Something to consider before we begin...

Should education be culturally appropriate to all?
‘Everyone has to find themselves in the story’

Ethno-national minority representation in the curriculum and civic identity: Exploring stakeholders’ views in Northern Ireland and Israel

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Today’s themes

Research problem

Citizenship education and education rights
- Northern Ireland
- Israel

Key issues

Culturally appropriate
Flexible to the needs of a particular community
Research problem
The research problem

• Education in a divided society...

• Constructive or destructive roles? (Bush & Saltarelli, 2000)

• A tool in socialisation to the divided status quo? (Podeh, 2000)

• ‘the means and the message by which worldviews are transmitted, cultures are reproduced, a way of life is passed on, and a person is created.’ (Randall, Cooper & Hite, 1999, p. 10)

• Citizenship and (common) citizenship education are contested

• So international educational rights obligations: a unifying perspective?
  ... or more contest?
Citizenship education and education rights in Northern Ireland and Israel
Northern Ireland

Israel
Northern Ireland

Population: 1.8 million

- Protestant 48.4%
- Catholic 45.1%
- No religion 5.6%
- Other 0.9%

Israel

Population: 7.5 million

- Jewish 75.5%
- Arab-Palestinian 20.3%
- Other 4.2%
- No religion 5.6%
Northern Ireland

- Predominantly Catholic nationalists and Protestant unionists
- Good Friday (Belfast) Agreement
- Segregated education with small but growing integrated sector

Israel

- Jewish and Arab-Palestinian citizens
- Many rounds of peace negotiations
- Segregated education system with tiny bi-national sector
Israel & Ulster
Northern Ireland

‘helps young people learn how to participate positively in society, to influence democratic processes and to make informed and responsible decisions as local and global citizens’

- Diversity and Inclusion;
- Equality and Social Justice.

Israel

‘To inculcate a common Israeli civic identity, together with the development of distinct national identities, and to impart to students the values of pluralism and tolerance’

- Israel as a Jewish and democratic state;
- Israeli society (diversity, equality, human rights).
Education rights

- Culturally appropriate
- Flexible to the needs of a particular community
Key issues

- Culturally appropriate
- Flexible to the needs of a particular community
Research participants

Students of citizenship education age 14-17 years (24)

Teachers of citizenship education (16)

Citizenship education policy-makers (12)
Key issue 1:

Representation in (educational) governance is a basic concern
We had a really extensive process where basically every interest group, agenda group, organisation was able to put in its tuppence worth, to try and ensure that their interests were reflected in those statutory statements that now form the Citizenship curriculum (Rosaleen, NI policy-maker).
Israel

The Ministry of Education involves people from all branches of the society and from different kinds of schools all over the country (David, Jewish policy-maker).

Listen, there is a difference between if you write about me and if I write about myself. So maybe in the textbooks, for example, there is the existence of the Arabs, but the main question is, ‘Who wrote this?’ Is it ... Jewish who wrote about Arabs with their eyes? Or is it Arabs who write about themselves? And I know that it is not the Arabs that write about themselves. The textbook was written by three women, all of them are Jewish, and after that it was given to somebody to translate it (Latifa, Palestinian teacher, binational school).
Key issue 2:

Finding yourself in the ‘story’ can lead to engagement
everybody has to find themselves in the story (Gad, Jewish teacher).

we can’t teach what we think or what we believe in ... This book is the Jewish version, we don’t believe in the same things that they wrote in this book, we believe in other things (Layla, Palestinian teacher).

because they [Jews] don’t learn about us, we [Palestinians] shouldn’t learn about them (Zaina, Palestinian student).
Northern Ireland

Catholic students
Interviewer: Do you get to talk about that [Protestants and Catholics] a lot in school?
Hannah: not a lot
Caitlín: not a lot because there’s not like loads of stuff that we’re allowed to bring up about all the Troubles and all ... you don’t really go into that much depth about it
Hannah: you just learn about how it was back then, you don’t learn about it now
Interviewer: Yeah. Is that something yous would maybe like to feel that you could talk about a wee bit more in class?
All students: yeah
...
Caitlín: Protestants and Catholics have so much history, so like we’re all sort of on the same page, we all know what’s going on.
Key issue 3:

Balancing common and differentiated parts of curriculum?
I think if you had a segregated curriculum, either the schools would say, ‘Too controversial, we’re not touching that’ and so that generation misses out on that challenge, or you could have a situation where it almost seems inevitable that there would be a particular emphasis on an interpretation of events, and I think that’s problematic for the future reconciliation and community building (Nicola, teacher, Catholic school).
Everything is political here. I mean, there are so many interests of different people, so you can’t really please everyone all the time (Lev, Jewish teacher).

This is a Jewish state in the sense that it’s a state of the Jewish people and there’s a dominant culture and with it is a certain ethos that has to be studied and understood (Netanel, Jewish policy-maker).

Jews see this book as for the Arab side, and Arabs see this book as for the Jewish side (Layla, Palestinian teacher).
So what might this mean for young people’s civic identity?
Today’s themes

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- Northern Ireland
- Israel

Key issues

Culturally appropriate
Flexible to the needs of a particular community
And finally...

‘It’s like common sense, but smarter’

(Roisín, Catholic student)
תודה רבה

شكرًا

Go raibh maith agaibh

Thank you

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References


Additional material
Key theme: Group representation

Acceptable

- Culturally appropriate

Adaptable

- Flexible to the needs of a particular community
Northern Ireland

Protestant: 48.4%
Catholic: 45.1%
No religion: 5.6%
Other: 0.9%

Ulster: 4%
British: 37%
NI: 28%
Irish: 25%
Other: 5%
Israel

By religion
- Arab: 45%
- Palestinian: 24%
- Israeli: 12%
- Jewish denomination: 10%
- Other: 4.2%

Jewish: 75.5%

Arab-Palestinian: 20.3%

By ethnicity
- Jewish: 49%
- Israeli: 39%
- Palestinian: 24%
- Arab: 45%
- Other: 2%