

CITIZENSHIP IN THE EDUCATION OF TEACHERS: IDENTIFYING EXISTING GAPS AND NEED FOR NEW RESEARCH DIRECTION

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ABSTRACT

Who is a citizen, and what is citizenship? These two questions have troubled the political scientists since the ancient times. Over the last one decade, in international scenario, a number of studies have focused on understanding conceptions of citizenship among pre-service teachers, in-service teachers and teacher-educators (Banks 2004; Kennedy, 2004). Studies conducted in developed countries indicate that the major responsibility for empowering teachers lie with the teacher educators. The present essay reviews the existing research in the education of teacher vis-à-vis citizenship education. It asserts that a good teacher education programme can create 'transformative professional' teachers.

KEYWORDS: *Teacher Education, Citizenship, Social Justice*

INTRODUCTION

The twentieth century witnessed a growing interest by social scientists across disciplines, in questioning the form and substance of the concept of citizenship, thus engendering a complex array of alternative interpretations. The two terms have complex and evolving history, making it highly contestable concept for social scientists. An exploration of the complexities and struggles associated with the understanding of citizenship from different disciplinary perspectives reflects on how the idea and notion of citizenship have traversed different historical contexts to acquire its present meaning. A plethora of writing that took place in 1990s onwards felt it to be appropriate to look beyond the larger theoretical traditions and their inherent contradictions and work out a framework that offers analytical tools to understand these complexities. In this backdrop, the sociology of citizenship gained a fundamental place by positioning citizenship as a conceptual tool to understand social reality. Sociologists proposed that 'citizenship' works its way into just about every corner of one's life. The nature of citizenship studies, in present times, goes beyond the political theorization as it has become a lively field making it essentially interdisciplinary in nature.

In other words, citizenship discourse is being used to study not only to understand the socio-political upheavals but also to study the processes of being a citizen through the practices of inclusion and exclusion. For instance, Yuval-Davis (1997) idea of 'transversal politics' presents a radical shift in the conceptualization of the idea of citizenship and community. As an emancipating tool, 'transversal politics' has the capacity to generate better epistemic community via 'dialogic' means, through 'listening to' and engaging with 'radically different voices' or the 'voices of the oppressed'.

Through this dialogic method she questions and rejects the notion of citizen as fixed, 'embedded-self' in her community. In this manner, she conceptualise citizen as an active agent as well as someone who has anti-fixating power to

review, revise and reject her value systems and instead adopt value systems that rejects ‘uncritical acceptance of traditions’ (Assister, 1999).

It would not be erroneous to say that there is no standard or homogeneous category of citizen. A number of social scientist, more specifically the multiculturalist, have also acknowledged that mere entitlement to citizenship rights does not automatically creates conditions for their actualisation, therefore it becomes crucial to unravel the complex process of being a citizen, by looking simultaneously at multiple facets of this ‘being’. This includes recognition of the different political locations and social situatedness of a citizen, as an individual as well as member of different social identification groups. It is by unravelling these dynamic processes of identification that it is possible to understand what enable/disable actualization and access to citizenship entitlements as ‘creating capacities’ for an effective citizenry. A sudden upsurge of people asserting and reclaiming their identities and ‘right to be different’ through several socio-political movements have further troubled the canon of traditional theorisation of citizenship. This generated a need to overhaul the historic notions of citizenship which typically navigate between the trajectories of individual, society and state.

In other words, moving beyond conventional typifications would mean an exploration of interactions between theoretical constructs and informal notions of citizenship. This will help not only to expand the conventional boundaries of citizenship but will also help in understanding how the two aspects of citizenship mediate and transform each other.

Werbner and Yuval-Davis (2005) define it alternatively and propose that citizenship is a ‘total relationship’, influenced by process and politics of identifications, social embeddedness, largely circulated notions and assumptions of citizenship, and sense of belonging. According to Werbner and Yuval-Davis (2005), “citizenship defines the limits of state power and where a civil society or the private sphere of free individual begins. These opposed impulses are part of what makes citizenship, for subject themselves, such a complex, ambiguous imaginary” (p. 02).

Kymlicka (2002) further argues that our everyday encounters with political and social realities are shaped by our deep sense of ‘righteousness’. Our sense of justice comes from how we respond to this everyday conflict in various domains of our lives. It is therefore not viable to develop a comprehensive framework that can formalize these principles to reach a standard scheme. Any such attempt would only distort or trivialize a much more complex reality. Instead he believes that we need ‘a fuller, richer and yet more subtle understanding and practice of citizenship’, because “what the state needs from the citizenry cannot be secured by coercion, but only cooperation and self-restraint in the exercise of private power” (Kymlicka, 2002, p. 285). He argued that a sense of justice among citizens is a necessity for a successful functioning of a democracy

One can say that there cannot and must not be a linear way of interpreting issues of citizenship. According to Mouffe (2002) various political philosophy are based on political principles often in conflict with each other. It is this site of conflict from where ‘the political’ emerge. Thus in place of resolving these conflicts and looking for false binaries, it is prudent to capture how these frictions reinvigorate new sites of citizenry and meaning of citizenry. The sites of these contestations are also sites of citizenry formation where citizens understand their relationship to the citizenry and with their own selves.

This would also mean that citizen is a process of identification and never a complete project as it continues to shift its site and form for its making. It also looks at how everyday discourses of citizenship transform, reproduce or replete the discourse which are derived from traditional political theorisation.

These new development in citizenship studies have captured the imagination of educationists. The role of citizenship education and its inclusion in the school curriculum has, for instance, become a much sought after area of research. The evolution of the discourse of citizenship education and its relatively more recent educational significance in contemporary societies, in particular the Indian society, is worth exploring. Scholars have argued that school textbooks have been a critical tool in forwarding the hegemonised agenda since colonial times. Also an inquiry into school curriculum, classroom practices and teacher education programmes show how they have continued to create certain notions of citizenship which includes the few while excluding others.

Majority studies reflect that social science teaching in India and elsewhere have been informed by the notions of an ideal citizen (Batra, 2010). The teaching of social studies textbooks becomes important key sites for the construction and maintenance of nationhood, its territorial significance in creating notions of national community and evoking ideals of being a citizen in a national community (Kumar, 2001; Jain, 2003; Roy, 2003; Saigol, 2004; Benei, 2008; Durrani, 2010).

Two broad conceptions of citizenship emerge from the review of these studies of textbooks. First, the liberal conceptions of citizenship which seeks to create universalistic notions of citizenship, unmarked by notions of caste, class, gender and religion. The studies show how this singularly constructed national identity is used to forge sameness, thus 'cloaking the inherent contradictions present with the construct of citizenship'. Such a construct of hegemonically conceived national identity invisibilizes the possibility of including discourses of subalterity and plurality (Jain, 2003; Roy, 2003).

A deeper prognosis reveals textbook plays crucial role in creating categories of citizenship which are exclusionary in nature. While portraying a singularly created national category of citizenship as based on universal values, it rather represents a numerically dominating community as normative. So, in India, it is upper caste, upper class, urban Hindu heterosexual male who fits in the 'normal' category of citizenship. Thus, insidiously excluding those who don't fall in in this normal category of citizenship.

The second broad conception of citizenship emerges from a complex nexus of 'education, religion and nationalism'(Saigol, 2004; Arif, 2005; Durrani, 2010;). It was mostly observed in the official curriculum of the school that seeks to promote idea of nation as majoritarian religion. The idea of a citizen and citizenship is created to foster cultural nationalism. Schools are treated as sacred religious spaces wherein the primary function is to keep religious identities alive (Saigol, 2004; Arif, 2005; Durrani, 2010).

Besides the textbook culture, it is also the hidden aspects of schooling that banalise the 'uncritical transmission of official belief structures'. A number of research studies indicate how school cultural practices and ethos contribute to the creating imageries of a citizen. They show that through hidden curriculum the students learn about their unequal status in society and its legitimation follows through 'subtle justification'; thus denying them claims to equal citizenship. Educational practitioners have evidenced complex gender, caste and class asymmetries that inform our everyday classroom practices in a school. Dalit literature indicates how schools regulate and control the principle of ritual purity/pollution. Dalit students are often blamed for a supposed decline in standards and achievement and the culture of educational institutions they study in; thus subtly creating a glass ceiling for Dalits to render them incapable of entering the political and public arena. The school thus alienates a Dalit child as the latter either finds no representation of her life world in the school curriculum or it is portrayed prejudiciously (Guru, 2005). The 'codes of gender appropriate behaviour', 'inferior

representation of Dalit students', are all the imageries which aids in circulation of exclusionary and hegemonised notions of citizenship in rituals and lived realities of schooling practices, including teachers' attitude and peer interactions (Nambissan, 2004; Sunder, 2004; Guru, 2005; Swami 2009).

Thus the researches show how the 'official' and 'unofficial' pedagogies of the school is used to define and fix meanings in a way what being a citizen mean. Thus other ways of beings as citizen is muted in the discursive space of the education. Teacher becomes a crucial agent in this due process (Batra, 2005; Thapan, 2006). Their own frame of rationality comes to guide their interpretation of the text and other schooling process. Teachers' own knowledge and belief influence what students would learn.

Over the last one decade, in international scenario, a number of studies have focused on understanding conceptions of citizenship among pre-service teachers, in-service teachers and teacher-educators (Banks 2004; Kennedy, 2004). Studies conducted in developed countries indicate that the major responsibility for empowering teachers lie with the teacher educators. It is them, who can provide opportunities to prospective teachers to develop as critical citizens. They need to bring "civic responsibility" among our teachers so that they can generate a strong sense of agency and the ability to bring transformation (Kennedy, 2004).

Kennedy (2007) suggests that teachers' civic responsibility is a way to contribute to the sustainability of democracy in a unique way through the education of future citizen, broadly understood a 'civic professionalism'. A well-conceived teacher preparation program can provide a solid foundation to those who aspire to become teachers by fostering in them values of 'civic professionalism', 'civic knowledge' and democracy as the central aim to bring much desired epistemic shift, that is, "How to engage with society, its issues, its problems it conventions and is values" (p. 206).

These studies have attempted to look at the role of teacher education in creating 'culturally responsive' teachers in multicultural classrooms. Although such research has been on the margins, its significance has been acknowledged in recent academic writings. Unfortunately, this field has not yet made an entry into educational research in India. The focus continues to remain on school curriculum alone. The majority of these studies overlook the role of a teacher in the classroom. A handful of research studies on 'citizenship' in India, from the last one decade, has continued to look at the school curriculum (Kumar, 2001; Roy, 2003; Jain, 2003; Saigol, 2004; Benei, 2008; Durrani, 2010.); with a focus on social science textbooks and few other on learning citizenship in school (Roy, 2003; Sunder, 2004; Arif, 2005; Thapan, 2006; Froerer, 2007).

The researchers have continued to focus on the role of school education in preparing the children for future citizenship roles. Discipline of education has been heavily dominated by the researches on schooling processes, school curriculum, mostly text-book etc. In India, studies on citizenship have received scant attention. A recent attention has heavily focused upon the classroom and curricular reforms.

National Curriculum Framework 2005 (NCF 2005) brought a landmark shift in social science curriculum of the school. It proposed a political desire to create a civil society and produce 'sensitive, interrogative, deliberative and transformative citizens'. It further perceived the role of social science as crucial to make this shift happen. It proposed "to restore self-esteem of the social sciences by having those addressed social and political issues in such a way as to awaken a real concern in our children for social justice" (NCF 2005).

This primary focus on official curriculum ignored some critical aspects of education for citizenship, such as how citizens are constructed in schools. Also a very little attention is paid to our school teachers and their education before they are inducted as regular school teachers.

A number of concerns were raised by Batra (2005) who critiques NCF 2005 for viewing the teacher as a 'mere implementing agency' and as 'one who needs to be persuaded and trained' (Batra, 2005). She notes that, "It would be naive to argue that a well-written textbook can successfully set aside the possibility of personal beliefs and biases being legitimised through classroom discourse" (p. 4350). She echoes the need to address the education of teachers; that major responsibilities lie with the teacher educators. It is them, who can provide opportunities to prospective teachers to develop as critical citizens. It is, therefore, critical to reflect what assumptions these student-teachers carry when they enter a plural classroom. In a classroom, which consists of children from diverse backgrounds, a teacher's everyday interaction with the hidden and the official curriculum produces different meanings of exclusion and inclusion while defining citizenship.

It is therefore, critical that we start with an understanding of the assumptions student-teachers carry in their classrooms and that may operate as 'invisible pedagogies'. Scholars have argued that the pre-service programmes need to provide student-teachers with the lens to understand larger curricular issues and their role in making curriculum decisions. Teacher education programmes however, tacitly shape their understanding of inequalities in society and the role of the school in relation to these inequalities (Zeichner, 2006; Batra, 2009).

Acknowledging that citizenship is a multi-dimensional concept, my doctoral study attempts to explore how student-teachers talk about citizenship in ways that matter to them. The attempt is to explore how student-teachers give discursive shape and content to their otherwise taken-for-granted understanding of citizenship. It also the complex ways in which student-teachers reduce, diminish, confine, and deplete meanings of citizenship when they define who a citizen is and what citizenship is all about.

The study attempts to investigate how developing teachers construct the idea of citizenship and how they view their roles as citizens. It aims to investigate the conceptions of citizenship that student-teachers of Delhi's two popular elementary teacher education programmes hold. For this purpose, an attempt was made to understand how the student-teachers view the construct of a 'citizen' and how they locate themselves as 'citizens'. Their ideas of 'what is citizenship' and the corresponding 'rules of inclusion and exclusion' have also been explored. This was done by examining their understanding and views on different issues of citizenship. The study has also explored the role of teacher education programmes in shaping the notions and constructs of citizenship of these student-teachers.

Three major findings emerge from the study, first that student-teachers draw upon several theoretical frameworks while constructing their notions of citizenship. This questions the theorisation of citizenship in political science, which is taking place in empirical void. Second major finding is that with little overlap, there is a remarkable difference in the way student-teachers of the two teacher education programmes construct the concept of a citizen and issues related to citizenship. Third findings shows how teacher-education curriculum comes to play a pivotal role in shaping student-teachers' understanding of a citizen and issues around citizenship. Various forms of official and hidden curriculum of teacher education programme help in nurturing/influencing their conceptions of citizenship. This study empirically proves that a good teacher education programme can create 'transformative professional' teachers.

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