes there was always a shifting band of critics and dissenters who objected to the version of citizenship embedded in curricula and textbooks and tried to take citizenship education in a different direction.⁶

Today, citizenship has re-emerged. In the United Kingdom it has been made a compulsory subject in the national curriculum where it is defined as a combination of political literacy, moral and social responsibility, and community involvement. In Quebec citizenship has been twinned with history and made an integral part of curriculum development at every grade level. Ontario has made civics a compulsory course in Grade 10. In Manitoba citizenship has been made a central theme of the social studies curriculum and, more fundamentally, a priority of the Department of Education (now the Department of Education, Citizenship, and Youth) generally. The Department has undertaken a number of initiatives, most notably in its innovation grants in citizenship education, and is now planning to create a data-bank of best practices, to organize professional development programmes, and to pursue a variety of other measures, all with the goal of showing how citizenship education can become an integral part of the school experience. The Canadian Education Association has initiated a citizenship education section on its website. Outside the world of education, citizenship has become an increasingly popular subject for historians, philosophers, and social scientists, most of whom used to treat it as one might regard clean underwear, good to have but too banal to be worth thinking about. As one political theorist recently observed, “There is an upheaval taking place in the world of ideas. It is a discussion that knows neither ideological nor geographic bounds; a debate that has transcended academic disciplines, indeed scaled the wall of academia—a debate about citizenship.”⁷

Nine Elements of Citizenship Education

In the Canadian setting, the debates of the last hundred years have created a broad consensus that citizenship education consists of some eight, or possibly nine, elements. People disagree over their priority and definition and their application to specific circumstances, and even more over what they actually entail for schooling, but by and large they agree that they constitute the core of citizenship and therefore of citizenship education.

The first is a sense of Canadian identity, not in any chest-beating, we-are-the-greatest sense, but in the recognition that, by definition, citizens have to be citizens of somewhere, that our somewhere is Canada, and that debates about the present and future shape of Canada are not abstract exercises that do not concern us, but rather are very much our own, personal debates. Here is how the political philosopher, Jeremy Webber, makes this point: “The core of any democratic community is not ethnicity or language or some catalogue of shared values. It is the commitment to a particular debate through time. The specific character

of that debate is of real importance to individuals. Members come to care about issues through the terms of that debate. It sets the framework for the positions they take on questions affecting the community as a whole. Using those terms they define their place within society.”⁸

The second element is an accompanying sense of international identity, a recognition that Canada is part of an interdependent world, a recognition that has been part of Canadian citizenship education ever since the 1920s, when provincial departments of education required schools to teach about the League of Nations. Our curriculum does not yet pay enough attention to the world outside Canada but most people accept the idea that we now live in a global village and share some responsibility for the well-being of people around the world.

The third element is an awareness of one’s rights and, equally important, of the rights of others, initially defined within the context of British legal and historical traditions and since 1982 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Ever since the Second World War this emphasis on the personal dimension of rights has been combined with a respect for the importance of human rights generally.

The fourth element is a willingness to carry out the burdens of citizenship, not simply in the minimal sense of paying taxes, obeying the law, and the rest, but more positively in the sense of service to the community at large and of engagement with public issues.

The fifth element consists of the internalization of important social values such as honesty, non-violence, a sense of fair play, tolerance, a willingness to work, respect for other people, and the like, none of which is explicitly “political” but all of which are necessary for the successful working of society and have obvious implications for the practice of citizenship. At the same time, this acceptance of key values must be accompanied by an ability to assess their applicability in specific situations, to make a reasoned choice when values conflict, as they so often do, and to weigh the claims of conscience and personal belief against the claims of society at large. There are times, after all, when a good citizen must be willing to break the law.

The sixth element is what the British political theorist, Bernard Crick, calls “political literacy,” which includes the ability to understand public and political issues, a sense of political efficacy, and a willingness to become involved in the public affairs of one’s community, at the very least by voting, but ideally by becoming more active.⁹ Civic engagement is crucial to citizenship. We too easily equate being a good citizen with being a good person, but one can be the latter without necessarily being the former. It is no coincidence that our modern conceptions of citizenship date from the American and French revolutions both of

which were founded on belief in human rights and in government by the people. The French revolutionaries took this so seriously that they abolished the old titles of *monsieur* and *madame* as aristocratic left-overs and replaced them with *citoyen* and *citoyenne*.

Neither the American nor the French revolutionaries in fact treated all people as equal, as most notably in the case of women and slaves, but once the idea that “the people” should (and in fact could) govern themselves was placed on the political agenda, it became possible, indeed almost inevitable, to argue about just who “the people” included and what their rights were, so that over time citizenship rights were won by everyone, regardless of class, gender, or race. We too easily forget, and therefore do not teach our students, that the rights of citizenship that we take for granted did not fall God-given out of the sky but had to be won, and often fought for and then defended. Citizenship is like a muscle: if it is not exercised it withers. However, according to much recent research, it is in this political dimension of citizenship that we perform least well.¹⁰

The seventh element of citizenship education consists of the broad general knowledge and command of basic skills that make it possible for people to play an active part in the affairs of their society. In any society that claims to be democratic, reasoned debate over issues is central to the exercise of citizenship. If they are to take part in this debate citizens need knowledge—in their heads, not in their computers. Knowledge is crucial to citizenship. We cannot always be running to access some data-base. Skills alone are not enough. Recently a business executive claimed that “memorized facts ... are of little use in the age when information is doubling every two or three years.... The worker needs to be able to utilize the systems that give him or her access to information when it’s required in the problem-solving process.”¹¹ This might be true for workers, though I doubt it personally, but it is fatal for citizenship.

Skills alone can never provide a sufficient foundation for citizenship. If we have the necessary skills we can follow directions efficiently; but without knowledge we can never question them. Citizens need “memorized facts.” They need knowledge in their heads, not just at their fingertips. The central lesson of George Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, for example, is not Big Brother or the thought police but the fact that most people followed Big Brother so willingly, not because they were scared or intimidated but because they freely believed. And they believed because they had no independent knowledge against which to test what they were being told. What made the novel’s central character, Winston Smith, so dangerous to Big Brother’s regime was that he knew just enough to know that there was much he

did not know and, knowing that, he questioned what he was being told. And, as we know from his other writing, Orwell was not just criticizing Stalinist communism; he saw the same trend emerging, albeit more benignly, in the democracies also. In Nineteen Eighty-Four he portrayed a future that left us with two depressing choices: either to become politically active citizens who unquestioningly supported the regime that controlled them or to become politically apathetic and therefore harmless “proles.”

The eighth element of citizenship education is the capacity to reflect on the implications of all the other elements and act accordingly. None of them offers a clear-cut guide to action in all circumstances. All of them raise ambiguities and contradictions when applied to concrete situations so that citizens have to be able to think through them and to apply them to the circumstances in which they find themselves.

There is emerging a ninth element of citizenship. It involves respect for and stewardship of the environment. Most people now accept that we can no longer take the environment for granted but we have not reached much agreement on what this means in policy terms. Nonetheless, it seems increasingly obvious that citizenship today must include an environmental dimension, whether in the form of sustainable development, zero growth, deep ecology, or some other course of action. Historically, we have solved the problem of unequal distribution of resources by encouraging economic growth. But today economic growth might be as much a problem as a solution, at least in its environmental impact. How far will we support Kyoto, for example, if it requires a drop in our standard of living? Here, then, is another element in the continuing debate that constitutes democratic citizenship and a crucial question for citizens to grapple with: how do we nourish the environment on which in the last resort citizenship depends?

Implications for Education: the Twelve C's

If this is a reasonably accurate account of what citizenship education entails, what does it mean for the actual conduct of education? In broad terms, I want to suggest four courses of action. The first involves establishing policy priorities and adopting procedures that mirror them. The second involves curriculum design and delivery. The third involves providing students with first-hand experience of citizenship in action. The fourth involves our approach to teaching strategies.

So far as overall policy is concerned, the key point is to ensure that citizenship is in fact recognized as a priority and that all its dimensions are attended to. Above all we must avoid the temptation to depoliticize citizenship by turning it into little more than a list of desirable personal habits and values. These are certainly necessary but they are not enough. One can be a good person without necessarily being a good citizen. Civic engagement must be a key component of citizenship. This said, we need to ensure that citizenship

is a key component of mission statements, descriptions of school goals, and policy documents. We also need to ensure that we screen our policy decisions against a conception of citizenship that includes the elements that I have described.

It is easy to adopt a particular policy as a solution to some pressing problem, say about truancy, smoking, lateness, report cards, or some other aspect of school life, without taking into account the implications of that policy for the teaching of citizenship. This was my argument against so-called “assertive discipline” in the 1980s. Whatever its merits as a disciplinary method, its implicit conception of citizenship was unacceptably authoritarian. To take another example, consider the negative citizenship messages contained in the categories of this report card that was in use in some schools only a few years ago: gets along with others; uses time to good advantage; competes assignments; works quietly and independently; listens well; dependable; produces neat work; takes criticism and disappointment well. Schools that used this kind of reporting prided themselves on teaching students to be good citizens, apparently oblivious to their equating of citizenship with obeying orders and following directions without complaint. If we are to give citizenship the attention it deserves and to see that our policies and procedures embody the kind of citizenship that democracy requires, then we must ensure that:

- Statements of school goals include citizenship, in all its dimensions, as a priority and citizenship must be consistent with democratic values and principles;
- All school policies and procedures (for example discipline, report cards, student behaviour, and the like) are consistent with the aims of democratic citizenship education.
- Teachers, students, school workers, and parents are aware of the citizenship dimension of school goals and frame their expectations and procedures accordingly.
- Citizenship and citizenship education become a major and continuing concern of teacher education and professional development programmes.

So far as the curriculum is concerned the key consideration is that all subjects, and the ways in which they are taught, are seen as making a contribution to citizenship, so that citizenship is not ghettoized within history and social studies as is so often the case. Any curriculum that takes democratic citizenship seriously should meet the criteria of the “12 C's,” as follows.

The first C stands for *Canadian* and asks whether their schooling teaches students enough about Canada to

prepare them to them participate in the ongoing debate that is quintessentially Canadian: what kind of country are we; what do we want to be; and how might we get there? We are a bilingual, multicultural, federal, regionalized, and some would say multinational, country. We are not a nation-state in the standard Euro-American sense, though both Europe and the USA are now gingerly treading in the paths that we have pioneered. The diversity of Canada, the strength of provincial and regional attachments, and not least the place of Quebec and the First Nations in the Canadian polity, make special demands of Canadian citizenship. According to one recent analysis, “Canadian notions of citizenship are undergoing important changes that, while they may have positive effects, require Canadians to confront traditional understandings of what it means to be a Canadian.”¹² Others more bluntly describe Canadian citizenship as dangerously “fragmented.”¹³ Fragmented is obviously a loaded word. The traditional idea of a unitary Canadian citizenship was often used to deny the cultural distinctiveness of the First Nations, Francophones, and other minorities, while also legitimizing the dominance of social and political elites and marginalizing women, but it might well be that a new conception of citizenship, based on diversity and differential rights and a new conception of nationhood, will be integral to an increasingly diverse Canada. As the 1995 Quebec referendum reminded us, if we do not get our conception of Canadian citizenship right, we might not have a Canada of which to be citizens.

The second C stands for *cosmopolitan*, in the strict sense of that word, and asks whether the curriculum teaches students that they are citizens not only of Canada but of the world, so that acquire a sense of human solidarity that crosses national boundaries, ethnic identities, and other loyalties, and a commitment to social justice that so often seems to be lacking on a global scale.

The third C stands for *civilizations* and asks whether students learn that, despite its failings, civilization is a precious achievement and needs constant protection. It asks also whether the curriculum gives students an adequate understanding of civilizations (in the plural) of which they are both the legatees and the trustees for the future. With this C I would include another: *connectedness*, by which I mean the habit of mind that locates the present in the context of a transition from a more or less known past (though, as historians constantly remind us, we know far less than we often think) to an unknown future. As the environmentalists tell us, we do not own this world; we hold it in trust for future generations.

The fourth C stands for *content* and asks whether the curriculum gives students an adequate command of a broad body of subject matter, representing the full spectrum of human endeavour in the arts and sciences, the humanities, the expressive arts, crafts, and so on, so that they learn

something of the heritage of human achievement while also learning to see the world through different disciplinary lenses.

The fifth C stands for *communication*, and asks whether the curriculum teaches students to communicate effectively in all the different forms that communication can take.

The sixth C stands for *criticism*, and asks whether the curriculum teaches students to think critically and whether it treats knowledge, not as sacred dogma to be learned but never questioned, but as an invitation to inquiry and reflection. Implicit in this C is a vision of Socrates as the model citizen, with his determination to question everything, “critical in orientation and dissident in practice,” to use Dana Villa’s description of what he calls “Socratic citizenship.”¹⁴

Criticism can be a purely negative and reactive process and citizenship requires more than simply responding to the ideas of other people. Some peace educators, for example, favour scrapping the idea of critical thinking as conventionally understood and replacing it with what they call dialogical thinking.¹⁵ Thus, the seventh C stands for *creativity* and asks whether the curriculum fosters creativity in students, not only in the arts but in all subjects, which should be treated not simply as things to be memorized but as incitements to exploration and thought.

Creativity goes hand in hand with *curiosity* which is the eighth C, which asks whether the curriculum encourages students to ask questions, to explore ideas, and to continue learning for themselves.

The ninth C stands for *community* and asks whether the curriculum prepares students to become informed and involved members in their various communities, local, national and global.

This leads to the tenth C which stands for *concern* or *care* and asks whether the curriculum creates in students an ethic of care, a concern for the well-being of others and for the health of the environment on which life depends, and a sense of social justice. This tenth C reminds us that education for citizenship must at some point involve not just study and discussion, but action. It is an old pedagogical truism that we learn by doing and it is as true of citizenship education as of any aspect of schooling, hence the value of community service and social justice projects. We cannot afford to treat citizenship as something that must wait until one becomes an adult.

This in turn connects with the eleventh C which stands for *commitment* or *conscience*. It stands for the commitment to do what one believes is right, to

follow one's conscience, while also balancing one's own individual interests and beliefs with the welfare of others.

Finally, the twelfth C stands for *competence* or *capability*. It asks how effective the curriculum is, not simply in teaching students about citizenship, but in preparing them to be effective and competent citizens, fully aware of the responsibilities of citizenship and capable of fulfilling them.

All this may seem overly ambitious, even utopian, but not when it is seen as encompassing twelve years of schooling and the whole range of school activities. The 12 C's embody a conception of citizenship that embraces its many dimensions but is also simple enough to be a practical guide to curriculum planning and delivery. Just as when we drive, we know more or less automatically that there are things we must do, such as staying of the proper side of the road, obeying traffic signs, and so forth, without even consciously thinking about them, so, when we teach, we need to govern what we do with an internalized conception of citizenship as embodied in the 12 C's.

A Final Word: The Necessity of Direct Experience

The 12 C's, however, take us only so far. There can obviously be a world of difference between the curriculum-as-written, the curriculum-as-taught, and the curriculum-as-experienced-by-students. This is why the so-called "hidden curriculum" (which in fact is often far from hidden to students) is so important a component of education for citizenship. As the effective schools research has shown, school "ethos" is a powerful factor in shaping the educational experience of students. It is not a new discovery. Back in 1918, Alfred White, the Superintendent of Schools in Brandon, had this to say on the subject: "Through such subjects as history, civics, literature, hygiene, opportunities will occur to us to teach the principles underlying democracy. It is folly to imagine, however, that we can transform a people merely by talking or teaching.... I would like to say with all the conviction that I am capable of expressing, that the spirit of democracy can only be made part of the lives of our children when it becomes the prevailing spirit of the school itself, and I might also add, of the home and the church."¹⁶ The key phrase here is "prevailing spirit." There is no single one-size-fits-all formula for creating a school ethos supportive of democratic citizenship. The key is to ensure that school rules and policies all contribute to the development of democratic citizenship in students.

The evidence suggests that we have been very successful

in developing what might be called the non-political aspects of citizenship such as honesty, respect for other people, tolerance, self-restraint, and so on. To the extent that Canada is stable, peaceful, supportive of human rights and tolerant of diversity, our schools can legitimately claim much credit. However, the evidence also suggests that we have been much less successful in teaching the more political dimensions of citizenship, as evidenced by the marked turning away from the political process on the part of many school leavers and young adults more generally. The result has been that, as successful as Canada is, we still have some way to go in achieving social justice for all citizens.

This is where providing students with direct experience of citizenship education comes in. Schools are increasingly doing this, in fact, and there are many examples of students working in anti-poverty campaigns, human rights projects, international development efforts, food banks, environmental clean-ups, election campaigns, community service, and the like. In addition, a number of Manitoba municipalities include a youth member on their councils, though there is as yet no provision for this to happen with school boards. The key point is the obvious one: in citizenship education, as in most of life, we learn best by doing. At the same time, many proponents of citizenship education argue that community service or volunteer work on its own is not enough. Such experience must be linked with analysis and discussion of wider social and political concerns. In this regard, Joel Westheimer of the University of Ottawa makes a useful distinction between what he calls the personally responsible citizen, the participatory citizen, and the justice-oriented citizen. As he puts it, "if participatory citizens are organizing the food drive and personally responsible citizens are donating food, justice-oriented citizens are asking why people are hungry and acting on what they discover."¹⁷

There are many suggestions and examples of successful practice available for correcting the political indifference of young adults, among them more or improved civic courses in schools, changes in voting procedures, lowering the voting age, extending community service programmes, making classrooms more democratic, organizing curricula around controversial issues, appointing youth members to elected bodies, and the like. They all have merit but I

am not convinced that they get at the root of the problem, that is insofar as the problem lies in anything that schools do or do not do, rather than in social forces that exist independently of schooling. My own, admittedly unproven, theory is that teaching methods might make a difference, not in the sense that we need to do more with cooperative learning, use more group work, become more (or less) student-centred, or in fact resort to any specific strategy, but rather in the sense that we need to approach the subject-matter of the curriculum differently. Thus, my fourth suggestion is that we need to rethink teaching strategies.¹⁸

All too often, the curriculum appears to students as something fixed and pre-existing to which they have no contribution to make except to absorb it and move on. We can make it more accessible through role-play, simulation, field trips, resource-based learning, creative writing, and a thousand other “hands-on” techniques but if we have to sugar the pill of study in this way we have already lost the pedagogical battle. A hundred years ago, a now largely forgotten educationist, Charles McMurry, observed of my own subject, history, that, if it was properly taught, there would be no need to look for ways to make it interesting. Just as it is absurd to think of making sugar sweet; so, he argued, should it be absurd to have to make history (or any other subject) interesting. Just as sugar is naturally and inherently sweet, so should the subjects of the curriculum be naturally and inherently interesting.¹⁹

As things stand, however, the curriculum is like a mountain that must be climbed simply because it is there. We too easily teach our subjects as studies of impersonal causes and results, laws and concepts, algorithms and formulas, rules and procedures, and chunks of factual knowledge to be memorized. What is lost is any sense of human agency, any sense that subjects and disciplines are in fact records of how men and women have tried to understand and shape their environment. I once asked a class of Grade 10 students what they hoped to get out of Grade 10 only to be told that I had answered my own question: they wanted to get of Grade 10. Why? So they could enter Grade 11. Then they wanted to get out of Grade 11 and into Grade 12, and so on and so on. If students see the curriculum simply as a hurdle to be jumped on the way to graduation, then there is not much hope for citizenship.

We too easily teach our subjects through the results they enshrine while ignoring the many struggles, intellectual and sometimes political, that produced those results in the

first place. Subjects are in essence records of human agency, the story of men and women struggling to understand, explain, and shape the environment that surrounds them. I do not have the expertise to know how this can be done in all subjects, though my colleague Arthur Stinner has shown how it can be done in science, but I believe that it is possible.²⁰ In my own subject, history, this means seeing the past not so much as prologue to the present, or as data for the analysis of contemporary issues, and certainly not as the recital of “one-damn-thing-after-another,” but rather as the story of men and women confronting the problems that faced them, working within the assumptions of their culture, having to act on the basis of incomplete knowledge, and never knowing what the consequences of their actions might be. It is an approach which opens up the possibility of identifying alternative solutions, of examining why the people of the past made the decisions they did, of opening up the divisions and debates that surrounded those decisions, and generally of approaching the past as the story of people actively seeking to gain some control over their lives. Textbooks and curricula make history appear inevitable: things happened the way they did because nothing else was possible. However, we need to teach history looking forward into an unknown future, not backwards with the hindsight of the present.

Indeed, if we teach our subjects in this way then our students might come to see themselves as heirs to a tradition of human striving that connects past, present and future. Above all, we need to show the people of the past as active agents of their own destinies. It might even be that this will result in our students coming to see themselves in the same way, thereby acquiring a sense of political efficacy and engagement that will make democratic citizenship a reality.

I earlier quoted W.A. McIntyre as saying in 1932 that the task of education was to help students picture a better world and strive to attain it. Here is another Depression quotation, this time from 1937. It comes from a speech to Manitoba teachers given by the Principal of McGill University on the theme of education and democracy: “The path to a better community lies before us, open but not clear. As I see it, the task of education is to give us the wisdom to see that path, hope to believe in our goal, and will to pursue it.”²¹ It is a vision of citizenship and education for citizenship that should guide all our efforts.

¹John Dewey: *Later Works, Vol. 11, 1935-37* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1937), 182.

²John Dryzek, *Democracy in Capitalist Times: Ideals, Limits & Struggles* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 4.

³Cited in R. Pampallis & D. Henley, "The Campaign for Compulsory Education in Manitoba," *Canadian Journal of Education*, 7 (1), 1982, 81.

⁴Bill Majiecko, "Public Schools and the Workers' Struggle, Winnipeg 1914-1921," in Nancy Sheehan, J.D. Wilson & D. Jones (eds.), *Schools in the West: Essays in Canadian Educational History* (Calgary: Detselig, 1986), 226-7.

⁵W.A. McIntyre, "The School Preparing for Life," *The Western School Journal*, 27 (1932), 44-45. For more on the Manitoba critics of citizenship education, see Ken Osborne, "One Hundred Years of History Teaching in Manitoba Schools, Part 1: 1897-1927," *Manitoba History*, Autumn/Winter 1998-1999, esp. 19-22.

⁶For a longer version of the history of citizenship education in Canada, see Ken Osborne, "Education is the Best National Insurance: Citizenship Education in Canadian Schools, Past and Present," *Canadian and International Education*, 25 (2), 1996, 31-57.

⁷Henry Milner, *Civic Literacy: How Informed Citizens Make Democracy Work* (Hanover: University of New England Press, 2002), 1. For the contemporary debate on citizenship see Ronald Beiner (ed.), *Theorizing Citizenship* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995); William Kaplan (ed.), *Belonging: The Meaning and Future of Citizenship in Canada* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993); Gershon Shafir (ed.), *The Citizenship Debates* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998).

⁸(Jeremy Webber, *Re-imagining Canada: Language, Culture, Community and the Canadian Constitution* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994), 223.

⁹On the concept of political literacy, see Bernard Crick & Alex Porter (eds.) *Political Education and Political Literacy* (London: Longmans, 1978).

¹⁰For data on the political disengagement of Canadian citizens, and especially of young adults, see Elizabeth Gidengil, André Blais et al., *Citizens* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2004).

¹¹Richard J. Murnane & Frank Levy (eds.), *Teaching the New Basic Skills: Principles for Educating Children to Thrive in a Changing Economy* (New York: Free Press, 1996), xvii.

¹²H. Lazar & T. McIntosh, *How Canadians Connect* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1999), 7-8.

¹³Alain Cairns, "The Fragmentation of Canadian Citizenship" in William Kaplan (ed.), *Belonging: The Meaning and Future of Citizenship in Canada* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993), 181-220.

¹⁴Dana Villa, *Socratic Citizenship* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

¹⁵R. Snow & L. Goodman, "A Decision-making Approach to Nuclear Education," *Harvard Educational Review*, 54 (3), 1984, 322ff; On dialogical teaching, see Bruce Beairsto, "Dialogue for Social Justice," *MASS Journal*, 6 (1) Fall 2005, 20-21.

¹⁶Alfred White, "Education for Democracy," *The Western School Journal*, 15 (1920), 174.

¹⁷Joel Westheimer & Joseph Kahne, "Teaching Democracy: What Schools Need To Do," *Phi Delta Kappan*, 85 (1), 2003, 34-40 & 57-66; Joel Westheimer, "Democratic Dogma: There is No One-Size-Fits-All Approach to Schooling for Democracy," *Our Schools Ourselves*, 15 (1), 2005, 25-30. For an extended version of Westheimer's argument, see Westheimer & Kahne, "What Kind of Citizen?: The Politics of Educating for Democracy," *American Educational Research Journal*, 41 (2), 2004, 237-269.

¹⁸For more on this, see my *Teaching for Democratic Citizenship* (Toronto: Our Schools Ourselves/ Lorimer, 1991), and my "Teaching for Democratic Citizenship" in Lorna Erwin & David MacLennan (eds.), *Sociology of Education in Canada* (Toronto: Copp Clark Longman, 1994), 417-442.

¹⁹Charles A. McMurry, *The Elements of General Method* (Bloomington: Public School Publishing Company, 1897), and his *Special Method in History* (New York: Macmillan, 1903).

²⁰Arthur Stinner et al., "The Renewal of Case Studies in Science," *Science & Education*, 12 (2003), 617-643.

²¹A.E. Morgan, "Education and Democracy," *The Western School Journal*, 32 (1937), 168.

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