

VALUES AND ATTITUDES – POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE: A STUDY OF THE IMPACT OF TEACHING THE HOLOCAUST ON CITIZENSHIP AMONG SCOTTISH 11–12 YEAR OLDS

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ABSTRACT

Previous research on teaching the Holocaust, notably case studies in the primary or the secondary sectors, suggests that Holocaust education can make a significant contribution to citizenship by developing pupils' understandings of justice, tolerance, human rights issues, and the many forms of racism and discrimination. Yet, there have been no longitudinal studies into its impact on primary pupils.

This paper, reports on the first stages of ongoing longitudinal research (sponsored by the Scottish Executive Education Department), and concentrates on the relevance of Holocaust education to citizenship, by comparing the attitudes of primary 7 pupils before and after Holocaust teaching using data from questionnaires¹.

Results show an improvement in pupils' values and attitudes after learning about the Holocaust in almost every category related to minority groups, ethnic or otherwise. One significant finding was a deep anti-English feeling and this in itself the need for further investigation.

BACKGROUND

The problematic nature of defining Holocaust education is described by Gundare and Batelaan (2003) in terms of its dependence on the country in question, that country's history of anti-Semitism and extent of collaboration or resistance during World War Two. This explains their statement that 'holocaust education is not, and should not be, the same everywhere' (2003: 151–152). Scotland's involvement in World War Two is not recognised as a significant part of Scottish history as such, yet its contribution included taking in Eastern European refugees and children who had come to the UK on the Kindertransports. It also included the active service of Scottish soldiers liberating Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. Furthermore, one Scot, Sister Jane Haining has been recognised by Yad Vashem, The Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority, Jerusalem, as a Righteous Amongst the Nations for helping Jewish children during the Holocaust (Scotsman, 2005).

The requirement for alternative factors to be included in determining the nature of Holocaust education arises in countries which, like Scotland, played a less direct role in World War Two and have no official record of anti-Semitism. Commitment to social justice and anti-racism in all its forms are factors for consideration in defining Holocaust education.

Holocaust education in Scottish schools can be defined as a combination of the historical features akin to Gundare and Batelaan (2003) and of the contemporary features which are of particular relevance to citizenship education. School based Holocaust education in Scotland does not exclusively focus on the Scottish perspective, but uses its citizens who are Holocaust survivors as valuable human resources. Recent Holocaust curricular materials, freely distributed by the Scottish Executive to all primary and secondary schools in Scotland, are based on the testimonies of Jewish Holocaust survivors who have lived in Scotland for most of their adult lives (LTS, 2000; 2002a). The content of these curricular materials share a strong focus on the areas of knowledge and understanding relevant to the development of active and responsible citizenship. These materials were commissioned as a direct response to the introduction of national Holocaust Memorial Day in 2001, and demonstrate

Scotland's strong commitment to social justice and anti-racism. However, unlike in England and Wales, Holocaust education is not mandatory in the Scottish secondary curriculum.

Ongoing campaigns, 'One Scotland, Many Cultures' (started in 2002) and 'One Scotland' (started in 2005) provide further evidence of Scotland's commitment to anti-racism. These campaigns embrace a multicultural Scotland and aim to eliminate racism in Scotland. Incidents such as the firebombing of the Pakistan Association Mosque, Edinburgh, in October 2001, the petrol bombing of the Edinburgh Hebrew Congregation Synagogue in October 2002, the stabbing of Iranian refugee Masood Gomroki in December 2002 and the ill-treatment and murder of Glasgow schoolboy, Kriss Donald, who tragically became Scotland's first white victim of a race murder (Scotsman, 2004), show that extreme forms of racism persist in the newly devolved Scotland. Statistics showing more than 260 people in Scotland have been charged for crimes aggravated by religious hatred, that highlight the extent of religious bigotry in Scotland (MacLeod, 2004). It is feared that the 7 July 2005 bombings in London will have a backlash in further islamophobic violence. Further, a report commissioned by Glasgow City Council (Herald, 2004) suggests a worrying increase in reported racist incidents in schools (both verbal and physical); even more worryingly, the most prevalent age group of the perpetrators was 9–12 years. In addition, there is evidence that even in a primary school with a strong track record of effective 'anti-racist education policies, strategies and practice', racism is experienced by pupils from an ethnic minority and those who are not from an ethnic minority (Woolfson, *et al.*, 2004: 16).

Currently a national priority, 'Values and Citizenship' involves teaching pupils 'respect for self and one another and their interdependence with other members of their neighbourhood and society' and 'of the duties and responsibilities of citizenship in a democratic society' (Standards in Scotland's Schools Act, 2000). The Scottish framework for citizenship education for pupils aged 3 to 18 years, as set out in the discussion paper Education for Citizenship in Scotland (LTS, 2002b) states that (as in England and Wales) citizenship education in Scotland is an entitlement for all pupils at all stages. However it is not taught as a separate curricular area or subject but permeates the primary and secondary curricula through a cross-curricular approach. The requirement for schools to audit their teaching of citizenship education by reviewing existing practice (LTS, 2002c; LTS, 2002d), the introduction of school self-evaluation guides that evaluate the quality of citizenship education in schools (HMIE, 2003), and the quality of the school's approaches to tackling racism (HMIE, 2004) have raised the profile of Education for Citizenship and anti-racist education.

Appendix 1 shows many key areas, as specified in the proposals for Education for Citizenship in Scotland where teaching about the Holocaust can provide a suitable context for attainment. The contribution of Holocaust education to citizenship in the primary school includes developing pupils' understandings of justice, stereotyping and discrimination (Short and Carrington, 1991; Maitles and Cowan, 1999; Cowan and Maitles, 2002) and provides opportunities for developing positive values of empathy, awareness of anti-racism, and an understanding that the individual can make a difference.

Previous research in secondary schools (Carrington and Short, 1997; Brown and Davies, 1998; Short, *et al.*, 1998; Davies, 2000; Hector, 2000; Totten, 2000; Ben-Peretz, 2003; Schweber, 2003) provides evidence that Holocaust education can make a significant contribution to citizenship in developing pupils' awareness of human rights issues including genocide, the concepts of stereotyping and scapegoating and the exercise of power in local, national and global contexts. Landau (1989) asserts that Holocaust teaching 'perhaps more effectively than any other subject, has the power to sensitise them (pupils) to the dangers of indifference, intolerance, racism and the dehumanisation of others'.

As education for citizenship and democracy proposals are developed in schools, these areas of content become central to pupils' understandings of living in a multicultural, multi-ethnic, democratic society. We undertook a small-scale research project to develop our understanding of the impact of a particular curricular topic — the Holocaust — as a potent area of enquiry for pupils' understanding of the important values to be progressed through the education for citizenship agenda.

METHODOLOGY

The research aims firstly to determine whether there were immediate improvements in pupil attitudes towards sensitive racial, human rights and citizenship issues through studying the Holocaust; secondly, to examine if any improvements in attitudes and dispositions were evident after transition to secondary schooling; and thirdly to ascertain whether there were significant differences between pupils in secondary school who had studied the Holocaust in primary school and those who had not.

(a) The Study

To investigate the value of Holocaust education, the authors devised a longitudinal strategy which examined whether there are 'immediate' and 'lasting' effects on the attitudes and dispositions of pupils that result from its teaching. This provides evidence of the contribution of Holocaust education in developing attitudes relating to citizenship.

The questionnaire had two parts: the first allowed pupils to evaluate whether they thought that their understanding of some general concepts had improved. It must be noted that this did not 'test' their knowledge of the area, only their perception of their knowledge. Although their knowledge was not central to the aims of this research, it enabled us to carry out cross tabulation; the second part focused on values and attitudes. Additions focused on the terms 'anti-Semitism', 'genocide'; consideration of 'refugees' and voting attitudes to disabled people. (Appendix 2).

We have the funding from the Scottish Executive Education Department to follow this group of pupils, into the secondary school, where we will be able to 'test' their attitudes and opinions compared to both their previous responses and to their Secondary 1 (aged 12–13 years: Key Stage 3 equivalent) peer group from primaries where the Holocaust was not studied. This stage of the longitudinal study has the potential of suggesting whether there is a lasting impact of this type of learning. In the words of Magnuson, *et al.* (1991: *xiii*), 'the development of individuals cannot be adequately and effectively investigated without using a longitudinal strategy'.

Yet, there are problems with this kind of panel/cohort study, as outlined by (amongst many others) Mason and Bramble, 1978; Cohen and Manion, 1989; Gall, *et al.*, 1996; Ruddock and McIntyre, 1998; Gay and Airasian, 2000. Chief amongst these and relevant to this study are first subjects can 'learn' about the test and, even although anonymous, might give what they perceive as the politically correct answer; and second, the class teacher can have an influence leading to distortions.

While the desire to give a politically correct answer cannot be entirely ruled out, questionnaires were designed to obtain honest answers and cross-referenced questions can eliminate those who have not taken it seriously. Statistical analysis, using the social statistics package (SPSS) was used to examine the data in more detail and, as is the nature of it, threw up further questions.

The questionnaires were given to the pupils in November 2003, and March 2004 (and projected for January 2005) which is in longitudinal terms, a brief timescale and should alleviate some of the worries of longitudinal research. This fitted in with teachers' planned teaching of the Holocaust in January 2004. Questions were devised by the authors and commented on/improved upon by the teachers involved. The questions involved long term general attitude questions together with current

topical issues in the news at the time (for example 'trial by jury', 'Gypsy Traveller' issues and 'attitudes towards refugees').

The administering of the questionnaires by the research assistant resulted in the class teachers having few opportunities to influence their pupils. Both head teachers and an education officer validated the questionnaires by giving feedback on the content of the draft questionnaire, contributing to its final form and ensuring pupils' understandings of the questions. The research assistant and class teachers provided assistance to the few individuals who required additional support and reported that pupils gave careful consideration to the completion of questionnaires.

Teachers were given free choice in the way they taught the Holocaust. Interviews were conducted after the completed second questionnaires had been analysed, with the class teacher of the smaller school (school A) and the P7 class teacher who had co-ordinated the Holocaust teaching in the larger school (school B). Teacher feedback showed that the two schools had used different teaching approaches and materials. School A had integrated the Holocaust into a topic on World War Two; school B had taught the Holocaust as a separate topic. Time spent on the topic varied from two hours for five weeks (school A) to four hours a week for three weeks (school B). School A's common approach was using the story of Anne Frank (Dring, 1992) but due to their composite situation where a group of pupils had learned about the Holocaust the previous year, school B was unable to teach 'as normal' using The Holocaust Teaching pack for Primary Schools (LTS, 1999), and so used a new resource 'Daniel's Story' (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 1993).

(b) The Sample

In order to avoid aspects of familiarity, to move beyond the multicultural areas most often used in the studies on this area and to explore issues such as attitudes towards Gypsy Travellers and Jews, we chose a small rural local authority some 30 miles from Glasgow.

The school sample was chosen, in collaboration with the local authority. We identified two primary schools in the area that taught the Holocaust as part of the World War 2 topic in Primary 7. A further advantage was that all pupils will go to the same local secondary and this should avoid significant drop out of the sample. One primary is a one streamed school; the other is a larger school containing pupils from three classes.

Both primaries are non-denominational, have mixed socio-economic catchment areas, are predominantly white and it was ascertained by the Senior Management Teams that they had no Jewish pupils. Although a small number of pupils from Gypsy Traveller families live locally, none are pupils of the schools in this sample.

We examined the attitudes of 87 pupils in November 2003 prior to their study of the Holocaust and 96 pupils in March 2004, after their study. The first questionnaires were distributed to 100 Primary 7 pupils which included 13 pupils (from the composite class) who had studied the Holocaust the previous year. On the school's request and in the interests of inclusion, all P7s were included in this activity. However these 13 responses were withdrawn from the first part of the research as they indicated a greater perceived understanding of issues than their peers and would have seriously weakened this research study. Their inclusion in the second part of this research can be justified in that this activity was designed for pupils to complete after their learning of the Holocaust to which they were eligible, and that the comparative aspect of the next stage of this research would be less valid if these pupils were not included alongside their peers who had studied the Holocaust. In addition there were four absences.

We present below some evidence relating to this. We are very aware that this is a relatively small sample and thus over-generalisation must be avoided.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In almost every category there was a welcome improvement in pupils' perceptions of their own understanding and values/opinions relating to the issues examined after learning about the Holocaust.

In terms of their general understanding, the following table (Table 1) shows their self-reported perceived improvement:

Table 1: Pupils' perceived knowledge

	Questionnaire	
	1 (Nov 2003)	2 (March 2004)
	%	%
1 Do you know what HUMAN RIGHTS are?		
Yes	93.1	95.8
No	6.9	4.2
2 Do you know what RACISM is?		
Yes	85.1	97.9
No	14.9	2.1
3 Do you know what a RACIST is?		
Yes	83.9	97.9
No	16.1	2.1
4 Do you know what a REFUGEE is?		
Yes	66.7	74
No	33.3	26
5 Do you know what a GYPSY TRAVELLER is?		
Yes	58.6	83.3
No	41.4	16.7
6 Do you know what the HOLOCAUST is?		
Yes	47.1	95.8
No	52.9	4.2
7 Do you know what TRIAL-BY-JURY is?		
Yes	43.7	51
No	56.3	49
8 Do you know what ANTI-SEMITISM is?		
Yes		29.2
No		70.8
9 Do you know what GENOCIDE is?		
Yes		18.8
No		81.3

Pupils' perceived knowledge of human rights and racism can be seen to be very high in the first questionnaire. It steadily increased after learning about the Holocaust. Whilst we might expect there to be significant extra cognitive understanding in terms of the Holocaust (q6), there is also a perceived large increase in terms of understanding Gypsy Travellers and a notable increase in knowledge of refugees. We must note though that this does not necessarily denote an understanding of each term but may be a reflection of mere familiarity. Interestingly, although we didn't ask questions 8 and 9 in the first questionnaire, there is a perceived lack of understanding of 'anti-Semitism' and 'genocide'. In an earlier work, (Cowan and Maitles, 2000) we noted that teachers were teaching the Holocaust without either specifically mentioning or explaining the word 'anti-Semitism' but using the term 'racism' as a general description of the genocide. Breaking down the results between the schools, we find that for this question the figures were that only 3.7% in one school, but 39% in the other, knew what anti-Semitism was after being taught about the Holocaust. Feedback from the class teachers revealed that the larger school had regularly used and displayed flashcards of key terms of the Holocaust which included 'anti-Semitism'; while the smaller school had not mentioned this term at all.

In terms of pupils' values/attitudes, pupils were asked about their opinions on adults and children making racist comments. Whilst there were worrying numbers who believed that it is acceptable to make racist comments, for the purposes of this research, it is noticeable that in some categories there is a more progressive attitude after the Holocaust was studied, although the change was small in all categories. Particularly heartening are attitudes towards Gypsy Travellers where the largest gain occurred, and with refugees; two groups who arguably have had a particularly difficult portrayal recently from both media and government. Increases in disagreement with racist comments made towards the groups of people in this sample, applied equally to adults and children.

We cross tabulated the perceived 'level of Holocaust knowledge' with attitudes towards Jews; the assumption was that we might expect after learning about the worst example of anti-Semitic violence, there would be sympathy towards Jewish people as a minority group.

Table 2 shows that none of the 41 pupils who perceived they knew what the Holocaust was, agreed to the statement about children making racist comments about Jews. However, of the 92 pupils who perceived they knew what the Holocaust was, after learning about the Holocaust, there were still three who agreed with the above statement. This suggests that teaching the Holocaust may have some influence but cannot eradicate racist attitudes even towards Jews, as a small number persists. This may support Allport's view that there will always be some individuals 'with a pathological need to hate' (Allport, 1954, cited in Short and Reed, 2004).

A further area we tried to gauge was pupils' attitudes towards having ethnic minorities, English, women or disabled people as representatives.

Table 2: Level of Holocaust knowledge crossed with children's racist attitudes towards Jews

Know Holocaust			Questionnaire		
			1	2	
Yes	I think it is ok for children to make racist comments about Jews				
		Agree	Count %	0 .0%	3 3.3%
		Disagree	Count %	39 95.1%	87 94.6%
		Don't Know	Count %	2 4.9%	2 2.2%
		Total	Count %	41 100%	92 100%
No	I think it is ok for children to make racist comments about Jews				
		Agree	Count %	4 8.7%	0 .0%
		Disagree	Count %	40 87.0%	3 75.0%
		Don't Know	Count %	2 4.3%	1 25.0%
		Total	Count %	46 100%	4 100%

Although in each category there was a small number who were opposed to voting for minority candidates, the children showed commendable respect for minorities and in all categories (except one) there was an increase in the percentage of those agreeing with the statements after they learned about the Holocaust. The category which showed a decline was not (as we might have expected taking into account media coverage and the peculiarities of sectarianism in central Scotland) 'Catholic' or 'Muslim' but was 'English person'.

Table 3 shows that while 20 more pupils now perceive they 'know racism', the number of pupils who were likely to vote for an English person decreased by 2 (14.8%), while those who were not as likely to do so, rose by 16 (11.3%). One explanation for this negative trend is that pupils' negative attitudes towards English people are more ingrained than their attitudes to other minorities. It also reveals that even after learning that racism is not a good thing, pupils can still hold a prejudicial attitude towards English people. Further cross tabulation shows that in every category (apart from 'English person'), the group of pupils who, per-Holocaust teaching, perceived they knew about the Holocaust, was more positive about voting for minorities than their peers.

Although we need to acknowledge the inadvisability of generalising from this sample, it does suggest that anti-English feeling for a variety of complex reasons which need further investigation, has a resonance amongst young people in Scotland. With hindsight, now that we have the results, it might have been useful to have included attitudes towards other European communities in Scotland (for example, Italians) in the light of EU expansion and statements by ministers in the Scottish Executive welcoming increased European Union immigration into Scotland. We intend to investigate this further in future studies.

Table 3: Level of Racism knowledge crossed with voting attitudes regarding English people

Know Racism			Questionnaire		
			1	2	
Yes	I think that I would be just as likely to vote for an English person as a Scottish person for the Scottish Parliament				
		Agree	Count %	44 59.5%	42 44.7%
		Disagree	Count %	20 27.0%	36 38.3%
		Don't Know	Count %	10 13.5%	16 17.0%
		Total	Count %	74 100%	94 100%
No	I think that I would be just as likely to vote for an English person as a Scottish person for the Scottish Parliament				
		Agree	Count %	10 76.9%	0 .0%
		Disagree	Count %	2 15.4%	1 50.0%
		Don't Know	Count %	1 7.7%	1 50.0%
		Total	Count %	13 100%	2 100%

A further area investigated was the pupils' opinions and perceptions of the numbers of ethnic minority people in both Britain as a whole, and Scotland in particular. We examined both Scotland and the UK in this category as there had been a perceived difference (certainly in the media) between the attitude of the Scottish Executive and the Westminster government towards the issue of increased immigration.

Whilst there are worries about the numbers who believed that there were 'too many' in Scotland, for the purpose of this investigation, there are welcome improvements, again, in every category. In each of the categories, the 'don't know' category had fallen after Holocaust teaching and contributed to an increase in disagreement with the statements.

Of particular interest, is the difference in perception that the children have of refugees in UK and Scotland where disagreement with the statement applying to Scotland increased by 24% compared with the increase of 15% applying to UK. There are potentially a number of explanations of this, ranging from pupils' own experiences to the different stances that the British Government (less welcoming) is taking towards refugees and asylum seekers as compared to the Scottish Executive (more welcoming). Yet, these increases, together with the 14% increase in disagreement with the statement applying to Jews in Scotland and UK were the largest made. However, before becoming too optimistic about the results, it must be noted that these attitudes towards refugees were less progressive than towards other minorities, perhaps suggesting the nature of overall media/'common sense' influences.

Additionally, given that more than 95% pupils considered that they knew what the Holocaust is (Table 1), pupils' attitudes towards Jews is disappointing in that 10% pupils agree with the statement ('too many Jews') despite there being approximately only 5,000 Jews in Scotland. One possible explanation may lie in pupils' understanding of the genocide of the Jews by the Nazis and their collaborators. This may be perceived as something that happened in the past that is not relevant to contemporary Scottish society, and that pupils do not perceive Jews as victims in today's society. It is unknown whether the contemporary nature of anti-Semitism was taught to pupils.

Table 4: Level of Holocaust knowledge crossed with attitudes towards refugees in Scotland

Know Holocaust			Questionnaire	
			1	2
Yes	I think that there are too many refugees in Scotland			
	Agree	Count	13	19
		%	31.7%	20.7%
	Disagree	Count	13	53
		%	31.7%	57.6%
	Don't Know	Count	15	20
		%	36.6%	21.7%
	Total	Count	41	92
		%	100%	100%
No	I think that there are too many refugees in Scotland			
	Agree	Count	8	0
		%	17.4%	.0%
	Disagree	Count	15	1
		%	32.6%	25.0%
	Don't Know	Count	23	3
		%	50.0%	75.0%
	Total	Count	46	4
		%	100%	100%

Table 4 which presents cross tabulation of data shows that the percentage of respondents who (perceived they) knew what the Holocaust was, and think that there are too many refugees in Scotland fell from 32% to 21%, and those who (perceived they) did not know what the Holocaust was, fell from 17% to 0%. This supports the claim that learning about the Holocaust has had a positive impact on pupils' attitudes to refugees.

CONCLUSIONS

It is important not to take too much from this study. The heavy content of the questionnaire, and its complex references to Scotland and UK are weaknesses of this research. There is no doubt that there are some unwelcome attitudes amongst a small minority of pupils. Yet there is evidence that pupils' self perceived knowledge and values/attitudes improved (excepting pupils' attitudes towards English people) after learning about the Holocaust. Positive trends towards Gypsy Travellers and refugees were particularly significant.

While unknown factors may also have contributed to these gains, the contribution of Holocaust education, at the very least, must be considered a factor. It is worth noting that when the pupils in this sample were learning about the Holocaust, in January 2004, Holocaust Memorial Day received very little media attention in Scotland.

The research uncovered a deep anti-English feeling – the only area that significantly declined in the course of the two questionnaires. This requires further investigation and has two significant implications for teachers. Firstly, it raises a serious question as to whether anti-English feeling is endemic in Scottish culture. When the class teachers were notified of these results they were concerned and committed to acting upon this by including it in their education for citizenship programme. This research may have such teaching implications for teachers throughout Scotland.

Secondly, if teaching the Holocaust and anti-racism suggests that the only victims are persecuted peoples eg. Jews, Gypsies, Tutsis, there can be a danger of ignoring prejudice against other peoples, eg. English people, Italians. This too has implications for teachers and suggests that whilst learning about the Holocaust has a valuable role to play, it is not a panacea for all young people's prejudices. This is further supported in the findings by pupils' attitudes to children making racist comments about Jews.

At the very least, numbers of pupils who put 'don't know' for questionnaire 1 came off the fence in questionnaire 2 and came down in favour of tolerance and understanding. Yet, surprisingly few (only 29% overall) knew (or thought they knew) what anti-Semitism was. Analysis of the ways in which teachers in our schools put the Holocaust in the citizenship context is likely to contribute to an understanding of this. It has been suggested (Short, 2003) that Holocaust research in the primary school lacks the pupil voice in evaluating the contribution of Holocaust education in this sector; this research begins to address these issues. In terms of our general aims, this study suggests that there are some significant immediate benefits of learning about the Holocaust; the longer lasting effects are yet to be ascertained.

NOTES

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APPENDIX 1

Key areas of Education for Citizenship that provide a suitable context for Holocaust education.

- The legal and human rights and responsibilities of citizens, individually and collectively in a democratic society.
- Barriers to full opportunity to exercise citizenship arising from socio-economic circumstances, prejudice and discrimination.
- The diversity of identities — religious, ethnic, cultural, regional, national — within Scotland, across the UK and worldwide, and the need for mutual respect, tolerance and understanding.
- The ability to respond in imaginative ways to social, moral and political situations and challenges, for example developing a personal response to a topical moral issue.

- The ability to consider and empathise with the experience and perspective of others.

(Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2002b, pp32 and 34)

APPENDIX 2

Additional questions in Questionnaire 2.

Part A

Do you know what anti-Semitism is?

Do you know what genocide is?

Part B

I think it is ok for adults to make racist comments about refugees.

I think it is ok for children to make racist comments about refugees.

I think that I would be just as likely to vote for a disabled person as an able bodied person for the Scottish Parliament.