UCL

Enhancing citizenship through developing schools as learning-centred communities

Prof Peter Earley and Dr Sara Bubb

Structure

1. Introduction
2. Key terms and definitions
3. What is citizenship?
4. Opportunities to develop
5. Conclusions

1. Introduction

We explore the importance of seeing schools as learning-centred communities which act as a means of promoting learning and improving the achievement of all, whilst also enhancing active citizenship and participation amongst its members, especially the children and young people.

1. Introduction

- Global forces have created major changes in the education systems. (Global Ed Reform Movement)

- Schools must take the main responsibility for developing the quality, motivation and organisation of their people – for managing and developing their human resources.

- Through school leaders helping to create a climate or culture which is conducive to learning – of both staff and pupils – schools can become learning communities or organisations where investment in people is given the priority it deserves.

2. Key terms
Learning-centred schools

Types of schools in which teachers work:

'Learning impoverished' vs

'Learning enriched' (Rosenholz, 1989)

'Imagine that you could become a better teacher just by virtue of being on the staff of a particular school – just that fact alone' (Little, 1990).

Students too?

Learning organisations
(OECD, 2016, p.ii)

- ".. a place where the beliefs, values and norms of employees are brought to bear in support of sustained learning; where a 'learning atmosphere, 'learning culture' or 'learning climate' is nurtured; and where 'learning to learn' is essential for everyone involved".

The characteristics of the school as a learning organisation consists of 7 dimensions:

- developing and sharing a vision centred on the learning of all students
- creating and supporting continuous learning opportunities for all staff
- promoting team learning and collaboration among staff
- establishing a culture of inquiry, innovation and exploration
- establishing embedded systems for collecting and exchanging knowledge and learning
- learning with and from the external environment and larger learning system
- modelling and growing learning leadership

(Kools and Stoll, 2016).

Professional Learning Communities

'An effective PLC has the capacity to promote and sustain the learning of all professionals and other staff in the school community with the collective purpose of enhancing pupil learning'

(Bolam et al, 2005)

Professional learning communities are seen as having 8 characteristics:

- shared values and vision
- collective responsibility for pupils' learning
- collaboration focused on learning
- individual and collective professional learning
- reflective professional enquiry
- openness, networks and partnerships
- inclusive membership
- mutual trust, respect and support

(Bolam et al, 2005).

Leadership in the learning community

- **Promotion of a strong sense of shared vision for the future**
- **Leading the learning, by being seen to be learning with everyone else**
- **Sharing and distributing leadership and empowering others**
- **Collaboration and continuous improvement is built into the fabric of the school.**

Note also OECD's 7 Dimensions of a LO

Leadership

- Leaders of such communities must engender an ethos that all in the organisation - students, teachers and support staff – are seen as learners in their own right. They must also strive to seek everyone's views and involve all, in various ways, in research and inquiry, decision-making processes, supporting, developing and empowering them to feel a sense of ownership in the future direction of their organisation

3. Citizenship

- Education for citizenship can enlighten students about their role in society, contributing to its well-being and participating in its affairs actively, responsibly and with critical faculties (Ghosh, 2015).

- It is expected to ensure social inclusion, empowerment and the growth of democratic values, promoting civic engagement.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

- Citizenship has been on the national curriculum since 1991, and compulsory in secondary schools since 2002.

- Citizenship teaching provides **'knowledge, skills and understanding'** to **'play a full and active part in society'** (National Curriculum 2014).

Citizenship curriculum fosters

- understanding of **democracy, government and law**

- skills and knowledge to **explore political and social issues critically**

- to weigh evidence, debate and **make reasoned arguments**

- pupils' ability 'to **take their place in society as responsible citizens'**.

- It helps prepare pupils for life as engaged citizens and to meet its opportunities, challenges and responsibilities.

- The new national curriculum citizenship programmes of study provide many opportunities to develop **SMSC**, promote **British values** and help teachers uphold the **Prevent Duty**.

British values

Schools have a duty to 'actively promote' fundamental British values. These are:

- democracy
- the rule of law
- individual liberty
- mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.

Citizenship

- For OECD, student outcomes should include developing well-rounded individuals, which we would suggest must include enhancing citizenship.

- Will the move towards schools becoming learning-centred communities help ensure that this focus is not lost in the drive to raise standards?

Types of Citizens

1. *personally responsible* citizens acting responsibly towards their community, such as obeying laws and paying tax

2. *participatory citizens* actively participating in the affairs of the community for its improvement

3. *justice-oriented citizens* raising questions and attempting changes in the existing socio-economic and political structures that reproduce the patterns of injustice over time (Westheimer and Kahne (2004) cited in Ghosh, 2015, p23).

It is the second meaning – participatory citizens - which is our main focus. How might schools promote this type of citizenship and civic engagement?

4. Opportunities to develop

- Learning-centred communities and their leaders who give consideration to the learning of all – students, adults and organisations – is key.

- What is potential role of learning-centred communities in enhancing active citizenship, including community and research engagement and participation in decision-making?

- An active participation by all in a *collaborative* culture means that everyone takes responsibility for learning. Staff and students working in such communities will discuss their work openly and seek to improve and develop their practice through collaborative inquiry and the sharing of good practice. In so doing, notions of citizenship can be promulgated amongst its members.

- The learning culture of a school committed to develop active citizenship requires effective leaders who support it by their behaviour, promoting practices that embody such things as democracy, inquiry, participation, responsibility, transparency, and inclusivity.

Developing citizenship: an example

- Developing active citizenship can be done in many ways through the means of both the formal and informal or hidden curriculum.

- Reference to a research and development project which involved students and staff researching aspects of the school and community in which they worked and lived.

- Such practices are more likely to be found in learning-centred communities, where by definition there is a greater focus on research and inquiry and student voice.

Riley, K (2017) Re-creating Schools as Places of Belonging: The Art of Possibilities, *Professional Development Today*

- She has involved teachers and students in collaborative research inquiry

- This has helped to unleash their energy and creativity and develops their skills and capacities.

- Her research with schools in London points to the many benefits, including empowering students and developing their citizenship, of involvement in collaborative research.

Benefits for students

- The student-researchers have found their voice. Engagement in research has released their creative potential to explore, reflect, act and change – themselves and their school.

- It has developed their talents and self-awareness in ways that undoubtedly promote their personal growth and feelings of well-being.

- Involving young people in research encourages them to become inquiring learners, it harnesses their creativity, enriches their lives and equips them to play that role in society, for they are *tomorrow's citizens* (our emphasis).

5. Conclusions

Educational policy makers and practitioners worldwide are facing challenges as education systems develop from predominantly bureaucratic, hierarchical models to those which give greater emphasis to school site management and where institutional level leaders take decision-making responsibilities with colleagues.

Conclusions

- Leaders in learning-centred communities endeavor to promote a culture which is supportive and collaborative, featuring mutual trust and sharing of ideas.

- Staff and students are empowered to take a central role in their work and there is a commitment to working together as learners, where staff and students alike are seen as learners, have a sense of community and work together co-operatively.

- It is our view that such cultures are also likely to enhance notions of active citizenship.

Institute of Education

Enhancing citizenship through developing schools as learning-centred communities

Prof Peter Earley and Dr Sara Bubb