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Secondary School English Textbooks as a Resource for Citizenship Education in the Algerian Context

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Abstract: *The present research work attempts to explore the potential relevance of foreign language course books to instill civic values into students in the Algerian educational settings. To that end, the study has opted for a critical and systematic analysis of the syllabi and contents of English secondary school education textbooks with a special reference to the nature of topics to which pre-tertiary students are exposed. The results of the analysis reveal clearly the adequacy and suitability of such teaching/ learning materials to help spread civic values among students.*
We might say that citizenship education is more than learning a book. It has to be underpinned by spreading its values and demystifying its concepts. Schools and teachers play a critical role in helping new generations become responsible citizens; however, their efforts must be matched with good practices from the other members of society. Otherwise, all they struggle to build within schools will be in vain.
Keywords: *Civic values, citizenship, textbook, syllabus, curriculum.*
Résumé : *Cette recherche vise à montrer la pertinence des manuels scolaires des langues étrangères pour contribuer à inculquer les valeurs de citoyenneté et civisme aux apprenants algériens. Avec cet objectif en vue, l'étude s'est basée sur une analyse systématique des programmes et contenus des trois manuels scolaires d'anglais en cycle secondaire. L'analyse textuelle révèle que ces outils pédagogiques conviennent à la bonne transmission de ces valeurs de citoyenneté qui s'avèrent très importantes, en particulier à l'ère de mondialisation.*
Pour terminer, on pourrait dire que l'éducation à la citoyenneté est plus qu'apprendre un livre. Elle doit s'appuyer sur la diffusion de ses valeurs et la démystification de ses concepts. Les écoles et les enseignants jouent un rôle essentiel pour aider les nouvelles générations à devenir des citoyens responsables ; cependant, leurs efforts doivent aller de pair avec les bonnes pratiques des autres membres de la société. Sinon, tout ce qu'ils luttent pour construire au sein des écoles sera vain.
Mots clés : *Valeurs civiques, citoyenneté, manuel, syllabus, curriculum.*

1. Introduction

According importance to civics or citizenship education has become the order of the day in modern societies. Indeed, it is an ever-present challenge for individuals and communities across the world. Citizenship has ceased to be, as it has been traditionally known, a status conferred to the individuals who live within the confines of a country. Detachment and withdrawal from the concerns of the society one lives in are no longer valued. Contrary to this, active engagement and participation in shaping the future and destiny of the society is a key feature of the modern citizen. For this to happen, governments and decision-makers are now stressing more than ever before the role of schools. Taking this as a starting point, the present paper

suggests the efficiency of raising students' awareness of the values of citizenship embedded in the Algerian secondary schools English textbooks.

2. Textbook: A Definition

'Textbook' is quite common a term in language teaching environments. It is defined by as "A book on a specific subject used as a teaching learning guide, especially in a school or college" (Richards & Schmidt, 2002: 550). In an attempt to provide a more specific definition, Tomlinson writes,

> [It is] a course book which provides the core materials for a course. It aims to provide as much as possible in one book and is designed so that it could serve as the only book which the learners necessarily use during a course. Such a book usually includes work on grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, functions and the skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking. (Tomlinson, 1998: 9)

It is worth emphasizing that the language skills and knowledge to which students are exposed are not dealt with in isolation. By and large, they revolve around a set of topics and themes. The latter are exceedingly important since they represent a concrete framework for language use. In this respect, Cunnings worth asserts that a topic "provides a focus for the language input contained in the course and helps to create a sense of coherence within individual units" (1995: 58). Hence, topic choice is by no means an otiose issue, but is one which has to receive careful attention in textbook design.

3. Roles of the Textbook

The textbook serves a great deal in enhancing language teaching and learning. A major contribution that it accomplishes is providing materials, as evoked earlier by Tomlinson, in order to develop the targeted skills and competencies. The provision of materials is invaluable for they are more often than not the sole means, in EFL contexts, through which learners are exposed to English (Hyland, 2003: 86). Furthermore, materials availability in a textbook saves teachers' time and effort to develop their own (Cunnings worth, 1995: 3). As a result, they focalize on adequate exploitation of these materials.

The lack of materials represents for some teachers a real challenge (Graves, 1996: 27, Nanun, 1991: 209). In fact, this is mostly noticed with novice teachers, for whom the textbook offers some sort of security and confidence. The ready-made texts, activities and tasks that it provides ease the burden and resolve the problem of what to teach, because it "serves [in this case] as a syllabus: if it is followed systematically, a carefully planned and balanced selection of language content will be covered" (Ur, 1996: 184).

Besides helping teachers to fulfill their work, a textbook lends itself properly to facilitate students' learning. It is a reliable source that can be consulted at any time; thus, "it contributes to learner independence as [s/he] … can use it to review,

look ahead and learn on their own" (Woodward, 2001: 146). Consequently, a sense of continuity in learning is always present as long as learners have a textbook. In more practical terms, it serves as a reference book not only to grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation but also to content knowledge for learners, to which they can resort in time of need in or outside the classroom. Nanun states that 'content areas covered in materials include the use of fictionalized characters and events, general interest (which often reflects the material writer's belief about what might interest learners), academic subject matter, a focus on language itself and literature' (1991: 209). As such, it can be considered as an effective compendium for experiential (through doing activities and tasks) as well as referential (through the content of the materials) learning within any curriculum.

4. Syllabus vs. Curriculum

It is common and acceptable among teachers that textbooks represent the tangible aspect of what has been specified in a syllabus within a particular curriculum. Indeed, syllabus and curriculum are two closely tied concepts that share considerable overlap. According to Finney (2000: 70),

> in its narrowest sense … [the term curriculum] is synonymous with the term syllabus, as in specification of the content of what is to be taught; in the wider sense it refers to all aspects of the planning, implementation and evaluation of an educational program". It is noteworthy that it is the second sense that is currently prevalent in the literature among researchers. Richards for example insists that "syllabus design is one aspect of curriculum development but is not identical with it. (2001: 2).

This inclination towards a more meticulous understanding of curriculum development stems largely from the increasingly raising awareness of the multiple factors influencing teaching and learning. Curriculum development requires the participation and contribution of many people. In this respect, Marsh points out that "a wide range of personnel are involved in making curriculum, including school personnel, researchers, academics and administrators, politicians and various interest groups" (2001: 12). Their endeavour which takes the form of recurring processes is expected to "determine the needs of a group of learners, to develop aims or objectives for a program, to address those needs, to determine an appropriate syllabus, course structure, teaching methods and materials, and to carry out an evaluation of the language program that results from these processes" (Richards, 2001: 2).

Despite the fact that all the issues entailed in developing a curriculum are, without exception, of paramount importance, it is worthwhile- to fit the scope of the present paper- to spotlight on aims and objectives specification. Basically, aims are more general and broad statements than objectives in terms of instructional outcomes (Richards, 2001: 120). However, in the present paper they will be both regarded as 'educational objectives' that the curriculum seeks to attain. By formulating these objectives, curriculum designers aim to set the boundaries of what is known as

'curriculum framework' whereby they envisage all sorts of content and procedural knowledge that learners have to acquire in the course of their studies. In actual fact, this phase in curriculum design and development is quite central. With regard to this, Bobbitt argues in his seminal work, The Curriculum, that:

The central theory is simple. Human life, however varied, consists in its performance of specific activities. Education that prepares for life is one that prepares definitely and adequately for those specific activities. However numerous and diverse they may be for any social class, they can be discovered. This requires that one go out into the world of affairs and discover the particulars of which these affairs consist. These will show the abilities, habits, appreciations, and forms of knowledge that men need. These will be the objectives of the curriculum. They will be numerous, definite, and particularized. The curriculum will then be that series of experiences which childhood and youth must have by way of attaining those objectives. (1918: 42)

Taking this standpoint, Bobbitt puts a tremendous burden on curriculum developers since they are utterly required to demystify a whole array of sophisticated and interrelated phenomena in the real world and convert them into attainable goals. In the process of doing so, Richard (2001: 113) explains that they "draw on their understanding both of the present and long-term needs of learners and of society as well as … [their] beliefs and ideologies about schools, learners, and teachers. These beliefs and values provide philosophical underpinnings for educational programs".

In the process of fleshing out the details of the curriculum, the designers are expected to draw on content which is regarded "from the point of view of epistemological objectivism … [as] knowledge which has been identified and agreed to be universal, unchanging and absolute" (Finney, 200: 71). Although the bulk of the content they rely on and utilize is objective, there are multiple ways to gear it towards their ideological orientations. The central reason behind this is to construct a system of values which is congruent with the aspirations of society. Within this perspective, Cunningsworth (1995: 90) maintains that "A curriculum cannot be neutral because it has to reflect a view of social order and express a value system, implicitly or explicitly". Admittedly, the last part of the latter quote alludes clearly to a set of learning outcomes that will be acquired; though, they may not be plainly stated. This situation is commonly explained by the existence of a 'hidden curriculum'.

5. Hidden Curriculum

In very broad terms, hidden curriculum refers to "learning outcomes apart from those intended in the 'manifest curriculum'" (Littlejohn & Windeatt, 1989: 155). Seemingly, the implementation of the planned curriculum which involves some sort of interaction between its various facets (including materials, roles taken by teachers and learners, tests and exams…etc.) and the school community as a whole result in a set of unstated educational outcomes. To put another way, this covert curriculum results in some learning outcomes as a by-product of what has been explicitly planned.

In order to lift the fog on this issue, the eminent educationalist A V. Kelly (2004) draws our attention to the role of the school environment and materials use in giving birth to this phenomenon. In his words, what stands behind this hidden curriculum are "those things which pupils learn at school because of the way in which the work of the school is planned and organized, and through the materials provided, but which are not in themselves overtly included in the planning or even in the consciousness of those responsible for the school arrangements" (Kelly, 2004: 5). Accordingly, these unseen objectives are hidden from pupils who unconsciously absorb the outcomes and, more importantly, integrate them in their value systems.

According to Bloom (cited in Johnson), the hidden curriculum has much more impact than the planned one because, to use his words, "it is so pervasive and consistent over the many years in which our students attend schools" (1989: 156). So, it is incumbent on teachers to be aware of, to borrow David Nunan's words, the hidden agendas especially of the teaching materials which "exert considerable influence over what teachers teach and how they do it" (Cunningsworth, 1995: 7). It is stating the obvious to say that while learning students invariably get inspiration, in the form of cognitive mapping, from the materials and textbooks they utilize. The way life is depicted in these course books contribute in building up schemata about reality. Moreover, they are critically germane to the development of a system of values by dint of which they become conscious of notions like autonomy, freedom, responsibility and self-esteem, to mention just a few.

6. Citizenship Education and Values

The concept of citizenship means different things to different people. In spite of the flurry of discussion that accompanied the delimitation of this concept, especially in recent decades, it is still contested. Much of the disagreement between the opposing views stems from their differences concerning what makes a citizen (Weinstock, 2001: 55). Although many researchers do acknowledge the importance of including the two dimensions of duties and rights in any definition of citizenship (Osler & Starkey, 2005: 9), the values associated with this concept are hotly disputed. This is partly due to the difficulty of reaching consensus over a set of core values which "are essentially controversial. That is they in fact do not have universal agreement" (Pring, 2001: 85). Given such a situation, citizenship education becomes an arduous task, particularly in a world that is constantly changing.

After comparing and discussing a set of definitions that are provided in the literature, Kerr (2003: 8) points out that "they highlight a number of key concepts that underpin citizenship education, including democracy, rights, responsibilities, tolerance, respect, diversity and community". Indeed, he tries to buttress his arguments for these values by reviewing the most recent studies about citizenship education. So, it goes without saying that any programme devoted for citizenship teaching and training, be it local, national or international, has to abide by a framework which mirrors the latest developments and innovations in civic education. In connection to this, Osler and Starkey (2005) contend that,

> Education for citizenship is concerned with both the personal development of students and the political and social development of society at local, national and international levels. On a personal level, citizenship education is about integration into society. It is about overcoming structured barriers to equality … On a political and social level, it is about creating a social order that will help provide security without the need for repression. (44)

As such, citizenship education is seen, from this perspective, as a package of rights and responsibilities which contributes into the empowerment of the individuals, and creates a social common bond that insulates the whole society from fragmentation. In modern times, the school is considered as the optimum tool to concretize this demanding project. In this respect, Johnston (2007: 47) explains that "schooling is a complex enterprise, but at base, it represents an attempt to socialize, train, and perhaps stratify the young and prepare them to take various positions in the society". Unsurprisingly, education in general and citizenship education, in particular, play a strikingly key role in preparing young people for life in their societies. This is not to say that this sort of education implies cloning individuals who must fit in a specific social hierarchy, but it rather aims at energizing people to be active members in their communities.

7. Citizenship Values in ELT Textbooks

We mentioned earlier when we discussed the roles of the textbook that it fosters learning other subject matters apart from language. Generally, this is known as 'boundary crossing'. According to Cunningsworth (1995: 58), "students should be able to learn other things as they learn English: English should be linked to other subjects in the school curriculum and the world outside the school". In the same vein, Risager (1991: 181) states that "foreign language teaching textbooks no longer just develop concurrently with the development of foreign language pedagogy in the narrow sense, but they increasingly participate in the general cultural transmission within the educational system and in the rest of society".

As a matter of fact, the different topics that students deal with when learning a foreign language mostly touch upon issues already seen in the curriculum. Further, the themes suggested therein often reflect learners as well as teachers' preoccupations of their societies. Thus, the aim is not just to develop students' language skills but also to shape their character through the discussion of issues that are deeply rooted in their communities. Following this line of argument, one can cogently contend that citizenship values have to take the lion's share because of its importance and relevance in making students responsible citizens "who adhere to the quality of a community and are not reducible, or contained in, the psychological characteristics of individuals" (Olssen, 2002: 7).

8. Citizenship Education in Algerian Secondary Schools

With the educational reform undertaken in Algeria, citizenship education (or it is known as Civics) has been given increasing prominence. Actually, it is taught in the primary and middle schools as an independent single subject matter. However, in secondary schools it is not presented to students as a discrete subject but is rather delivered through other subjects of the national curriculum. By opting for this methodology, it seems that secondary school curriculum planners want to bolster students' knowledge, skills, attitudes and values of citizenship (which are already grasped in the primary and middle cycles) through their consolidation across the core, compulsory disciplines. For want a better phrase, citizenship education is embedded in the curriculum under the form of multidisciplinary issues. The latter, according to Huddleston and Rowe are;

Issues about the kind of society we would like to live in and how society might be achieved. They revolve around certain contested concepts –like justice, rights and responsibilities- and how these concepts are interpreted in different social situations. They are characterized by certain kinds of questions: about what is in the public interest; whether the ends justify the means; which is the lesser of evils and so on. (111-12)

By taking this stance, one would expect the language classroom to be an ideal place where students and teachers engage in constructive discussions which aim to instill a clear schema of what it is to be a good citizen. Building on this ground, we presume that these are the kinds of topics which are presented to secondary school students in their English textbooks: At the Cross Roads (first year secondary school), Getting Through (second year secondary school) and New Prospects (third year secondary school).

9. Methodology

The present paper has opted for the methodology of content analysis to address the issue of citizenship values secondary school English textbooks. This method which is largely used in social studies has really yielded insightful conclusions. It is defined by Webster's Dictionary of the English language as "analysis of the manifest and latent content of a body of communicated material (as a book or film) through classification, tabulation, and evaluation of its key symbols and themes in order to ascertain its meaning and probable effect". Many educational researchers, especially those interested materials evaluation have resorted to this methodology mainly to examine issues like gender, sexism, racism …etc (Bem and Bem, 1973; Gordon 1984; Porreca, 1984).

Krippendorff (2003) gives some examples that illustrate the usefulness of content analysis, as a technique, which may well generate challenging conclusions:

- One might date a document from the vocabulary used within it.
- One might infer the religious affiliations of political leaders from the metaphors used in their speeches.
- One might infer the readability of an essay from a measure of the complexity of its composition.

- One might infer the problems of a city from the concerns expressed to the city mayor's office.
- One might infer the prevailing conceptualizations of writers and readers from the proximities of words in frequently used texts.
- One might infer the political affiliations of citizens from the TV shows they choose to watch. (37)

The aforementioned examples, in actual fact, conjure up the suitability of this research technique to the objectives of the present study which aims at unearthing citizenship values in Algerian Secondary School English textbooks.

10. Procedure

The procedure of analysis followed in our study is far too complex, due to the difficulty of making use of the computers since the three textbooks under consideration are not available (at least for the researcher) as an electronic version. In order to make the three textbooks amenable to content analysis, we first identified the key words, units of analysis, which reflect the core values of citizenship. The ones which are provided earlier by Kerr (2003) are suitable enough for the purposes of our study. These core values include: democracy, rights, responsibilities, tolerance, respect, diversity and community. The latter were subject to scrutiny in the topics with which students deal in the course of a leaning English as a foreign language. Particular attention was given to the different texts and the follow-up tasks generated by each and every topic. The rationale behind this is fairly simple: to quote Weber (1990: 51), "the most frequently appearing words reflect the greatest concerns". However, tracking these units of analysis in their contexts is not straightforward, in the sense that we do not just for these words per se. Quite often, we relied on reading between the lines to see the linkage between the kind of text or task and our framework of citizenship and civic values.

11. Discussion of the Results

It is worth reiterating that the content analysis we conducted in the three secondary education English textbooks aimed at investigating the extent to which the core citizenship values –mentioned earlier- are embedded between their paperbacks. Our analysis of the syllabus descriptions revealed that these values were not neglected despite the painstaking task of textbook writers and curriculum developers to keep balance between the various interrelated components of a language course (language skills, content knowledge, culture, attitudes and values). The different themes and topics presented to students are, so to speak, universal or international; however, they did not lose sight of the national context of the teaching learning process.

Topics like environment, pollution, nature, education, ethics, scientific discoveries and inventions, business management make part of global issues, but they do represent a springboard for critical discussion that helps create an atmosphere where students can widen their horizons and feel their membership to a common

community challenged by similar problems. This does by no means imply that textbooks are preparing students for a kind of global or universal citizenship that transcends one's national concerns and ideological idiosyncrasies. On the contrary, they highlight the necessity to stick firmly to one's identity without underestimating the fact that we are at an era of globalization in which individuals are facing common challenges and have to act collaboratively in order to succeed.

A positive finding to be reported is the recurrent reliance on pair and group work in accomplishing tasks especially those which follow texts. Besides, project work methodology is systematically followed in the three textbooks. Hence, students do have the chance to actively engage and participate in the teaching learning process. This allows them to hone social skills like respecting and listening to one another. On top of that, many tasks do require students to be critical, and to express their views and attitudes concerning many school and societal issues. The reason behind this is to prevent them from becoming passive citizens who can be easily manipulated.

Even though the three textbooks could be considered as a good source to scaffold citizenship education and promote its values among students while learning a foreign language, there are still many inadequacies that may impede this process in many ways. It seems that students constantly need additional sources of knowledge, especially political knowledge that represents a real necessity for citizens in modern times. Active engagement in the community does not need only intelligent choice making, problem-solving and critical thinking but also fairly complete knowledge about the legal system and the political and government institutions that organize communities and states. Basically, this is not to say that students have to deal with the technical jargon of politics. Instead, they ought to be familiarized with the rudiments that permit appropriate functioning in society.

12. Implications for Citizenship Education at the Pre-Tertiary Level

Although our analysis of the contents of the three textbooks point to the fact that core citizenship values have somewhat been incorporated successfully, absorbing these values by our learners remains far from easy and straightforward. Many are the situations in and outside schools which may stand as obstacles in the way of moral values adherence. In such situations, the onus is on teachers and their fellows to insulate students against misinterpretations and dilemmas of reality. Teachers have to act as genuine models who symbolize active citizenship since as the adage goes, actions speak louder than words. However, acknowledging the critical role that teachers play in schools is not meant to overload them. Admittedly, teachers have got many other duties and obligations which are time and effort consuming, but their role is and will always be irreplaceable.

Setting suitable learning challenges for students to acquire citizenship values is of the utmost importance. However, we should never forget that our students are still adolescents who utterly require special attention. This phase in a person's life is critical and sensitive at the same time. Adolescents are most of the time under the pressure of issues which might seem as trivial for adults. Such things as what to wear

and how to appear in front of peers take huge amounts of energy and attention from our students. Concurrently, they are expected to learn academic content, do homework and get good grades. In these circumstances, one should not presume that raising students' awareness to citizenship values will be a simple task. It often necessitates careful use of language and the creation of situations where being a good citizen or looking for the civic values will eventually solve the problem.

Emphasizing the role of schools does not exclude the relevance of extra-curricular activities in enhancing students' attainment of citizenship education. Apart from content academic disciplines, students often take part in some activities, inside and outside school, like charity organizations, art and sport clubs, and scouts that contribute positively in helping to construe clear understanding of concepts like rights, duties and expressing one's point of view. So it is urgent to stress the immense importance of indulging in communal actions which stand as valuable opportunities and fervent stimuli to participate actively as a citizen in the society.

It is a sad fact that youth participation in the democratic life of the state is very low. Although this problem is common in many countries, it has become typical of young democracies. A possible cause that stands behind this reluctance and unwillingness to take part in civic activities like voting is the failure of government agents and decision-makers to encourage them to get involved in public affairs. One way out of this fiasco is to support schools to adopt democratic modes of management so that students will be accustomed and confident in these sorts of democratic practices.

13. Conclusion

To round off, we might say that citizenship education is more than learning a book. It has to be underpinned by spreading its values and demystifying its concepts. Schools and teachers play a critical role in helping new generations become responsible citizens; however, their efforts must be matched with good practices from the other members of society. Otherwise, all they struggle to build within schools will be in vain.

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