This article reflects on the aims and focus of citizenship education for young people in secure institutions in England and Wales. Drawing on writing by Government and specialist educational organisations and data from a research project in four secure establishments for young people, it considers the limitations of viewing citizenship education as a reform tool and the identification for educational purposes of young people first and foremost as «offenders». It reflects on the challenges to fostering «active citizenship» in secure environments with reference to encouraging critical reflection and building links between young people and their local communities. It suggests that there is a need for a re-appraisal of the assumptions underpinning citizenship education for young people in secure institutions and for further reflection on deeper ideological and structural tensions between education and criminal justice systems.

**Keywords:** citizenship education, young offenders, secure institutions for young people, responsibility, critical reflection, participation

**Introduction**

*Citizenship in the deepest sense is even more important to those youngsters whom, for whatever reason, we have put temporarily outside the community.*

House of Commons Education and Skills Committee, 2007: Ev80

This article offers some reflections on the provision of citizenship education for young people detained in secure institutions in England and Wales. In 2008 there were on average 2,926 under 18 years in secure accommodation in England and Wales (Youth Justice Board, 2009). As Mr. Wylie in...
his evidence to the House of Commons Select Committee quoted above suggests, the notion of citizenship for these young people is particularly significant for they may already have been marginalised from mainstream society prior to their convictions and will face significant challenges to re-integration as a result of their custodial sentence (Jones & Nellis, 1998). The Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act which was ratified by the UK Parliament in November 2009 shifts responsibility for the education of young people in secure institutions from the Home Office to Local Education Authorities and for the first time these young people come under the legislative umbrella of mainstream education. The introduction of this Act offers a timely opportunity for reflection on the provision of citizenship education for young people who have been sentenced to custody in England and Wales.

This article is divided into three sections. The first outlines the emergence of citizenship education as a reform tool in secure institutions for young people and its educational implications. The second considers the discourse in current educational materials and policies directed specifically at this group, in particular, the construction of the young person as a morally immature "offender" and the emphasis on "personal responsibility". The third presents some of the general contextual challenges for education in secure institutions and discusses issues specific to the aims of citizenship education. The conclusion suggests ways to approach some of the dilemmas and challenges facing teachers of citizenship in secure institutions for young people and points to others which require further reflection.

In addition to educational materials and policy documents, the arguments in this article draw from a secondary analysis of data from a research project in two young offender institutions and two secure training centres. During this project, interviews were held with 35 young people about their lives prior to and in prison and focus group discussions were held with 413 young people about their experiences of custody. Observations of education classes and interactions between staff and young people on the residential units took place in one young offenders’ institution and one secure training centre. These findings are supplemented by data from reports by Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Prisons (HMP) Inspectors, the Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills (Ofsted) and voluntary organisations.

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1 There are three types of secure institutions in England and Wales for under 18s: young offender institutions run by HM Prison Service for young people aged 15-17 years; secure training centres run by private companies for young people between the ages of 10 and 17; and secure children’s homes run by local authority social service departments for young people aged 12 to 16 years. The majority of young people remanded or sentenced to custody are sent to young offender institutions.
1. Citizenship education as a tool for reform

The teaching of citizenship has been a regular feature of educational programmes for young people charged with a criminal offence in the UK since the introduction of reformatory schools in 1854. Under the jurisdiction of the Home Office a range of approaches developed over the twentieth century from the most radical experiments in self-government (see for example, Homer Lane’s «The Little Commonwealth» which ran from 1913 to 1918), to the more moderate regimes of the borstals of Lowdham Grange and North Sea Camp established by W. W. Lewellin in the 1930s (which set up committees of young people similar to school councils) to the strict authoritarianism of traditional regimes. The focus of such programmes in reformatory schools and later borstals was on «reclaiming the young offender» (Bailey, 1987) and «instilling in them the notions of good citizenship» (Flynn, 1998). There was a dual emphasis on «the inculcation of personal responsibility» (Bottoms & McLintock, 1973) and «social utility» (Cox, 1997). These themes are still evident in political discussions today:

Ian Lucas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will take steps to ensure that young offenders have instruction in the obligations of citizenship.

Beverley Hughes: Citizenship is an important part of the curriculum for juveniles in custody. It helps them to understand the consequences of their behaviour and prepares them for a useful life on release. (Hansard, 2002)

Current educational initiatives such as post-16 citizenship education programmes for young offenders continue to emphasise the theme of reform:

It can help reduce the risk of re-offending by encouraging learners to draw on their own experiences and consider the impact that an individual’s actions can have on society and the wider world. (Learning Skills Network, 2009)

It is argued here that such views of citizenship education as a reform tool are limited and limiting for they set a conceptual «ceiling» to the role young people in custody might play as citizens of the present and of the future. They frame the young person negatively as an «offender» confining them to an identity defined by their past actions. They also mask the mutual nature of responsibility related to the notion of citizenship – the responsibility of the state towards the individual (upholding human rights) as well as the responsibility of the individual towards the state.

Citizenship courses in many secure institutions in England and Wales today operate within a wider framework than one of personal reform and social utility. Several young offender institutions offer courses which are linked to «Entry Level» Citizenship qualifications and cover, for example, «Identifying Rights and Responsibilities», «Identifying Communities and Participating in Community Activities», «Participating in Decision-Making and Recognising the Role of Government»,
Recognising the Individual as a World Citizen. However, young people are still often cast in the role of «offenders» who need moral instruction and a stronger sense of personal responsibility. Is this an appropriate framework for the teaching of citizenship?

A significant challenge to reaching consensus on the aims and form of citizenship education in secure institutions is the complex and contested concept of «citizenship» itself. McLaughlin argues that the National Curriculum «does not offer a clearly worked out conception of “citizenship”» (McLaughlin, 2008: 126) and illustrates how National Curriculum teaching guidelines swing between «maximal» and «minimal» interpretations of the concept. Minimal interpretations he defines as being concerned merely with the formal, legal and juridical identity and status of individuals and with social and political participation at the level of local voluntary activity and voting wisely. Maximalist interpretations assume a greater level of social and political engagement on the part of the individuals who will see themselves

as a member of a living community with a shared democratic culture involving obligations as well as rights, a sense of the common good, fraternity and so on (...) [and who will] actively question and extend their local and immediate horizons in the light of more general and universal considerations such as those of justice and to work for the sort of social conditions that will lead to the empowerment of all citizens. (ibidem: 122)

McLaughlin suggests that the ambiguous stance of the National Curriculum guidelines may cause conflict in discussions about practice:

Teachers will engage in an exegesis of the wording of the document, unguided by clear guidance about fundamental principles. (p. 127)

In addition to these conceptual challenges to teaching citizenship, teachers in secure institutions are regularly faced with practical limitations which restrict the range and scope of learning activities, in particular those that involve students working outside the classroom or those which require access to certain equipment or resources. In the institutions of our study, for example, security regulations prohibited the use of the Internet or items that could be used in fights or for self-harm, such as scissors or staples. There were also limitations on the use of recording equipment and restrictions on the movement of young people around the establishments.

It is not surprising therefore that an eclectic approach to citizenship education has developed, influenced by historical understandings of what is relevant for young offenders, individual interpretations of National Curriculum guidelines and perceptions of what is practically possible in the context of a secure environment. Such an approach is likely to be based on an assortment of principles and assumptions which are not guaranteed to combine coherently nor are necessarily in the best educational interests of the young people in these institutions. Some examples are given below.
2. The discourse of citizenship education for young people in custody

2.1. The characterisation of the young person as an «offender»

Amongst the policy and educational materials for citizenship education in secure institutions are images of the young person as an offender. The first is an excerpt from a citizenship pack for young offenders in post-16 education. The second is the title and aim of a module from an entry level citizenship course for people in young offender institutions:

Citizenship education has the potential to be extremely relevant in a prison context, given that many such young people have committed crimes that affected other people. (Learning Skills Network, 2008)

Module Title: DON'T DO IT!
Aim: to enable students to pass on some of their acquired wisdom to other potential offenders. (Mayor, Seddon, Metcalfe & Pinnington, 2002: 30)

There are two reasons why the categorisation of young people in custody as «offenders» is unhelpful for educational purposes. First, not all young people in custody have been convicted of a criminal offence. In 2007-08 approximately 19,5% of under 18s in custody were on remand and unconvicted. The length of time spent on remand varies enormously from a few days to over six months (Gibbs & Hickson, 2009). It would also be unwise to assume that all young people are guilty of the crime for which they were convicted, as exemplified by the case of Paul Blackburn (see The Guardian Newspaper, 2005) or Charlie McMenamin (see BBC News, 2007). Redlich and Drizin (2007) argue that young people, particularly those with mental health problems, are susceptible to false and coerced confessions and consequently to miscarriages of justice. All young people in secure institutions, whether sentenced or on remand attend the same education classes.

Second, by framing their citizenship education from the perspective of their offending, young people in custody are given a negative identity as «learners who have done wrong». The negative outcomes of stigmatization have been well-documented: it can lead to depression and low-self-esteem and form a barrier to social integration (Becker, 1963; Goffman, 1963; Hargreaves, Hester & Mellor, 1975; Link & Phelan, 2006). These findings resonate with the views of several young people we interviewed during our research project:

Once a criminal always a criminal… people just… sort of stereotype. So (that) just makes life that bit harder. (Young woman, 15)

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2 In 2007-08 there were on average 2 942 young people under 18 in custody; 606 were on remand of whom 575 were unconvicted and 32 were convicted and awaiting sentence (Gibbs & Hickson, 2009).
It was like some people they just look at you and they just judge a book by its cover and think -Yeah, you’re in prison for something you’ve done, you must have been mean to someone or something like that-. When you don’t really understand why you’re here. (Young man, 15)
That is partly the depressing thing... because really I know that probably a lot of people will say it, but I am not a bad person. It may sound stupid but I’m not. (Young man, 17)

There are thematic links here with wider sociological debates about the representation of criminality and social and moral order. Melossi (2000) suggests that differing representations of criminality in public discourse are linked to «oscillations» in the social order. In times where social order is perceived to be under threat (as may be argued to be the case in the UK where the motive to avoid «risk» is a significant driver of social and political action) he argues that criminals are represented as morally offensive and subversive individuals – «the public enemy» (p. 174). The threat they pose is perceived to be a consequence of a personal rather than societal deficit. In such times public rhetoric emphasises «the value of the collectivity around concepts such as “the state”, “the nation”, “the community”» (p. 150). The political interest in citizenship education for young offenders may be a part of this phenomenon.

2.2. Moral immaturity

Through the concepts of Citizenship, offenders can develop a clearer awareness of the needs of the whole community than many have been able to do in their previous lives.
Mayor et al., 2002: 2

A citizenship curriculum that is based on a standardised perception of young people’s moral outlook may not provide for the diverse capacities and potential of young people sent to secure establishments and, for those convicted, the variety and frequent moral complexity of their offences. During our research project, we encountered young people in prison for breach of licence (the result of not turning up to a pre-arranged meeting with their Youth Offending Team worker); others who had been involved in fights where they could equally have been the victim instead of the offender, and others who had held stolen goods or drugs for friends or family.

There are several research studies based on Kohlberg’s theories of moral development (see Kohlberg, 1976) which have found that groups of young offenders are at «lower stages» of socio-moral reasoning than non-offenders (see Palmer, 2003). These studies form part of a wider body of research which aims to explain criminal behaviour. They do not indicate young people’s capacity or potential for moral reflection. There would appear to be room therefore for a more nuanced approach to the issue of offending than that of the following module entitled «The Biggest Crook» which encourages discussion on the seriousness of different crimes listed on a worksheet but does not extend to reflection on the criminalization of activities:
Students attempt to come to a whole class consensus as to the worst three crimes. Open discussion should be held, with challenges to attempts to justify a crime. (Mayor et al., 2002: 30)

It is interesting to compare this approach to that recommended by Department for Education and Skills (DfES) Key Stage 3 Scheme of Work for Unit 2 on Crime, which encourages students to reflect critically on the definition of crime:

This section allows pupils to consider whether any (of the examples given) should be classified as crimes and whether any of the crimes listed should be «decriminalised». If so, why? (DfES, 2009)

The approach suggested in the scheme of work offers greater scope than the «Big Crook» module to address the broader moral social and political issues that are associated with criminalisation. This is not to suggest there should be no differentiation between students of differing abilities in the teaching of citizenship but there is a danger that if the substantive component of a citizenship programme is based on an assumption of moral immaturity, it will not extend beyond the portrayal of an overly simplistic view of «right» and «wrong» and may limit the range and scope for critical engagement with key social debates which directly affect the lives of young people in secure institutions. If young people in mainstream education are given space to develop their critical powers through reflection on such matters, it is difficult to justify why young people in custody are not given an equal opportunity through their education.

One of the concerns that might be raised is that such opportunities for reflection may encourage the use by some young people of «rationalisation» and «intellectualisation» – psychological defence mechanisms to «neutralise» or «explain away» their offending behaviour (Perry, 1990). This concern, however, conflates the aims of addressing individual offending behaviour with broader educational aims, which are about introducing all young people to «an inheritance of human achievements, of understanding and belief» (Oakeshott, 1972: 287) and providing them with the intellectual means to engage critically with the political, social, moral issues on which society is divided. Without the ability to engage with such issues, people become susceptible to political marginalisation and disempowerment (Smith 1997). Moreover, discussions on controversial issues, such the rationale for criminalisation, are an important part of the educational process: they encourage learners to reflect on their own positions and their perspectives through the consideration of other points of view and thereby develop, what Pring (2001: 111) refers to as «moral seriousness»:

The capacity to think seriously about their relationships, about the kind of future (including jobs) they want to pursue, about loyalties and commitments. Both developing and supporting that sense of «seriousness»... requi-

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3 For an initiative that provides opportunities for young people in secure institutions to reflect on moral matters, see Rowe and Dickson, 2006.
res, on one hand, roots within those traditions of thought and experience through which such questions have been posed and explored by others elsewhere. But it requires, too, a respect for the authentic voice and feelings of the young persons as they struggle to make sense of their place within society. In making the connections between the two levels of narrative, the teacher provides the wider perspective, questions the perhaps rather limited vision, points out other possibilities.

Personally, tailored «offending behaviour programmes» are perhaps better suited to address the individual circumstances and needs of young people who have committed a crime than a «broad-brush» citizenship syllabus shaped by general assumptions about the qualities and characteristics of «young offenders». Palmer and Hollin (1999: 85) argue:

Young offenders are not a homogenous group, committing different crimes for various motivations… Therefore, each young person’s abilities need to be individually assessed, to enable effective programmes to be conducted.

By keeping such programmes discreet and separate, a non-judgemental approach to the wider educational project in secure institutions becomes possible.

**2.3. A narrow perspective on «responsibility»**

The following statement by a deputy governor of a young offenders’ institution, exemplifies the focus on responsibility that is a regular feature of the rhetoric surrounding citizenship education for young offenders:

Citizenship is vital because when they go out… what are trying to ensure is that they have a sense of community and a sense of responsibility about how to behave and how to interact with their friends, families and peers… Much of the work we’re doing over the last few years has been about… asking the lads to engage in a sense of community and to think about their responsibilities to themselves and to each other… (Learning Skills Network, 2008: 7)

The emphasis on the development of «responsibility» is a feature of mainstream education policy too. It is however advocated from two alternative perspectives: one which focuses on the actions of authority and the pursuit of democratic principles, the other which focuses on the actions of the individual and his or her contribution to society.

The two examples below demonstrate the distinctions in the use of the term «responsibility». Prior to the introduction of Citizenship to the National Curriculum, The Advisory Group on Citizenship Education advocated pupils taking responsibility from the perspective of furthering democratic participation:
We believe that schools should make every effort to engage pupils in discussion and consultation about all aspects of school life which pupils might reasonably be expected to have a view, and wherever possible to give pupils responsibility and experience in helping to run parts of the school. (Advisory Group on Citizenship Education, 1998: 6.3.1)

Here the Advisory Group advocates a change in traditional power structures from one where students have things done to and for them in school to one where they play a role in the running of the school.

In contrast, other citizenship writing advocating the responsibility of young people highlights the role of individual rather than that of authority. The focus as explained in the aims of the National Curriculum for Key Stages 3 and 4 (Years 7 to 11) is on young people becoming «responsible citizens who make a positive contribution to society» (QCA, 2007).

The Qualification and Curriculum Authority’s (QCA) guidance on the development of «the skills of participation and responsible action» states:

By the end of Key stage 4 most pupils will take part in group and decision making activities demonstrating responsibility in their attitudes to themselves and others; negotiate, decide and take part responsibly in school and community based activities and reflect on and critically evaluate the process of participation; communicate their findings and experiences and make suggestions for improvements and/or changes. (QCA, 2002: 9)

The definition of pupil participation here is weaker than that used in the report by the Advisory Group on Citizenship Education. There is no direct reference to sharing in the running of school activities rather the emphasis is on personal responsibility and «taking part».

This latter focus on the personal responsibility of young people has been a key theme of Government policy on youth offending in general (Home Office, 1997). A key objective of Youth Offending Teams, established following the Crime and Disorder Act of 1998 is: «Confronting young offenders with the consequences of their offending, for themselves, their families, their victims and the community and help them to develop a sense of personal responsibility» (Home Office, 1998: 6). The focus on personal responsibility has also emerged in restorative justice policy (Braithwaite & Roche, 2000) and the introduction of Youth Offending Panels in 2002 (Newburn et al., 2002). Here, the aim for those in authority is to «encourage» young people who have committed a crime to take responsibility for their actions.

There is a dilemma linked to the use of «responsibility» with reference to young people: it can positively signal young people’s growing capacity to direct and manage their lives and share in the running of communal activities but it can negatively foster blame and punitive attitudes. This latter concern has been the focus of much debate in youth justice writing since the lowering of the age of criminal responsibility to the age of 10 in England and Wales in the Crime of Disorder Act 1998 (see Goldson & Peters, 2000). The problem highlighted is a tendency to disregard the influ-
ence of systems and structures and focus on the young person as responsible for their failures. It is argued that insufficient acknowledgement is given to the responsibilities of those in authority towards young people or the significant social, economic, structural and systemic obstacles faced by young people while in custody or on their return to the community: «the burden of responsibility falls on individuals to atone or change their behaviour rather than on the state to recognize that it also has a responsibility (within UN conventions and rules) to its citizens» (Muncie & Hughes, 2002: 4).

The danger of focussing on just the one form of responsibility in the teaching of citizenship is that it may lead to a sense of demotivation and disengagement on the part of learners who may feel they «are being lectured on how they should behave» (Learning Skills Network, 2008: 8). Further, it masks the more empowering interpretation of responsibility in relation to a person who has a role to play in collective decision-making processes. Hine (2007: 21) suggests that insufficient account is taken of the positive attributes of many young people who have committed criminal offences:

> These young people are rarely given credit for the strengths they display: the resilience they show in coping with difficult circumstances, the support that they show for friends and the help that they give to neighbours and family... We need to present a more positive approach to young people, show them that we appreciate their strengths and believe that they can and do make a valuable contribution to society.

A citizenship syllabus free of the negative undertones of reforming the offender could present such an approach.

### 3. Citizenship education within the context of a secure institution

In schools, it is often a challenging task to provide all students with meaningful opportunities to play a role in decision-making processes. It is not always achieved (Lanskey, 2007). The involvement of young in decision-making processes is additionally challenging in the context of the secure environment.

Our observations during the research project support the findings of other investigations (see Ofsted, 2006, 2008) that teaching in a secure institution is presented with several structural, political and environmental challenges. Shortages of discipline staff can mean that education classes are curtailed or cancelled at short notice. The slow movement of groups from one part of the institution to another may delay the start of lessons. Individuals may be in lessons for very different lengths of time ranging from a few days to a few months. There is a wide range of ability, experience and motivation for learning amongst young people in custody which is linked to previous educational experience and also to their state of well-being in the establishment. Teachers may lack access to up-to-date resources (Nelson, Blenkinson & Kerr, 2001) or be limited in the
resources they can use due to security restrictions as described earlier. In addition, the prison context raises further challenges that are specific to the teaching of citizenship.

3.1. Structural challenges

Although interpretations vary, all definitions of citizenship begin with the concept of membership of a pre-defined community. Many theorists refer to a sense of shared membership «to feel that one belongs… to be connected… through one’s sense of emotional attachment, identification and loyalty» (Carens, 2000: 166, in Williams, 2003: 210). This idea has been pursued in discussions about citizenship education in the UK:

While we recognise that citizenship education is about more than issues of integration and social cohesion, it does have at its heart a commitment to enabling young people to participate fully in a democracy, and ultimately, securing a cohesive and inclusive society. (House of Commons Education and Skills Committee, 2007: 12)

Imprisonment presents a structural challenge to the vision of citizenship education as a vehicle for social inclusion. Young people in custody who have been physically removed from their communities are likely to face significant barriers to future re-integration (Youth Justice Board, 2006). Indeed, their offending behaviour may have been an indicator of a broken-down relationship with their local community. In such cases, imprisonment delays the opportunity to restore relations and to re-establish a sense of belonging. There is a certain irony in the social processes at work here – the criminal justice system has triggered their exclusion from society while at the same time, the education system aims to strengthen their inclusion: «it is about a bridge between young people, their schools, their families and their communities» (House of Commons Education and Skills Committee, 2007: Ev43). This vision of citizenship education presents major challenges for teachers in Secure Training Centres and Young Offender Institutions for such establishments create and sustain physical and psychological obstacles to the building of bridges between young people and their local communities. Moreover, many young people are accommodated in institutions far from home. In September 2008 over 40% of all 15, 16 and 17 year olds in custody were held more than 50 miles away from their home address (Hansard, 2009). The inclusionary aims of citizenship education are thus likely to be severely restricted in secure institutions in England and Wales.

3.2. Challenges of active citizenship: critical reflection, participation and decision-making

For citizenship education to be effective, it is argued that its underlying principles should be embedded within the ethos of the learning community: Citizenship «is not just another subject that
is to be taught, like a different version of Maths or Science or English, but something that impinges upon the whole way in which schools function (House of Commons Education and Skills Committee, 2007: Ev43). The school thus ideally operates as an institutional role model facilitating active engagement from young people in decisions about matters that concern them individually and as a group. Many schools do not achieve this ideal but are collectively more advanced in this endeavour than many secure institutions for young people which are not subject to the same statutory guidance.

In the secure training centres and young offender institutions of our study, for example, there was little opportunity for young people to participate in the management and running of the institutions or for ‘vertical reflection’ (reflection on the roles and actions of those authority) (see Osler, 2008: 463). In secure settings where the maintenance of order and security is a major concern, this type of reflection may be considered likely to destabilise the regime. Several typologies have been developed to measure the level of young people’s participation in activities (Arnstein, 1969; Hart, 1997; Rudduck & Flutter, 2004). Hart (1997), for example, developed a ‘ladder of participation’ to measure the role of young people and adults in decision-making. The lower rungs represented token participation by young people and the higher rungs indicating decisions initiated and directed by young people and shared with adults. Much of what was taking place in the secure institutions of our study was at the lower end of such scales, at the level of ‘tokenism’ whereby young people expressed their views but could not ensure that their views would be heeded (Arnstein, 1969).

There was, however, a distinction between the regimes in secure training centres and that of young offender institutions who participated in the research project. In the two secure training centres there were ‘trainee councils’ which nominally had a role in communicating young people’s views. In the young offender institutions, young people could make complaints individually via a written complaints box but there was little opportunity for collective discussion or negotiation with the prison management as is the case in many adult secure settings. It took a concerted effort on the part of individuals to initiate small changes:

I just take all the complaint forms and just sign them like, give them to other inmates and just tell them ‘Right, do this so we can just get more food or more time out or... stuff like that...’ And if there’s no improvement you just get another leaflet and get everybody (to) sign it. (If) there’s no more improvement, get them again...

(Young man, 17, young offenders institution)

Many of the young people in custody we met during our research were dissuaded from expressing their views formally; they found the systems cumbersome and slow to respond and were unconvinced that their views would be taken seriously:

You write a letter and a week later... it depends how long... sometimes a week or so there will be a meeting with the staff and like a higher person, So I just couldn’t be bothered at the time and I said ‘oh just forget it’.

(Young man, 16, secure training centre)
If I was here and something happened to me and I got a fellow prisoner who saw what happened they won’t be able to give evidence for the prisoner, only the teachers would be able to give [evidence]... [and] I think they’ll stick up for the officer. (Young man, 16, young offenders institution)

Because the participatory aims of Citizenship education imply a «do as I do» rather than a «do as I say» philosophy, the teaching of Citizenship presents educators with particular challenges in current secure regimes. As Smith (2002: 83) argues, young people’s capacity to participate is «highly dependent on the supportiveness of the social and cultural context».

Conclusion

In this unprecedented time, as the responsibility for educational provision of young people in custody in England and Wales passes to local authorities, there is a strong educational argument for re-orientating the framework for citizenship education for young people detained by the criminal justice system to align it with the framework for young people in mainstream schooling. Such a re-orientation would avoid the potentially negative outcomes for young people associated with the label of «offender» and affirm their equality with their counterparts in mainstream schools in terms of their status as learners and their citizenship potential. Moreover, if the inclusionary aims of citizenship education are to be realised, then further consideration needs to be given to the impact of custodial placements, in particular, on young people’s capacity to «build bridges» with their local communities.

Citizenship education in theory provides young people with valuable opportunities to reflect on the world in which they live, their own role in society and the role of others too. However, the theory is not likely to be translated into practice in secure institutions where there is a strong instrumental aim for citizenship teaching to promote good behaviour and there is little systematic support for young people’s voice and participation in the management of the daily regimes. The appeals to «security» and «safety» which curtail the concept of «active citizenship» in secure institutions may be seen as further examples of a trend in the «cultural politics of English childhood» which limit young people’s engagement as social actors and agents through adult appeals to «care» and «protection» (James, Curtis & Birch, 2008). The exclusionary social practices within the secure regimes and indeed the exclusionary practice of imprisonment itself «limit not only children’s participation – in terms of the kinds of things they might do – but also their imagination about the kinds of people they are or might be» (ibidem: 95). Qvortrup’s (1990) distinction between children as «human beings» or «human becomings» resonates strongly in the context of citizenship education for young people in secure institutions in England and Wales where, as a consequence of the limits to participation, greater emphasis is placed on the young person as...
“citizen of the future” rather than as “citizen of the present”. Through such an approach to citizenship education young people are treated as “objects of socialization” rather than “subjects of their present lives” (Invernizzi et al., 2008: 6; see also Corsaro, 1997: 43). As long as custody remains a sentencing option for young people, there is a need for a more detailed exploration of the relationship between the educational and residential provision in secure institutions and reflection on how the management ethos of the latter can support the aims and messages of the former. This relationship is currently challenged by deeper conflicts of principle, power and structure between educational and criminal justice processes which require further consideration and debate.

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