Educate~ Vol.6, No.1, 2006, pp. 57-70

Research Paper

Approaching the political in citizenship education: The perspectives of Paulo Freire and Bernard Crick

by **Tristan McCowan** (t.mccowan@ioe.ac.uk)

Abstract*: The forms that political education should take, and indeed its very presence in schools, are strongly contested questions. This paper explores these ideas in the light of the work of two theorists, Bernard Crick and Paulo Freire. There is first an analysis of their conceptions of politics and the political, their justifications for political education and their proposals for the curriculum. While the two theorists share the aim of political empowerment for all, there are significant differences in their understandings of society and of the potential of education for social transformation. The juxtaposition is seen to raise some important issues for citizenship education provision in England and Wales, concerning, in particular, its existence as a separate subject, its role in promoting conformity, the dangers of indoctrination and the means of promoting political agency.*

Introduction

The presence of political education in the curriculum has long been a subject of debate. Since the 1960s, a number of initiatives have emerged, either directly under the banner of 'political', (as with the Hansard Society's 'Programme for Political Education'), or in an indirect form, focusing on peace, development or human rights. The aim of these has been to equip young people for effective political participation and to contribute to a more just and democratic society. However, these initiatives have met with strong criticism (eg, Scruton et al., 1985; Flew, 2000; Tooley, 2000) on the grounds of their ideological nature and their secondary importance in an already overloaded curriculum. The introduction of citizenship education in 2002 gave the teaching of political issues, for the first time, an official presence in schools, but debates continue over the ways the subject should be implemented, and indeed whether it should exist at all.

This article explores the issue of the presence of political education in relation to the ideas of two theorists, Paulo Freire and Bernard Crick. Both argue strongly for political education, and agree on the fundamental principle that all people should be free and able to participate fully in the political sphere. Yet they have distinct views on the objectives of political education, its potential influence on society and the ways it should be delivered. The juxtaposition of the ideas of the two thinkers illuminates some important aspects of the issue, particularly since Freire has a very different perspective from that underlying the National Curriculum provision. In addition, I will argue below that Crick's vision is limited in certain dimensions, and that Freire's ideas, some of which are profoundly challenging for conventional schooling, should be acknowledged and engaged with.

Lister's (1994) analysis of Freirean initiatives in the UK provides a brief comparison of the ideas of Crick and Freire, and their key educational proposals. Common elements are seen to be their emphasis on issues rather than constitutional structures, their view of politics as an activity and the idea of political participation for all rather than just professional politicians. Shukra et al. (2004, p. 192), on the other hand, draw a distinction between Freire and Crick, preferring the former's *political education* to the latter's *political literacy*. However, the distinction they make is limited to the emphasis on critical attitudes in Freire, that is, "discuss[ing] and challeng[ing] the way in which a particular issue is understood", rather than "valuing and using existing political structures". In addition, it is problematic for the authors to use the term 'political education' to distinguish Freire's approach from that of Crick. A more

comprehensive analysis of the ideas of the two is necessary in order to assess the possibilities of a contribution of Freire to citizenship education.

Freire is best known for his work in the field of adult literacy, where he defended the importance of 'reading the world' as well as 'the word', that is to say, developing wider understanding of society at the same time as learning technical literacy skills. His seminal work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1972) proposed a theory of *conscientization*, a process through which marginalized groups could move from a naïve to a critical consciousness, thereby creating the conditions for the transformation of society in accordance with social justice. Freire's work is broadly Marxist in orientation, but also shows important influences of post-modernism and Christianity (particularly liberation theology). His ideas were first implemented in literacy programmes in his native Brazil, but with his exile in 1964 he developed a worldwide following, his influence extending to mainstream school education as well. Freire has inspired a number of contemporary educationists and educational movements, from US critical pedagogy to Actionaid's Reflect programme, yet his influence on general educational practice in the UK, and citizenship education in particular, is marginal.

Crick, on the other hand, is perhaps the single greatest influence on citizenship education in England. The most important expression of his views is *In Defence of Politics* (2000/1962), in which he counters the characterization of politics as a dirty self-interested game, and asserts its importance for society as a necessary and rich process in which all should have at least some involvement. Principally a political theorist, he has long had an involvement in educational debates, was part of the movement campaigning for political education in the UK in the 1970s, and later chaired the report of the Advisory Group on Education for Citizenship and the Teaching of Democracy in Schools (QCA 1998) (subsequently referred to as the Crick Report).

The work of both Freire and Crick has, unsurprisingly, developed over time, and it is therefore misleading to present a single version of their ideas. In relation to Freire, Cavalier (2002, p. 261) states:

> The journey of Freire's life, as evidenced in his later work, seems to have taken him from seeing education as key to the revolutionary struggle to right the wrongs of class conflict as apprehended through Marxist analysis to a somewhat more explicitly faith-based passion that societies will be more just and humane through the assistance of an ethically responsible education for critical consciousness.

Crick's work on political education has also changed, becoming more conservative since the 1970s, and moving towards a position of combining traditionalist and progressive ideals of good citizenship (Crick, 2002a, p. 496). It is beyond the scope of this paper to do full justice to these changes of perspective over time, but where possible reference will be made to divergence between earlier and later phases. This paper does not equate Crick's ideas with those found in the Crick Report: significant differences can be observed from the notion of *political literacy* established in earlier works, some of which can be attributed to the evolution of his work, and others from the incorporation of the ideas of other individuals and groups in the report. The elements of 'social and moral responsibility' and 'community involvement' in some ways depart significantly from Crick's early ideas, and as Davies et al. (2005) argue, the third element, 'political literacy', has to a large extent been sidelined.

In relation to the terminology used in this paper, it is hard to make a watertight distinction between 'political' and 'citizenship' education. Crick (2002a, p. 493) sees the latter as signifying a wider concept, including participation in civil society associations as well as governmental affairs. Yet in many ways, preference for the term 'citizenship education' today is due more to its less threatening associations than to significant differences in meaning. Freire in fact rarely uses either phrase, for the simple reason that he sees both as being

integral rather than specific aspects of education. In this paper I will most often refer to 'political education', being the expression that best relates to the understandings of both Crick and Freire in the main part of their work, but will also refer to 'citizenship education', particularly in relation to the current provision in the National Curriculum.

First, the article will assess the views of the two writers on the nature of politics and the political. Next, there will be an analysis of the justifications given for political education, and the proposals for political education in the curriculum. Finally, there will be a discussion of key questions arising from the juxtaposition and their implications for current citizenship education provision.

Contrasting views of politics and the political

An initial distinction between Freire and Crick can be made in terms of the left-right political spectrum, with the former tending towards a socialist and the latter a liberal position. However, these labels do not fully describe their understandings of political education. Crick, like Freire, is committed to substantial reform in favour of social justice and equality, and opposes the unrestrained free market. Freire, in contrast to many Marxists, opposes the transmission of pre-established understandings of society and history. Closer analysis is necessary to show the significant differences in the ways in which the two figures understand political change and the means to change.

An initial contrast can be found in their usage of the terms 'politics' and 'political'. Freire uses them in the broadest sense, meaning all relations of power and forms of organization in society, whether or not they occur within the domain of official governmental affairs. Crick however, uses the word 'politics' in a very specific way, particularly in *In Defence of Politics*. The term as used here does not include the micro-level of small groups, nor does it include general relations of, and struggles for, power (there being a strong implicit distinction between public and private realms). Yet even within the sphere of government, Crick attaches a more specific meaning. Not all forms of rule and influence are seen to involve 'politics'; only those which allow democratic debate and compromise, rather than totalitarian imposition. He states:

> Politics, then, can be simply defined as the activity by which differing interests within a given unit of rule are conciliated by giving them a share in power in proportion to their importance to the welfare and the survival of the whole community. And, to complete the formal definition, a political system is that type of government where politics proves successful in ensuring reasonable stability and order. (Crick, 2000/1962, pp. 21-22)

The understanding of the political in his 1970s work is much broader, including conflicts of interests and ideals, differential distribution of power and access to resources in society (Crick and Lister, 1978, p. 38). Further change is seen in his more recent work, where greater emphasis is given to participation in civil society organizations. Yet, in general terms, his conception is narrower than that of Freire, and relates predominantly to the public sphere.

The contrast between Crick and Freire here is not just one of convention or classification: there exists a substantial difference between the two as regards the understanding of political activity and the forms of political activity valued. In this, Crick tends towards a pluralist notion: he sees society as being composed of different groups whose interests are likely to be in conflict. Politics is, therefore, the successful reconciliation of these interests:

> Politics arises from accepting the fact of the simultaneous existence of different groups, hence different interests and different traditions, within a territorial unit under a common rule…. it marks the birth, or the recognition, of freedom. For

> politics represents at least some tolerance of differing truths, some recognition that government is possible, indeed best conducted, amid the open canvassing of rival interests. Politics are the public actions of free men. (Crick, 2000/1962, p. 18)

This view is one of toleration and accommodation rather than a radical politics of difference. The emphasis in Crick is on formal equality and freedom of speech for all social groups:

> The method of rule of the tyrant and the oligarchs is quite simply to clobber, coerce, or overawe all or most of these other groups in the interest of their own. The political method of rule is to listen to these other groups so as to conciliate them as far as possible, and to give them a legal position, a sense of security, some clear and reasonably safe means of articulation, by which these other groups can and will speak freely. (Crick, 2000/1962, p. 18)

However, this falls a long way short of addressing the discrimination and marginalization faced by certain groups in society. The Crick Report has, in this way, been widely criticised for its lack of attention to issues of race and multiculturalism (eg, Osler, 2000; Olssen, 2004; Shukra et al., 2004).

Freire, on the other hand, does not see the existence of conflicting interests as being intrinsic to society. Contemporary society is seen to be characterized by *oppression*, whereby the oppressed are prevented from being *subjects* of history, and become mere *objects*, determined by other people's intentions and without real agency (Freire, 1972). In his early work this oppression was seen in terms of social class, while later (eg, Freire, 1994) he acknowledged other elements such as race and gender. Conflicts of interest are, therefore, the result of these unnatural divisions in society, symptomatic of injustice, exploitation and lack of critical consciousness, and will lessen as society moves away from relations of oppression. Freire's main thesis – that human beings must move towards increasing *humanization* – allows for the possibility of humanity living with a common interest and welfare and not in a constant conflict of interest.

There is some similarity in Freire's position to Rousseau's (1968/1763) *general will*. Freire has faith that society can be organized in the best interests of all and that individual citizens can and will act for the common good. Crick, on the other hand, like many liberals, is distrustful of the idea of a general will on account of the possible infringements, gross or subtle, on individual liberties. Both Crick and Freire tend towards civic republican approaches to citizenship, in that they both value universal political participation, but differ in this important respect. This difference relates to understandings of the individual in the work of the two thinkers. Both are opposed to the alienated individualism of neo-liberalism and the consumer society, and see political participation in terms of cooperation with others. Yet Freire goes much further in this respect. In his view, the process of humanization and the transformation of society is only possible through overcoming the barriers between people and creating unity based on common humanity. Education and political participation are only possible in the context of the collective. Crick, however, while opposing the encouragement of individualist political participation (Crick, 2000, p. 30), has a much stronger concern with the liberty of the individual in relation to society.

Another major difference concerns their tendencies towards political realism and idealism. Crick states:

> A political education should be realistic and should chasten the idealist. Ideals are too important to be embalmed; they must be wrestled with and confronted (confronted with other people's differing ideals), but fairly and openly. (Crick, 2000/1962, p. 25).

Here, Crick draws on Aristotle, and his rejection of Plato's condensing of the polis to a unity (Crick, 2000/1962, p. 17). Freire, on the other hand, emphasizes the importance of utopian ideals, and strongly resists pragmatist approaches, seeing them at best as cowardly and unambitious, and at worst a deliberate attempt to perpetuate injustices for the benefit of the few. He acknowledges the utopian nature of his view, and moreover asserts that utopian views are essential to the educator and to the human being in general. However, it would be wrong to overstate the difference between the two on this question and create idealist/realist archetypes of them – Crick, for example, also recognizes the importance of ideals and that a cold pragmatism is undesirable.

Crick and Freire, therefore, differ both in their use of the term 'politics' and in their understanding of the political nature of society and its ideal political development. Crick tends towards a realist position in which society must attempt to find compromises between different interest groups, while Freire tends towards an idealist position in which society potentially can move beyond divisions and injustices. In many ways, their ideas on political education stem directly from these differences.

Justifications for and aims of political education

Public education systems have always been strongly linked to the political ends of state-building, home security and overseas expansion. More recently, there have been concerns with declining allegiance to the state, political apathy and anti-social behaviour stemming from the alienation of youth. At the same time there is a continuing distrust of openly political content in the curriculum. Both Freire and Crick, however, assert that all forms of education, including formal schooling, should have the political as a central component. This section will assess the arguments put forward in support of this inclusion.

Freire's justification stems not only from the desirability of political education, but from its unavoidability. One of his well known maxims is that education can never be neutral. Education will always have political implications, even if it is not addressing explicitly political issues:

> There never is, nor has ever been, an educational practice in zero space-time – neutral in the sense of being committed only to preponderantly abstract, intangible ideas. To try to get people to believe that there is such a thing as this… is indisputably a political practice, whereby an effort is made to soften any possible rebelliousness on the part of those to whom injustice is being done. It is as political as the other practice, which does not conceal – in fact, which proclaims – its own political character. (Freire, 1994, p. 65)

This claim has an ontological and epistemological basis. According to Freire's view, there is a dialectic of subjectivity and objectivity in the interaction of human beings and the world, with consciousness modifying and being modified by external reality. Human beings, however, are not universally aware of their potential for transforming the outside world, being 'immersed' in their reality. This is particularly true of 'oppressed' peoples, who believe that their poverty and oppression is inescapable and somehow fated. He states:

> In order for the oppressed to be able to wage the struggle for their liberation, they must perceive the reality of oppression not as a closed world from which there is no exit, but as a limiting situation which they can transform. (Freire, 1972, p. 31)

Education, according to Freire, is fundamentally tied to this question, serving either to reinforce learners' sense of lack of potential for acting – being objects – or to 'liberate' them by increasing their understanding of the possibilities of transformation – becoming subjects

(Freire, 1985; 1996). There is no escape, therefore, for educators: they must choose which of these dynamics to foster. Cavalier (2002, p. 257) expresses this point well:

> There is no choice but to act. What Freire makes clear is that the apparent choice not to act is, in the ethical perspective he takes, actually a decision to act in a way that continues the status quo and thus dehumanizes all people, that perpetuates injustice, and that assures the present unjust situation will continue into perpetuity.

These processes are not only liberating or domesticating in relation to individual consciousness, but also to the material conditions of society, since the oppression of social groups, or alternatively liberation from oppression, depends on their critical consciousness. Education, therefore, becomes a fundamentally political act. If people are not encouraged to be critical, they will accept injustices and not work together to overthrow oppression and transform society.

Crick, in a different way, sees politics as unavoidable, since the alternative is living in tyranny, through coercion and force – in other words, to regress from civilization. Given that education cannot avoid being a preparation for life, equally it cannot avoid dealing with politics and preparing people for it:

> The calmer view of a deliberate education for citizenship might be that since politics, rather like sex, cannot be avoided, indeed civilized life depends on it, on them, it had better be faced. Since it cannot be avoided, care and time should be given to it…. Only a few would maintain that the good life for all or most consists in the avoidance of public concern; but nearly all recognize that our whole culture or style of life is less rich, that is less various and shapely, and is less strong, that is less adaptable to change in circumstances, if people of any age group believe that they should not or cannot influence authority…. Any worthwhile education must include some explanation and, if necessary, justification of the naturalness of politics: that men both do and should want different things, indeed have differing values, that are only obtainable or realisable by means of or by leave of the public power. So pupils must both study and learn to control, to some degree at least, the means by which they reconcile or manage conflicts of interests and ideals, even in school. (Crick, 1999, p. 339)

Political education is therefore justified in both individual and societal terms. An individual's life is richer if he/she is aware of and active in the political sphere; society, and democracy in particular, is richer if its members understand, value and are active in politics. In relation to the latter, Crick concurs with Aristotle that democracy will lead to better rule than tyranny or oligarchy, since the chances of finding perfectly enlightened rulers are very slim (Crick, 2002b). Since politics for Crick is essentially the resolution of differing interests, education should equip people to resolve these differences in an amicable and satisfactory way. While Crick accepts that political participation cannot be obligatory, thereby distancing himself from the radical civic republicans, it is considered highly desirable for all. Despite their very different perspectives on the issue, therefore, both Freire and Crick agree that political education is vital both for social justice in relation to the participation of all individuals in political processes, and in relation to the effective functioning of society.

As part of their justifications for political education, the two writers have defended it against various attacks. One of the main arguments against political education is that it opens the door to indoctrination, either in the sense of a systematic nation-wide project, or through the actions of individual teachers. The very term 'political education' brings to mind sinister totalitarian regimes indoctrinating the masses. Both Crick and Freire refute these arguments, and show a number of points of contact in their understandings of bias and indoctrination.

Crick (1999, p. 344) states:

> Neutrality is not to be encouraged: to be biased is human and to attempt to unbias people is to emasculate silence. Bias as such is not to be condemned out of hand, only that gross bias which leads to false perceptions of the nature of other interests, groups and ideas. Teachers, education institutions and political regimes are not to be condemned for bias or for anything as natural and inevitable as attempting to maintain themselves and their identities; they are only, in terms of reason, human rights and education, to be condemned if they do so in an intolerant manner and in such a way as to repress deliberately or to suppress unpleasant facts, contrary opinions, rival doctrines, challenging theories.

Freire, as discussed above, also considers neutral education to be impossible (and he goes further than Crick by stating that attempts to be neutral are a veiled means of perpetuating injustice). Teachers, in his view, should state their opinions, but not impose them in an authoritarian manner: "Respecting them [the learners] means, on the one hand, testifying to them of my choice, and defending it; and on the other, it means showing them other options…" (Freire, 1994, p. 65). Roberts (1999, p. 20) draws a distinction in Freire's thought between, "(a) transmitting a political or moral view and (b) doing this in a dogmatic way". Both Crick and Freire, therefore, recognize that political education is a sensitive matter, and that there exists a risk of manipulation of students. Nevertheless, they see that this risk is one that must be taken.

A final point concerns the possibilities and limitations of political education. Here, both writers acknowledge that education cannot do everything. Freire responded to criticism of his early work by recognising that education was only part of the process of social transformation:

> A more critical understanding of the situation of oppression does not yet liberate the oppressed. But the revelation is a step in the right direction. Now the person who has this new understanding can engage in a political struggle for the transformation of the concrete conditions in which the oppression prevails. (Freire, 1994, p. 23)

The different understandings of political activity and reasons underlying support for political education inevitably lead to differences in the form that political education will take. The next section will assess the different ways in which the two writers envisage it being materialized in the curriculum.

Political education in the curriculum

The 1978 report on political education of the Hansard Society and the Politics Association, which had the aim of providing a blueprint for the introduction of the subject in the English school system, provides one of the most extensive accounts of Crick's ideas on political education. The proposals here revolve around the concept of *political literacy*[1] (later to be one of the axes of the citizenship education provision proposed by the Crick Report). The authors state, "By political literacy we mean the knowledge, skills and attitudes that are necessary to make a man or woman both politically literate and able to apply this literacy" (Crick and Porter, 1978, p. 31). The document continues:

[1] According to Crick (2002, p. 490), the term 'political literacy' was first used by Graham Moodie at York University, but was turned by himself and Ian Lister to a specifically educational use.

> A politically literate person will then know what the main political disputes are about; what beliefs the main contestants have of them; how they are likely to affect him, and he will have a predisposition to try to do something about it in a manner at once effective and respectful of the sincerity of others. (p. 33)

Importantly, therefore, the conception includes both understanding and a disposition to action. It takes as its base the necessarily conflictual nature of politics, seen above as central to Crick's vision. Crick sees it as necessary to understand and engage in the controversies and debates, rather than smoothing them out, and pretending that they do not exist:

> We see political literacy as more concerned with recognising accurately and accepting the existence of real political conflicts than with developing knowledge of the details of constitutional machinery. Problems are prior to the institutions which try to resolve or contain them. (Crick and Porter, 1978, p. 32)

Three separate elements of political education are established in this programme: understanding the present system, developing participation skills and considering alternative directions and systems. The last of these is considered the most contentious, and the most liable to indoctrination (Crick and Porter, 1978, p. 33). In relation to methodology, Crick adopts a conceptual approach, valuing the teaching of basic political concepts to students (this is true both of the 1970s political literacy and the Crick Report). Yet knowledge and understanding are not sufficient:

> Participatory skills in real situations are the essence of any genuine education for democracy…. To believe in democracy and simply to teach outlying constitutional law is to do harm, not good: at best to bore children, at worst to render them perceptively cynical that they are being kept from understanding the real issues of the society they live in and the wider world. (Crick, 2002a, pp. 500-501)

Crick does not see it as desirable to try to transmit ‘substantive doctrines’ (and in any event sees these attempts as probably doomed to failure). Instead he proposes the encouragement of procedural values, namely: freedom, toleration, fairness, respect for truth and respect for reasoning (Crick and Lister, 1978, p. 41).

Crick’s approach to political education is constructed in opposition to two alternatives. Firstly, apolitical approaches which see citizenship education as simply community and national involvement, usually in a volunteer capacity, with no possibility of critiquing and changing the current political order (as with the ‘active citizenship’ of the Conservatives in the 1990s, critiqued by Wringe, 1992). The Crick Report has itself been criticized for this, being seen to promote notions of social capital without the possibility of real political change (Gamarnikow and Green, 1999). However, Crick’s own position, particularly in his early work, is of opposition to this type of approach. Secondly, Crick opposes excessive emphasis on content, symbolized by the A Level subject ‘British Constitution’, which emphasized knowledge of political conventions and details of procedure. Instead, Crick advocates an approach based on real political problems, and developing a critical perspective: “we should be *good* citizens; but we should also be *active* citizens in the sense of learning how to combine together to change things that need changing, or to resist bad changes” (Crick, 2002a, p. 492. Original emphasis).

Freire's approach is similar to that of Crick in that it opposes excessive emphasis on content, yet in other ways is distinct. Freire’s proposals for political education are nothing other than his proposals for education, given that he sees education as being intrinsically political. He does not separate the teaching of politics from other parts of the curriculum: in fact, he specifically opposes this, on account of its implication of falsely depoliticizing the rest of the

curriculum. The question therefore is not what is political education, but what is liberating (rather than domesticating) education.

The concept used most commonly by Freire in relation to this liberation is *conscientization.* This is the processes of gaining critical awareness as a means of transforming society:

> To surmount the situation of oppression, people must first critically recognize its causes, so that through transforming action they can create a new situation, one which makes possible the pursuit of a fuller humanity. (Freire, 1972, p. 29)

Conscientization in relation to the individual learner is the process of developing the sense of being a *subject*, of appreciating one's ability to intervene in external reality. The *conscientized* person is 'subject of the processes of change, actor in the management and development of the educational process, critical and reflexive, capable of understanding his or her reality in order to transform it….' (Gajardo, 1991, p. 40). In Freire's early work (1976), the process of conscientization was described as having three stages, with the learner moving from magical, to naive, and finally to critical consciousness. However, according to Roberts (1996), this categorization does not appear in his later work, and he moves towards a view of conscientization:

> …not as a progression through a finite series of steps with a fixed set of attitudes and behaviours to be achieved, but rather as an ever-evolving process. Constant change in the world around us requires a continuous effort to reinterpret reality. (Roberts, 1996, p. 187)

Freire is emphatic that this learning process is one of *praxis*, a dialectic of reflection and action. The gaining of critical consciousness will not of itself transform the world: 'this discovery cannot be purely intellectual but must involve action; nor can it be limited to mere activism, but involve serious reflection' (Freire, 1972, p. 47). In addition, conscientization cannot be a purely individual development, and must take place in the context of the collective, in mutually supportive horizontal relationships.

There are two key pedagogical features in the process of conscientization: *dialogue* and *problematization.* The former, in Freire's conception, is much more than verbal interaction. Traditional education is seen to be ineffective as it involves a mono-directional transmission of knowledge from teacher to student: the so-called *banking* education. Conscientization can only be achieved through a dialogical encounter, where the student is fully involved in the educational process. This is the fundamental difference between Freire's concept of education and that associated with the state-socialist movements of the twentieth century. In the latter, there is an intention to 'conscientize' the masses, making them aware of their exploitation at the hands of the bourgeoisie, yet this is a transmission of pre-established content with little engagement with the learners' conception of reality. As such, in Freire's view, it cannot fully educate even if the information transmitted is itself 'correct'.

Problematization involves the presentation of learners' reality so as to reveal its problems or contradictions. This allows learners to distance themselves from their immediate situation, and gain a critical perspective on it. Freire emphasizes that education must start from learners' own experience of the world:

> Accordingly, the point of departure must always be with men and women in the 'here and now', which constitutes the situation within which they are submerged, from which they emerge, and in which they intervene. Only by starting from this situation – which determines their perception of it – can they begin to move. (Freire, 1972, p. 66)

Freire's vision of educational change, involving a quasi-religious awakening leading to a radical transformation of society, makes Crick's proposals seem rather modest. There are, however, a number of common elements. Both involve a rejection of content-based approaches and assert the importance of action. Both see the key to political learning as grappling with problems that have as their base the real lives of the learners. They both oppose the telling of official lies, and aim to allow people access to the truth, even if it is uncomplimentary to the state.

A major difference is in the location of political learning. For Freire, by necessity, this occurs across the whole educational experience, including the general character of the institution and the extent to which the education is dialogical or authoritarian. Crick, however, sees political education occupying its own space, even if dealt with across a number of subjects. He is sceptical of arguments that "reforms of school organization, still less 'ethos', are the only way to get a better political education" (Crick, 1999, p. 350). While he recognizes that the structures of the school and relations between staff have some significance in terms of the political development of students, he does so to a far lesser extent that Freire.

As a whole, the proposals of the two theorists are, to a large extent, responses to their visions of society and political change: for Crick, the skills, knowledge and values necessary to understand political problems and resolve conflicts through negotiation; for Freire, the combination of awakening of consciousness and political action needed to transform oppressive relations.

Implications for citizenship education

This juxtaposition of the ideas of Bernard Crick and Paulo Freire has aimed to highlight some of the key issues relating to political and citizenship education today. There are a number of important similarities between the two writers. Both stress the importance of the political in education, and have strongly rebutted those who, for the sake of 'neutrality', seek to close the door to politics. However, aware of the possibilities of manipulation, they both propose a form of education that does not impose a particular political line on students (in this, the position of Freire is more ambiguous). They also coincide in their central aim of the political empowerment of the individual, extending the potential for political participation to all citizens, and ensuring an autonomous and effective, rather than submissive and tokenistic participation. Lastly, in terms of method, they both take as their starting point *problems* rather than *certainties,* allowing the student to develop understanding through real issues.

Their points of disagreement stem from divergent understandings of the nature of society and social justice, the balance between pluralism and unity, political idealism and realism, and the individual and collective. As observed in the above analysis, these views lead the two theorists to justify political education in different ways, and to put forward distinctive proposals. These differing trajectories can be seen in the following table:

	Bernard Crick	Paulo Freire
Nature of politics	Reconciling different interest groups.	All (human) relations of power; ongoing struggle for humanization and against oppression.
Justifications for political education	Politics is a highly desirable form of social organization, therefore needs to be learnt.	Education is unavoidably political: educators must choose between liberation and domestication.
Programme for political education	Political literacy	Conscientization

Acknowledging this alternative perspective of Freire is important for those working within the 'Crickean' framework of citizenship education in England. This is not to argue, unreservedly, for a Freirean approach to educational practice in general: there are problematic elements of Freire's thought, particularly as regards notions of 'correct' and 'false' thought, and in its ontological and epistemological foundations (Glass, 2001; Mejía, 2004). Nevertheless, Freire's work provides considerable insight into the nature of education and its possibilities for transforming individuals and society. In relation to citizenship education, it might be dangerous to think in terms of 'adding on' a little Freire to the existing Crick: this may be impossible, since, in many ways, the implementation of Freirean pedagogy is an 'either-or'. Yet, understandings of the political in education in general terms and citizenship education, specifically, are substantially richer if Freire's approach is acknowledged. Four questions are particularly salient in this respect:

Should political education be a separate subject?

One serious omission in the vision of Bernard Crick is the lack of importance attached to the school and pedagogical processes. This is perhaps unsurprising, Crick being first and foremost a political theorist and not an educationist. He does acknowledge that authoritarian relations between the head and the rest of staff are unlikely to give a good example of democracy for students, and allows the possibility of the learning of democracy from participation in school bodies. In relation to this, the Crick Report acknowledges the importance of school councils and the "ethos, organization, structures and daily practices of schools" (QCA, 1998, p. 36). Yet in general these aspects have minor importance. Freire's theory of pedagogical relations, on the other hand, shows a wider understanding of the process of education and its political nature. While many researchers have shown the political significance of pedagogical relationships, the importance of Freire's thought is that he proposes ways in which these can be positively linked to the aims of political education.

Curricula in many countries have included political, citizenship or civics education as a separate discipline, and the current National Curriculum provision recommends that it can be either a separate subject or a cross-curricular theme. In Freire's conception, however, all education is politically oriented and has political consequences. The very existence of 'citizenship education' implies that the rest of the curriculum is not education for citizenship, and may cause learners to view citizenship as a specific part of their lives, rather than something that imbues their whole experience. At the same time, it can be argued that specific curriculum time is necessary for the teaching of political issues, institutions and theories. If we accept this to be true, and 'citizenship education' as a separate discipline remains, it is essential that wider elements, such as teacher-student relations, school organization and knowledge transmission are understood to be integral parts of the forming of citizens. The aim should be to have a 'citizenship curriculum' rather than citizenship education within the curriculum.

Should citizenship education be concerned first and foremost with equipping young people to participate in the existing system?

An important difference between the ideas of Freire and Crick is that the former places a much stronger emphasis on social transformation. This is not to say that Crick's approach aims to support the status quo: he does makes important distinctions between law and justice, and encourages citizens to be active for political reform. He opposes the implementation of apolitical forms of citizenship education, and in his earlier work, proposes "considering possible changes of direction of government or alternative systems" (Crick and Porter, 1978, p. 33) as a possible (if contentious) object of political education. Yet this latter emphasis is largely absent from the Crick Report, where there is little insistence on questioning the current social order. Freire, on the other hand, advocates a radical rethinking

of social organization, emphasising the importance of *hope*, and rejecting fatalistic views of the inherent corruptness of humans which must be controlled by tight social and political structures.

There is no doubt that citizenship education, as all education, should prepare young people for life in society. Yet while necessary, this objective is certainly not sufficient. It must also equip those people to change society, not in a random way or simply for the sake of change, but in accordance with principles of justice. Citizenship education must, therefore, allow people to imagine alternatives, to recreate the system and not simply to conform to it. Possibilities for change must include alternatives to capitalism, alternatives to the monarchy (see Garratt and Piper 2003), and other deeply ingrained features of society. Not all aspects of current society are in need of change, but equally, no aspect should be immune from it.

What are the dangers of indoctrination presented by political education?

There is wide consensus that educators should be wary of imposing their views on young people and should allow different perspectives a fair hearing. This is particularly emphasized in subjects like citizenship education which deal with controversial topics, and which carry the risks of indoctrination. However, Freire here turns the question on its head: indoctrination, in his view, is *avoiding* political questions, since this serves to support and perpetuate the current (unjust) system. Teachers, therefore, have an ethical obligation to be 'biased', that is, to direct their teaching towards the construction of a just and humane society. Of course, the question of the exact nature of a just and humane society is itself contested, so teachers must still be careful not to impose their specific conceptions on students. Yet the important point remains that far from avoiding political questions for fear of bias, schools and teachers are ethically bound to deal with them and use them for social transformation.

How can political agency best be galvanized?

Most people with a genuine interest in citizenship education are concerned with the development of the agency of individuals, that is to say, their ability to be actors in the political sphere, to be active rather than passive. Yet, the question of how this can be achieved is far from straightforward. Crick rejects the notion that knowledge (even political knowledge) is sufficient, and instead asserts that it is necessary also to develop skills and values in students. This is certainly a more complete view, but still rests very much on a *transmission* model of education. Freire critiques this form, the so-called 'banking' education, which aims to deposit certain predefined elements in students' minds, and instead asserts the importance of dialogue. This insistence is not just a question of pedagogical effectiveness: it is key to political empowerment. In Freire's view, the formation of the political actor is not only brought about by the development of knowledge, skills and values in the field of politics itself, but depends on deeper processes. The learner must first understand him or herself as a subject in a fundamental ontological sense, able to have influence on external reality, in order to be a political actor. This deeper development of agency, consequently, makes relevant all the pedagogical relations in school, the extent to which learners are encouraged to develop their own visions, the extent to which knowledge and values are imposed, and so forth. There is little point in equipping people with political knowledge, skills and attitudes through pedagogical processes that negate the necessary sense of agency.

These questions are far from straightforward, but are better engaged with than ignored. This is not an exhaustive list, and other questions could be discussed, such as the balance between the individual and collective, and the tensions between formal civil and political equality and social inequalities. A necessary limitation of this paper is that the ideas have

remained at a degree of abstraction, with no attempt to build into the discussion the elements of context necessary to show the practical possibilities of the approaches. In many ways, the two thinkers are strongly influenced by their own life contexts, in Freire's case the suffering of the peasants and urban poor in North-East Brazil, and for Crick the 20th century totalitarian states and their negation of individual liberties. Nevertheless, the confrontation of the ideas of the two writers highlights some of the key difficulties in conceptualizing a satisfactory citizenship education, difficulties that often remain submerged, given that those engaged in the debates hold many basic assumptions in common. Freire provides important insights relating to the wider pedagogical implications of political education, and the opening of possibilities for radical change. These insights need to be acknowledged if citizenship education is to make the transition from fringe curiosity to central part of the curriculum, and from reinforcer of the current order to agent of change for social justice.

References

Cavalier, W. (2002) The Three Voices of Freire: an Exploration of His Thought over Time. *Religious Education,* 97, 3, 254-270.

Crick, B. (1999) The Presuppositions of Citizenship Education. *Journal of Philosophy of Education,* 33, 3, 337-352.

Crick, B. (2000) *Essays on Citizenship*. London: Continuum.

Crick, B. (2000/1962) *In Defence of Politics (5th ed.)*. London: Continuum.

Crick, B. (2002a) Education for Citizenship: the Citizenship Order. *Parliamentary Affairs*, 55, 488-504.

Crick, B. (2002b) *Democracy: a Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Crick, B. and Porter, A. (eds) (1978) *Political Education and Political Literacy*. London: Longman.

Crick, B. and Lister, I. (1978) Political Literacy. In B. Crick and A. Porter (eds) *Political Education and Political Literacy*. London: Longman.

Davies, I., Evans, M. and Reid, A. (2005) Globalising citizenship education? A critique of 'global education' and 'citizenship education'. *British Journal of Educational Studies,* 53, 1, 66-89.

Flew, A. (2000) *Education for Citizenship*. London: Institute of Economic Affairs.

Freire, P. (1972) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. London: Sheed and Ward.

Freire, P. (1976) *Education, the Practice of Freedom*. London: Writers and Readers Publishing Cooperative.

Freire, P. (1985) *The Politics of Education*. Massachusetts: Bergin and Garvey.

Freire, P. (1994) *Pedagogy of Hope: Reliving Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Continuum.

Freire, P. (1996) *Pedagogia da Autonomia*. São Paulo: Paz e Terra.

Gajardo, M. (1991) *La Concientización en América Latina: una Revisión Crítica*. Michoacán: CREFAL – OEA.

Gamarnikow, E. and Green, A. (1999) Social capital and the educated citizen. *The School Field,* 3, 4, 103-126.

Garrat, D. and Piper, H. (2003) Citizenship education and the monarchy: examining the contradictions. *British Journal of Educational Studies,* 51, 2, 128-148.

Glass, R. (2001) On Paulo Freire's Philosophy of Praxis and the Foundations of Liberal Education. *Educational Researcher,* 30, 2, 15-25.

Lister, I. (1994) Conscientization and political literacy: a British encounter with Paulo Freire. In P. L. McLaren and C. Lankshear (eds) *Politics of Liberation: Paths from Freire*. London: Routledge.

Mejía, A. (2004) The problem of knowledge imposition: Paulo Freire and Critical Systems Thinking. *Systems Research and Behavioral Science,* 21, 62-82.

Olssen, M. (2004) From the Crick Report to the Parekh Report: multiculturalism, cultural difference, and democracy – the re-visioning of citizenship education. *British Journal of Sociology of Education,* 25, 2, 179-192.

Osler, A. (2000) The Crick Report: Difference, Equality and Racial Justice. *The Curriculum Journal* 11, 1, 25-37.

Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (1998) *Education for Citizenship and the Teaching of Democracy in Schools. Final Report of the Advisory Group on Citizenship*. London: QCA.

Roberts, P. (1999) A Dilemma for Critical Educators? *Journal of Moral Education,* 28, 1, 19-30.

Roberts, P. (1996) Rethinking Conscientisation, *Journal of Philosophy of Education,* 30, 2, 179-196.

Rousseau, J.-J. (1763 / 1968) The Social Contract (trans. M. W. Cranston). Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.

Scruton, R., Ellis-Jones, A. and O'Keefe, D. (1985) *Education and indoctrination: an attempt at definition and a review of social and political implications.* Harrow: Education Research Centre.

Shukra, K., Back, L., Keith, M., Khan, A. and Solomos, J. (2004) Race, Social Cohesion and the Changing Politics of Citizenship. *London Review of Education,* 2, 3, 187-195.

Tooley, J. (2000) *Reclaiming Education*. London: Cassell.

Wringe, C. (1992) The ambiguities of education for active citizenship. *Journal of Philosophy of Education,* 26, 1, 29-38.