



UvA-DARE (Digital Academic Repository)

Talking about values : a dialogic approach to citizenship education as an integral part of history classes

Schuitema, J.A.

Publication date
2008

[Link to publication](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Schuitema, J. A. (2008). *Talking about values : a dialogic approach to citizenship education as an integral part of history classes*. UvA/ILO.

General rights

It is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), other than for strictly personal, individual use, unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons).

Disclaimer/Complaints regulations

If you believe that digital publication of certain material infringes any of your rights or (privacy) interests, please let the Library know, stating your reasons. In case of a legitimate complaint, the Library will make the material inaccessible and/or remove it from the website. Please Ask the Library: <https://uba.uva.nl/en/contact>, or a letter to: Library of the University of Amsterdam, Secretariat, Singel 425, 1012 WP Amsterdam, The Netherlands. You will be contacted as soon as possible.

Chapter 3

MAKING HISTORY VALUABLE: AN INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN FOR CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION IN THE HISTORY CLASS¹

The principal aim of this chapter is to explore the possibilities to integrate citizenship education into secondary history classes. First, we examine the debate on history teaching and the different perspectives on citizenship education. We will go on to formulate objectives and teaching strategies for citizenship education and present a curriculum unit for citizenship education in the history class. We argue that citizenship education should focus on the development of skills as well as moral values and that students need to develop their own perspective regarding moral issues and make their own moral judgements. In the lessons series we present students are encouraged to participate actively in the learning process and express their opinions. By working in small groups students are stimulated to engage in dialogue with each other and discuss moral issues that arise from the subject matter.

1. INTRODUCTION

Human acting influences history and human thinking gives meaning to history. Moral values have a central role in this process of meaning-making. People, however, differ in the meanings they attach to historical events. In learning about history, students reconstruct the historical narratives again and consequently their personal values influence their interpretation of historical events. These value-laden constructions and reconstructions of the past make history an interesting subject for learning to think about values and for developing skills for moral and social development.

Under the heading of citizenship, educational scholars have argued for such a broad understanding of education. The argument is that schools should prepare students for participation in our society. This asks for education that focuses not only

¹ Schuitema, J. A., van Riessen, M., Veugelers, W., & ten Dam, G. (submitted). Making history valuable: Citizenship education through history teaching.

on the development of domain specific knowledge and skills but also on the social and moral development of students.

Several European countries have recently put citizenship education on their political agenda. In the UK, citizenship education was introduced as part of the national curriculum in the 1990s. French education introduced 'éducation civique'. In the Netherlands, in 2005 the Dutch parliament adopted the 'Active Citizenship and Social Integration' bill which obliges schools to integrate citizenship education in the curriculum. Fostering citizenship should be part of regular subjects (languages, history, biology etc.) (cf. Onderwijsraad, 2003).

History, in particular, is considered to be a subject with promising opportunities for stimulating the moral development of students (see e.g. Arthur, Davies, Wrenn, Haydn & Kerr, 2001; Phillips, 2002; Brett, 2005). In this chapter, we focus on the integration of citizenship education into the history class. We present a curriculum unit for secondary education which we developed in cooperation with history teachers. Before doing so, we examine the debate on history teaching and the different perspectives on citizenship education.

2. TEACHING HISTORY AND MORAL GOALS

To understand the thoughts and feelings of the people in the past we need to take account of the moral values of that time. Empathy with the moral values helps us understand the choices made by people in the past and is therefore an indispensable 'instrument' for any serious learning about the past. So what is relevant therefore is not the question of *whether* history teaching should deal with value orientation – it can't fail to do so – but the question is really about *how* it should be done and with what objective.

There has, for some time, been heated debate about whether history should deliberately and actively contribute towards citizenship by summoning up values that are considered of vital importance for a western society (cf Wilson, 2001). Many historians and history teachers are concerned that the discipline of history might be used to serve a particular moral and social agenda (Brett, 2005). When history is used as an extension of citizenship education it would harm the intrinsic objectives and identity of the discipline of history: history is to explain what, how and why things happened (Lee & Ashby, 2001). As a consequence, historians should be concerned with the experiences, thoughts and actions of people of the past and not with people of the present (Elton, 1991).

Some historians, however, have questioned whether in fact we are in a position to fully understand the motives of people in the past. VanSledright (2001), for example, argues that any attempt to make sense of the past is influenced by our own 'positionality'. No meaning-making process or understanding is possible without our sociocultural framework. He suggests replacing the concept of empathy by the more realistic concept of contextualization, not as an objective by itself but in order to 'learn much more about who we are, about our historical positionalities, and about the way we wield them' (p 66).

Barton and Levstik (2004) even go a step further. They argue that history as a school subject has different demands and purposes than history as an academic discipline. Although empathy or contextualisation are important tools, it should not be the end-point of history education in schools. In their view, the overarching goal of education is to prepare students for participation in democratic life. This means participation in deliberation about the common good and issues of justice. Barton and Levstik advocate a focus in the curriculum on issues such as human rights, justice or the common good. Rather than posing contextualizing questions such as 'Why did Truman decide to bomb Hiroshima and Nagasaki?' they would prefer students to think about questions such as 'How could the greatest number of lives have been saved?' As a reaction to the concerns of historians and teachers who see history debased in this way to become an auxiliary science to citizenship education, Barton argues that we all make moral judgements about the past. It is a very real feature of our society. Statues are erected to people we revere and who represent our own values, and we set certain days aside for remembrance or mourning. Students also have a moral opinion about things that happened in the past. Instead of ignoring these opinions, history teachers should set about working to teach students how to substantiate their opinions and to defend those judgments in the context of a pluralistic society. 'This is ultimately the test of history education: Does it help students make judgments in the present? Otherwise, there's no point in bothering with it.' (Barton, 2004, p. 9).

Other scholars, Phillips (2002) and Wrenn (1999) for example, adopt a middle course in this discussion. They are of the opinion that history and citizenship education can go hand in hand. Radical changes to the curriculum are not necessary. The skills taught in the history classroom show major similarities with key elements in the literature on citizenship education. Wrenn (1999) argues that citizenship education should not only be seen as an integral element of history education. It can be used to improve history teaching as well. Phillips (2002) focuses in particular on the pedagogic-didactic choices that history teachers make. It can, for example, be a conscious choice to stimulate students during the lesson 'to think independently; to present substantiated arguments; to communicate effectively; to co-operate and learn from each other; to be curious; to interrogate evidence; to appreciate more than one point of view and a range of different interpretations' (Phillips, 2002, p.145).

As Brett (2005) argues, these objectives are shared fully by citizenship educators as well as most history teachers. However, we can't assume that these kinds of objectives in matters of citizenship will simply be implemented in the history class. In order to be able to work on citizenship education, teachers mainly need specific lesson material. As a rule, teachers support curriculum changes not on the basis of arguments for or against citizenship elements in the history programme. They would welcome good material. In this chapter we do not confine ourselves to guidelines for moral education, but also give a concrete example of citizenship education through history teaching.

3. OBJECTIVES OF MORAL EDUCATION

When one decides that history can make a contribution towards citizenship education among students, the question that arises immediately is: what do we want the students to learn?

In the literature we find various approaches to moral education. These differ in the extent to which they focus on fostering specific values or on stimulating independent and critical thinking (see Solomon, Watson & Battistich, 2001). The 'indirect approach' stands in the tradition of Kohlberg's theory of moral development in which the importance of acquiring skills for moral decision making and moral reasoning is accentuated. The focus of the 'direct approach' on teaching a specific set of values - such as trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, honesty, justice and fairness - represents a less reflective and developmental view on moral education.

In the past few decades a renewed interest in the concept of citizenship education has emerged (Althof & Berkowitz, 2006). In order to prepare students to participate in society, citizenship education should include both the development of skills and the stimulation of certain attitudes and values. Moreover, students should gain insight into the society they live in (knowledge). Students need skills to develop their own perspective on society - what do they find worth striving for? - and to make their own choices. Further, they need reasoning skills and communication skills for reflection and dialogue on moral values. Last but not least, critical thinking skills are needed to enable them to make their own moral judgements. Citizenship education, however, cannot be equated with a set of skills. By doing so it is in danger of stimulating relativism. The goals strived for should also include social integration and social cohesion. Fostering moral values, such as concern for others and justice, is therefore just as important as stimulating skills. Students need to take responsibility for their actions. This includes being sensitive to multiple perspectives on one issue and being able and willing to examine them. To summarize, citizenship education that favours moral development can be characterized by three interrelated objectives.

Autonomy

A modern democracy needs autonomous but involved citizens. Being autonomous means that citizens have the competences to make well-considered choices and take responsibility for their choices (Ten Dam and Volman, 2004). Students should therefore be stimulated to formulate their own opinions and learn how to substantiate these opinions to others.

Moral values

Social cohesion in society depends on shared moral values such as concern for others and justice. Taking responsibility for one's own choices means that students can be called to account for their moral choices (Veugelers & Vedder, 2003). It is therefore important to gain a deeper understanding of moral values and to develop the competences to reflect upon these values.

Multiperspectivity

Considering the plural character of today's western society, it is crucial for citizens to be able and willing to cope with 'diversity' (Banks, 2004). Students should therefore learn to recognize and understand different perspectives on societal issues and the conflicting moral values embedded in these perspectives. This also involves recognizing the subjectivity of one's own opinions. Students should be able to defend their personal viewpoints in the context of a plural and democratic society.

4. TEACHING STRATEGIES FOR MORAL EDUCATION

Arguing that – history - education can contribute to citizenship does not yet provide an answer to the question of 'How should this be done?' What are the components of a curriculum for moral education?

The key word in our approach is 'meaningful learning'. Students are motivated to actively participate in their learning if they feel that it has something to do with themselves or their lives. In other words, they themselves must consider that what they are learning is relevant. From a socio-cultural perspective on learning, the cultural context is also relevant in the learning process and learning must be seen as learning to participate in an existing discursive cultural or social practice. Moral development cannot therefore be attained by learning a set of principles, just as you cannot learn a language only by studying grammar (Tappan, 1998). Neither is it possible to simply transmit moral values. Moral development of students means first and foremost learning to participate in moral (discursive) practices. Learning to participate implies that you start to see yourself as part of those social and cultural practices, as someone who can and may participate in them (Lave & Wenger, 1995). It also means that in that role you take on ever more responsibility for your own actions (including the use of knowledge and skills). The learning process thus implies a change in personal identity, in the way one positions oneself towards others and towards oneself (cf. Ten Dam, Volman & Wardekker, 2004). A curriculum unit for moral education must therefore be set up in such a way that the knowledge and skills are, and become, meaningful to students in relation to their own position in the world and helps them to become a member of a community of practice.

To encourage meaningful learning processes as outlined above in the history class, we formulated four guiding principles. We systematically developed these principles into a curriculum unit for teaching history in secondary education, consisting of 13 lessons. Before presenting examples of our lessons, we briefly present the four guiding principles.

Involving student's perspective: active participation

For learning to be personally meaningful it is important that a link is continuously made with present and future situations, in which students are supposed to use the knowledge and skills they learn. Students should be encouraged to participate actively in the teaching-learning process and express their opinions so they can articulate their own values and perspectives on the subject matter.

Dialogue

One way to involve students in the subject matter and to stimulate participation is to foster dialogue in the class. Encouraging dialogue in the classroom helps students to become aware of their own values and perspectives in relation to the subject matter and to those of others. When students have to discuss moral dilemmas, they learn how to solve conflicts and to consider the perspectives of others. Moreover, they develop the skills needed to justify their personal opinions towards others. Further, it is assumed that dialogue stimulates the development of attitudes such as tolerance, respect, 'open-mindedness' and autonomy (see Schuitema, Ten Dam & Veugelers, in press).

Working in small groups

As we argued above, the quality of the learning processes is partly dependent on the room created for students' active participation in the classroom. Working in small groups is an effective way to encourage dialogue among students. It also stimulates students to feel involved in the learning content. Students in small groups are stimulated to interact with each other in an active way. They have to make decisions together regarding the strategy, the planning, the division of work etc.

Reflection on the learning process

If students are aware of what and how they learn, learning can become more meaningful to them. In the context of citizenship education, reflection does not only involve someone's own cognitive functioning, but also one's own affective processes. For example: the ability to recognize the influence of group norms on one's own process of moral development, and the competence to regulate such interactions.

5. THE CURRICULUM UNIT

In this section we discuss the way these guidelines can help to achieve the objectives of citizenship education in the history class that favours moral development.

We describe the curriculum unit that we have developed together with teachers to introduce citizenship education in the history lesson. The teaching material supplements an existing history textbook and is intended for students in the 8th grade. This series of 13 lessons deals with the history of the United States of America from the first settlers to the early nineteenth century. This is a regular subject for students in the Netherlands in the 8th grade of secondary education. The material covers in detail the origins of the US, the situation of the Native Americans and immigration to the US. Slavery and the Civil War are also covered briefly. The last two lessons make a link between these subjects and the current debate in the Netherlands about the multicultural society.

Working in small groups

By working in groups, which is essential in our curriculum unit, students are stimulated to engage in dialogue with each other. Because of the design of the assign-

ments, students are all dependent on one another, which renders working together a necessity. The assignments themselves are distributed over a number of lessons and students must draw up plans together and make decisions about how the work is to be allocated. Instructions are given at the beginning of each assignment on how the students can best approach the assignment, and with suggestions for working together.

The role of the teacher

When students work together in groups, dialogue takes place mainly among the students themselves. The main role for the teacher is that of a supervisor who focuses mainly on the collaborative process. But dialogue also takes place during class discussions. The teacher then has more influence on the content of the dialogues and can steer the students' thinking process and encourage more in-depth discussion. For example, the teacher can ask the students questions, and present the class with as many different perspectives as possible. In addition, the teacher encourages the students to listen to each other and to respond to each other. And, by continuing to ask questions, the teacher challenges the students to come up with a well-considered opinion and to substantiate it with arguments.

The concept of values: identifying and articulating moral values

Attention is systematically given to moral values throughout the curriculum unit. The concept of moral values is introduced in the first few lessons and there are a number of assignments to practice working with this concept. What is a moral value? How can moral values be recognized in the subject matter? What are personal values?

Moral values tend to be abstract concepts for students in the 8th grade. We used the following description: 'opinions, wishes or ideals about how people should behave with and towards each other'. In order to practice working with the concept of values, students work on a task that involves using cards. They are given a set of 18 cards, and each card bears a statement that conveys either a fact or an opinion. The students first have to separate the opinions from the facts. They then learn to make a distinction between an opinion that expresses a moral value and an opinion where this is not the case. For example, compare: 'Everyone in the Netherlands should have the same rights and duties' (a statement based on a moral value) with 'History is one of the most difficult school subjects' (a statement without a moral value).

The concept of values returns when students have to recognize and identify values that are covered in the material. The Constitution and the Declaration of Independence are excellent documents in which values play a significant role. Students read the text of the Declaration of Independence and some passages from the Constitution. They then fill in the table shown in Figure 1. In order to make the values more tangible for the students, an example of a statement is given in the first column on the basis of a value in the second column. Students must then state whether or not this value is to be found in the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence. This gives students an idea of the kind of values the first Americans considered to be important.

Are these values to be found in the American constitution?			
statement on the basis of a value	Value	Yes	No
1 Laws and rights apply without exception to every American.	Justice		
2 No religion is more important than any other religion.	Pluriformity		
3 The government should ensure that everyone is happy.	Social involvement		
4 The population elects the government and may also dissolve it again.	Democracy		
5 Every accused person is entitled to an honest trial.	Justice		
6 Every citizen is free and cannot be harassed by the government.	Freedom		
7 Every American should look after his fellow citizens.	Social involvement		
8 Every American has the right to carry a weapon and to use it to defend himself.	Freedom		
9 It is important that rich Americans pay taxes for the poor.	Social involvement		

Figure 1. Identifying moral values in the American constitution.

Empathizing with different perspectives

Most history teachers consider that being able to empathize with the perspectives of people in the past and how these people saw their world is an important objective of history teaching. One main aim in our curriculum unit is also to involve the student's own perspective.

In history education different perspectives are often investigated through the use of different (primary) sources (Rouet, Britt, Mason & Perfetti, 1996). Primary sources present events from a certain perspective. Confronting students with sources that present different perspectives on certain events, makes it clear exactly how the perspective determines perception. What's more, sources can give certain events a very personal slant and this gets students even more involved in the subject. In those lessons in the unit that were about Native Americans, we worked with dyads sets of sources. One set presented perspectives of the Native Americans, and the other set put forward those of the settlers. Students worked in groups of 4. Each group is split up into dyads, and each of these couples work with one of the two sets. The couples then question the other couple about the sources they have studied and they have to answer a number of questions: 'How did the group in question regard the other group?', 'How did they live and what were their values?', 'What did the other group

mean to them?' The students then work on a number of statements. One example of a statement is:

Many settlers came to America as refugees in search of a better and more secure future. You can't blame them for mainly thinking about their own future. Isn't that what everyone does?

Students are asked to think about what an Native American and an American would have thought about such a statement. And what do the students think themselves? In the subsequent discussion, the teacher emphasizes the fact that there are in fact many different perspectives. The students' own perspective is one of those: being that of someone who looks at history from our own present-day context.

The subsequent lessons, which look at immigration to the US, go a step further. The sources that set out the perspectives of the immigrants and those of Americans born in the US, are now all mixed together. We expect that the students themselves are now able to discriminate between the sources. Each of the four members of the groups has different sources at their disposal, which means exchanging information is essential.

Dialogue: exchange, co-construction and validating.

In the unit we paid explicit attention to the skills and attitudes students need to engage in discussions with each other. We considered the following cumulative skills and attitudes to be important for an effective dialogue aimed at citizenship education (see Frijters, Ten Dam & Rijlaarsdam, in press; Rojas-Drummond & Mercer, 2003).

- *Exchanging*: being willing and able to express your own opinions and share these with others.
- *Co-constructing*: being willing and able to form your own opinions in a dialogue, utilizing the input of others, and contribute to the opinions of others.
- *Validating*: being willing and able to validate your own opinion and the opinion of others from the perspective of moral values.

All these skills and attitudes are necessary for a productive dialogue. However, there is a certain structure to the curriculum unit. From the outset, students are encouraged to share their opinions with others. And gradually the elements of co-construction and validating are added.

Together come up with as many arguments as possible for and against the statement. Examine the issue through the eyes of 'new' immigrants, and also through the eyes of immigrants who already lived in America. Give your collective opinion about the statement. Make a brief note in the columns below of which facts you use as arguments for that opinion.

STATEMENT:	
The Nation Origins Act from 1924 was a good solution for the problems surrounding immigration in the US.	
arguments for the statement	arguments against the statement
Our collective standpoint about the statement:	
Our standpoint is based mainly on the following facts :	
Our standpoint also stems from our values , i.e.:	
We definitely do not agree / do not really agree about the following:	
This is (we think) because:	
Do this next task on your own. Go back to your own (provisional) opinion on worksheet 9. Has this opinion changed? Why do you think this is?	

Figure 2. Group dialogue assignment.

In the part about immigration to the US, students have, as already said, studied sources that present different perspectives. Having read these sources, the students then form an opinion based on the statement:

The Nation Origins Act from 1924 was a good solution for the problems surrounding immigration in the US.

The assignment that follows is presented in Figure 2. Each student first forms their own opinion about the statement and they write it down. Working in groups of four, the students then put together the arguments for and against the statement. We're not yet looking at the students trying to convince one another. The main point of this exercise is to work together whereby the students write down as many arguments as possible (exchange). Once this has been done, the students are then asked to arrive at a collective standpoint. And this is now when certain considerations must be made, and what is important here is to contribute to the opinion of others and to use the comments of others in the formation of one's own opinion (co-construction). When the students have come up with a collective standpoint, they specify the facts and values they are based on (validating) and also state those areas they could not agree on. Finally the students go back to the opinion they wrote down in the first place and say whether they have changed this opinion as a result of the discussion with the others, or whether their own opinion has now become even stronger.

Reflection

Students are given assignments throughout the entire curriculum unit in which they reflect on the learning content and on the learning process. This happens, for example, during a class discussion following the exercise outlined above where they exchange different perspectives. The teacher asks the students to think about the question of how come the different parties (Native Americans and settlers) can have a different view of events. The teacher comes back here to the concept of values. The teacher also asks the students whether immersing themselves in one of the perspectives was a good way to think about this period in history. What is the advantage of this? We have attempted in this way to help the students get a better grasp of what they are learning ('What have I learned') and to have them reflect on their own learning process.

Later on in the unit the students start to reflect more independently on the learning content and on their own learning process. An example of how this is done is shown in Figure 3. This is an assignment that students are given when working in their groups of 4 after they have completed the 'Nation of Origins Act' assignment (see Figure 2).

<p>Discuss the questions below:</p> <p>You don't have to arrive at an answer together. What's important is to compare your own experiences.</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. When working in groups, did you manage to exchange information? A lot of different sources were available. What went well in the exchange of information and what went less well? What do you think is the reason for this? 2. You all discussed the statement. What do you think is the 'secret' of a good discussion? How do you recognize a good discussion? 3. Did you succeed in the group in arriving at a collective standpoint? What made it easy to work together on this. What made it difficult? And if there are more differences of opinion than points of agreement, does this mean that the discussion was a good one or that the discussion was for nothing? 4. Do you now think differently about 'immigration' than you did at first? If not, why not? If yes: what is the main reason for this? 5. If you were to work in this way again: what could or should be done differently to make it (even) more successful? Are there any things you can do yourself?

Figure 3. Reflection assignment.

Bridging past and present

It is important to make bridges with the students' perception of their own daily life. For example, our curriculum unit makes a link between the subject matter and the present-day multicultural society of the Netherlands. The idea is that students see that the discussion they are having about episodes in history is now also relevant to their own social environment. Of course, the current situation in the Netherlands is totally different, but the same ideas do return and the same values are involved. Students read an article that presents a particular view of contemporary multicultural society. It is a fairly conservative view of how in the Netherlands we should handle immigrants. Students then go and look themselves for sources on the internet. The teaching material provides a link to a Dutch newspaper that has written a lot about this particular question, but the students are free to look for sources wherever they want. This task concludes with an assignment similar to the one in Figure 2, where students are again requested to come up with a collective standpoint on a particular statement.

6. CONCLUSION

We have shown in this chapter how citizenship education can be a part of history lessons. The assignments we described are easy to adapt to other historical subjects.

The teaching material was tried out by two secondary school teachers in four 8th grade classes. Interviews with teachers and students and observations of the lessons indicate that working in groups does require more effort from both the students and the teacher, all of whom needed time to get used to a new way of working. Working with different sets of primary sources also requires more teacher preparation. The additional effort required did, in fact, have its advantages according to the teachers, who found it both useful and enjoyable to be involved in history teaching in this way. And as far as the students were concerned, the subject matter really came to life when they were asked to give their own opinions. Emotions actually ran quite high when the fate of the Native Americans was discussed. It did appear difficult for them to recognize just how restricted in time and place their own opinions are, and how their own values affect these opinions. In the dialogues, the students were quick to take a certain stance and it turned out to be hard to maintain a critical view of one's own opinion and the opinions of others. This particular way of working demands a lot of the students, but they were very involved nonetheless. We are currently conducting an extensive assessment with a large number of classes in order to get a better idea of the learning effects of the material we have developed which focuses on the integration of citizenship education in the history class.