3.A. What can policy makers do with this information?

By Tom Healy[*]

Introduction

David Campbell's review is a timely and comprehensive account of a vast and complex area – the impact of formal education on some measurable aspects of civic and social engagement (CSE). It is about formal education because it focuses, as was required, on that part of learning which takes place within institutions of teaching and learning – especially at secondary level. It addresses some measurable aspects of civic and social engagement because not every form of political, civic and societal involvement is directly measurable, observable or readily distinguished from other phenomena. But, we have to start somewhere and this paper allows us to review what is known, what is not known and how we might proceed to establish better sources of information and knowledge about the impact of formal education on CSE.

As project of OECD/CERI, the Social Outcomes of Learning (SOL) focuses mainly on the international comparative evidence through empirical research as a guide to informative and useful pointers to educational policy makers. There is, already, a large amount of research and data-gathering on the "economic" returns to investment in human capital: relatively less has been gathered together in relation to the "social" returns (see OECD, 1998 and 2001 for previous reviews of evidence).

My concerns centre on four overlapping questions:

- Why should we be interested in the CSE outcomes of formal education?

- Does formal education increase CSE and, if so, which types of formal education for which kinds of measurable CSE outcomes?

- How much does formal education increase CSE compared to other factors?

- And what can policy makers do with this information to improve (i) the quantity and quality of CSE, and (ii) the quality of education's impact on CSE?

A key issue emerging in any consideration of the CSE impacts of formal education is how specific and generic skills (or attributes) relevant to CSE can be fostered inside and outside formal education. Skills such as working with others toward some shared set of goals, listening to other viewpoints, negotiating and adapting to social change, asserting one's own rights and those of others, knowing about the history, institutions and political arrangements of a society are all critical to sustained democratic action and behaviour. None of these skills or attributes can be taken for granted. Neither is formal education a

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guarantee of effective and morally defensible civic and social engagement. History knows too many examples where high levels of education in the population as a whole did not correlate with desirable forms of social engagement. Recent examples of how high levels of skill, human capital and completed educational attainment were associated with extremely evil outcomes confirm the obvious point that human capital and schooling can be used for good or ill. It is worth stating the obvious if only to recall that social capital can be used for good and ill and this fact, alone, does not render it any less problematic than human capital.

Why should we be interested in the CSE outcomes of formal education?

Politics, power struggles and competition (*to strive with*) are natural and necessary aspects of human discourse and relationships. The challenge, I would argue, is to moderate competition with compassion (*to suffer with*) and other values. This is where a civic learning culture – going beyond "civics education" has a vital role to play. May I suggest that to dis*passion*ately study the empirical evidence on the "social outcomes" of formal education is necessary but insufficient. To use learning and formal education to enable people to realise their full potential to work and live co-operatively with others is, surely, the goal of our joint endeavours.

Living in a fractured world – economically, culturally and politically – is a tough challenge. A recent OECD project (DESECO) on the definition and selection of key competencies, Rychen and Salganik (2001) has defined three generic or core skills for living: acting and thinking for oneself; using various tools including language and symbols; and learning to live and work with others.[1] The latter competence – learning to live and work with others in a diverse and complex society – is learned in many settings such as school, community, family and workplace as well as voluntary and other organisations. Formal education from pre-primary through to adult or continuing education provides an important social context in which skills are developed, relationships developed, norms of behaviour adapted and changed. Increasingly, participation in formal education and training is seen as a lifelong process in which people are learning as much about change and how to change as about a fixed set of facts or known procedures to accomplishing particular tasks.

Hence, CSE has a context – OECD societies facing the challenge of rapid change and risk. And "education" has a purpose – to equip individuals, groups and whole societies to fulfil many and complex roles. In the first place, knowing something about the social outcomes of learning in a formal education setting helps policy makers and educationalists to influence the impact of learning on broader social aims and objectives. In the second place, it enables a wider audience to appreciate the specific social outcomes of learning and formal education that are typically sidelined in mainstream analysis of the labour market and economic development outcomes of investment in "human capital". Human capital has a social and economic rate of return and any analysis that enables us to

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[1] The skills were summarised as capacities to:

- function autonomously (including critical thinking, judgement);

- use tools interactively (including language and symbols); and

- join in socially heterogeneous groups (including acceptance of diversity and democratic values).

quantify this in monetary or non-monetary terms should be welcome news to education ministries as they contend for scarce public resources.

Third, many commentators (*e.g.* Whiteley, 2005) have noted worrying trends in levels of political engagement, voting and trust (with respect to institutions) in many OECD countries. If formal education has a positive impact on civic and political engagement, how do we explain long-term declines in *some* of these forms of engagement (particularly voting)? What others things are going on that explain these trends? And can formal education moderate these trends?

Finally, all of this has a strong political and policy context. For example, the European Union (EU, 2005) has committed to upskilling as it struggles to move toward Lisbon 2010 goals. Among eight "core competencies" it has identified "interpersonal, intercultural and social competencies, civic competence". This competence (note the use of the singular instead of the plural) is defined as covering "all forms of behaviour that equip individuals to participate in an effective and constructive way in social and working life, and particularly in increasingly diverse societies, and to resolve conflict where necessary". Civic competence "equips individuals to fully participate in civic life, based on knowledge of social and political concepts and structures and a commitment to active and democratic participation". Schools and schooling still have a vital role to play. I would argue that we need to pay more attention to the "social capital" outcome of schooling and not just its "human capital" function in sustaining growth in economic output or personal income (important as these are in terms of realising social inclusion and meeting various personal needs).

Formal education impacts on CSE – what and for whom?

That formal education emerges as a strong correlate of CSE is not surprising. From analysis of European data in the 1950s, Almond and Verba (1963, p. 276) reported a strong link between various types of political engagement (discussion of politics, voting, sense of competence to influence government) and levels of completed (formal) education. Verba, Schlozman and Brady (1995) found that education, other things constant, increased political participation. Moreover, literacy skills among adults have shown a positive relationship with participation in voluntary community activities for several OECD countries (OECD and Statistics Canada, 2000).

A survey of the adult population in Ireland in 2002 showed that higher education graduates, other things equal, were 7 times more likely to volunteer in the community than those with lower or upper secondary attainment only (Healy, 2005). Higher education graduates were more than twice as likely to volunteer as those who have not completed second level schooling. These results are similar to those found by Schuller *et al.* (2001) in the United Kingdom. They report that higher education graduates were three times more likely to be a current or active member of a voluntary organisation than those without upper secondary completion (below A-Levels) and about twice as likely as upper secondary completers.

The power of generalisation is in numbers – international cross-country and cross-situational. They enable us to identify relationships, impacts, and even in special circumstances, causality. The drawback is that they are generalisations – not amenable to local or national circumstances where the "rules of the game" and the particular set of institutional and cultural norms mediate general relationships and impacts. Formal education, CSE and their complex inter-relationships are *not* the same everywhere.

A drawback with European Social Survey (ESS) or the Civic Education Study (CivEd) of the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) is that they refer to patterns of CSE that are readily observed and quantified. What about areas of CSE that are more implicit, influential, subjective in nature? Much effective civic and political engagement may be indirect, informal and based on mutual favours, acquaintances and implicit "contracts". Hence, particular groups may enjoy favoured status on account of who they know and how their status in society is respected. They may not need to attend meetings, volunteer, engage in boycotts, contact local parliamentarians, etc. Their civic and social engagement could be of a different quality and nature to that of other groups. The relevance of their initial level of education is that it gave them both access to powerful socioeconomic positions of knowledge, status and respect. In this sense, education – understood as formal schooling – can have a strong "sorting" element and no amount of data from ESS or other similar type surveys could reveal the extent of such engagement and position of influence.

Hence, examining correlations between educational attainment, on the one hand, and types of CSE from sources such as ESS does not allow us to examine the differential impact of formal schooling on a broader concept of civic and social engagement. We may be back to the "drunk and the lamppost"[2] problem. Moreover, the absence of longitudinal analysis means that we cannot convincingly disentangle cohort from lifecycle and period effects. Even if we could approximate these on the basis of longitudinal data, we are unable to identify causative influences as distinct from correlation ones.

Nevertheless, in the space of 150 pages, Campbell has undertaken an unenviable task of summarising a very complex and often confusing area. He had to contend with a number of significant short-falls in the availability of evidence and the limitations of existing research methodology. He pays particular attention to the available empirical evidence – as in other areas of social research – often but not exclusively North American.[3] His sources refer to generalised impact on CSE in the case of primary, and especially secondary, levels of education. Relatively little is known, and therefore reported, about impacts in the case of tertiary, adult and other areas including non-formal or informal learning. Whiteley (2005, p. 19) reports on the emergence of a literature on the impact of adult civic education programmes on civic and political engagement.[4] In a revised draft, it would be valuable to draw on some empirical work in the area of adult education. For example, using UK panel data, Feinstein and Hammond (2004) have found that adult learning plays an important role in contributing, in mid-adulthood, to observable shifts in political and social attitudes as well as in civic behaviour as measured by group membership. Given the dearth of evidence in the field of social outcomes of *adult learning* it would be worth exploring and describing some available studies further.

Also of interest is work commissioned by CEDEFOP (Green, Preston and Malmberg, 2004) in which relationships between various civic outcomes and educational attainment and inequality in adult literacy skills are explored. They suggest that increases in levels of average educational attainment across the population may not impact *directly* on civic

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[2] The story is told of a drunk who searched for a lost key under the public lamppost even though it was pointed out to him that it likely to be in the park – presently covered in darkness.

[3] A useful weblink to US research and data that complements the review is *www.civicyouth.org/*

[4] Whiteley's paper examines the impact of education on participation among young people and not adults. However, he cites a number of studies on the impact of adult civic education without elaborating on these (Whiteley, 2005, p. 19).

tolerance, crime and social cohesion. However, to the extent that higher educational attainment can reduce poverty, unemployment and income inequality, it can have an *indirect* impact on social cohesion.[5]

As Campbell acknowledges, what we have are suggestive correlations rather than firm causative relationships. He concedes that such correlations could be spurious "since both schooling and civic outcomes are simultaneously influenced by a wide variety of inherently observable traits specific to individuals and the families and communities in which they were reared" (taken from Dee, 2004, p. 1698). Even if we were to access more longitudinal surveys the enduring problem posed by selection bias or endogeneity leaves us wondering: but does this apparent relationship and correlation reveal the influence of other (unmeasurable) factors, or does it tell us something about the way particular groups select themselves for formal education and CSE?

Campbell begins with a consideration of results from the European Social Survey (ESS) covering a large number of European countries. This particular source has furnished a new set of measures of civic and social engagement not readily available from previous waves of the European Values Survey (EVS). He gives considerable attention to the international empirical evidence for "relative", "absolute" and "cumulative" hypotheses. The discussion of the sorting or "relative education hypothesis" in Section 3.3 would benefit from an inclusion of the work of Pierre Bourdieu. Bourdieu saw educational credentials as a form of capital that gives strategic (sorting) advantage to particular social groups by virtue of its access to power, knowledge and cultural symbols. Those with greater *economic capital* are best positioned to acquire *cultural capital* such as formal education but also adult education or social capital, such as valuable social networks, a fact that further reinforces their dominance (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990). Through combining social and cultural capital those with greater economic capital are also best positioned to exercise *political power and influence* (Phillips, 1999). As Campbell correctly observes the sorting or competitive model described in Nie, Junn and Stehlik-Berry (1996) does hold for some CSE outcomes – viz. political activity expressed in accessing politicians.

Citing Nie *et al.*, Campbell writes:

"At its core, their argument is that political engagement is driven by social status. The higher your placement in a social hierarchy, the more likely you are to be engaged in political activity. And your place in the social hierarchy is largely a function of education."

and

"There are competing expectations regarding the relationship of trust – both interpersonal and institutional – to education. One perspective is that trust has largely social origins, and is thus driven by socioeconomic status. If so, the sorting model would apply. The nearer you are to the top of the social hierarchy, the more reason you have to be trusting. Conversely, if trust is primarily a psychological predisposition immune to one's position on the social ladder, then one's absolute level of education is most likely to matter."

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[5] Using aggregate cross-country data for 15 countries, Green, Preston and Malmberg (2004) found that income inequality – when controlling for GNP per capita – was significantly associated with lower levels of trust and higher levels of crime.

The inter-relationships between social status or power, trust (as one component of CSE) and formal education is complex and, probably highly context-specific. In other words, particular types and levels of formal education could be highly useful to advance the access of some social groups to political influence. In this perspective, CSE could indeed be a very competitive private good – private to particular groups and collectivities. In other cases, CSE could be like a public good – its possession by one group does not crowd out or exclude access by others. To address some of these issues would require a detailed analysis of social power as it plays out in specific societies and hierarchical and multi-tiered educational systems.

By way of illustration, Galland (1999) has found (using EVS) that whereas trust and civic engagement are indeed correlated at the cross-country level, there are important differences between different social groups in the way in which individuals exercise their choice of social networks and relations. Hence, high levels of trust in one area can co-exist with a restricted radius of engagement or trust in another area. Galland questions whether general measures of trust or civic engagement can offer a reliable guide to the quality of social relations or to their interaction at a macro-level.

Campbell makes an important distinction between different types of CSE. He differentiates between a "political index" (= contacting officials/politicians, working in a political party/group) and an "expressive index" (= signing petitions, boycotting, demonstrating) and "political interest". However, each of these indices captures a very partial set of information. The expressive index which comprises signing of a petition, taking part in a lawful demonstration and boycotting certain products, is a very limited measure of how people exercise their civic engagement.

Campbell suggests that "civic" engagement tends to be consensual while "political" engagement tends to be rooted in conflict. I would question this typology. While it may be true in practice – this would required empirical verification – it is not necessarily true in the way these forms of engagement are defined. In any case, "politics" and "civil society" do not have clear-cut boundaries. In practice they overlap. Much "politics" is local and at the local level "civic engagement" frequently has a political dimension both in the implicit sense that people contend for influence, ideas and power and also in the explicit sense that political parties and ideologies still exert a strong influence in various social networks and manifestations of community engagement. Which student society, charitable organisation, sports club, organisation and Church group is not characterised by some degree of implicit power struggles and "politics"? Voluntary activity and community engagement may represent forms of civic and political engagement to the extent that even if they are not politically motivated or aimed they can influence political decisions. As Whiteley (2005, p. 8) puts it: "Voluntary activity helps to sustain civil society and hence supports the government and state". Hence, even if the distinction of "civic" and "political" engagement is conceptually and empirically useful, we should not draw too rigid a boundary line around these concepts.

In the statistical analysis, two factors emerge as significant – apart from education impacts: gender and, secondly, household income. By implication, social class (proxied in this case by household income) and gender are likely to have strong and statistically significant impacts on some dimensions of CSE independently of the level of formal education. If this is so, we need to ask what is the impact of education relative to other factors including social class? Can education contribute positively or negatively to the strong (positive) relationship between social class and CSE – in other words is education serving to shore up and accentuate social inequality in access to politicians and the

political system or does it play an equalising role? In a cross-sectional and cross-national study of these relationships it is difficult to draw conclusive results.

Formal education impacts on CSE – how and why?

Campbell writes: "the fact that norms have not received much attention in the scholarly literature is unfortunate, as they are central to understanding why people engage in CSE". At this point, his review would benefit from additional insights of a theoretical nature. For example, Whitelely (2005) describes five theoretical models in explaining political participation and engagement:

- *cognitive engagement* – people who are better educated can process more information and make informed decisions on the basis of which they selectively engage in forms of engagement they identify as productive;

- *rational choice* – people chose political involvement on the basis of a rational evaluation of costs and benefits to them (such an evaluation may be aided by education in political knowledge and skills);

- *civic voluntarism* – people get involved if they have resources (money, time and education) as well as motivation (contingent on social conditioning and norms of civic behaviour);

- *equity fairness* – people participate in response to a perceived unfairness or gap between expectations and treatment; and

- *social capital* – people are more generally more likely to participate politically in communities where voluntary and community networks and associated trust are higher (education tends to be strongly related to many measures of social capital both as an outcome as well as an input).

The latter three models place emphasis on social and structural factors including social norms and networks. At the risk of over-simplifying the above models, it could be claimed that cognitive engagement and rational choice are fully compatible with the classic human capital model of human behaviour: people, rationally, invest their time and effort in various activities (including schooling) with a view to some net gain over alternative uses of time and effort. Education improves the decision-making and information-transforming process. In the social-structural accounts, education is acting as a socialising agent as well as a form of capital working in association with other forms of capital (financial, cultural and social). One suspects that each of the above five models casts some incomplete light on the reasons why people engage and how education facilitates this. If we were to find more evidence for the cognitive and rational choice models of explanation then the policy implications might suggest more targeted educational provision including education in civic knowledge. If we were to find more evidence on the social-structural side then the education policy implications are broader and may refer to a much wider range of issues that cross the curriculum, pedagogy, assessment and governance of schools.

The analysis of UK longitudinal data (Whiteley, 2005) suggests that cognitive engagement models of active social participation are significantly shaped by political knowledge and interest as well as exposure to citizenship education. Civic voluntarism models are shaped by political interest and educational attainment of parents. By merging both models together, Whiteley claims that "citizenship education appears to have a direct

impact on these rather different forms of participation, even when many other factors are taken into account" (Whiteley, 2005, p. 51). Consequently, Whiteley is optimistic about the future prospects for civics education in Britain and its impact on civil society.

Lurking behind the generic competencies in the DESECO framework, mentioned above, are those norms of "good" and "bad" behaviour inculcated through socialisation. Presumably schools are an important part of this "social conditioning" through learned example and lived ethos as much as in formal instruction in right behaviour. Hence, the way schools are run, who gets to make which decisions, how curriculum is interpreted and applied and how various people relate to each other sets an important conditioning context for young people as they learn about society, democracy and social relationships on their own doorsteps. Campbell comments that: "Schools are communities, in which norms are taught and enforced. Since they involve regular face-to-face interaction and a need for cooperation, they are a prime environment for the development of social capital". It could be postulated that the ethos of a particular school or learning community is likely to be a more telling factor in shaping actual or potential civic behaviour than simply taught civics. Civic norms of behaviour are probably more *caught* than *taught* in such an environment. These findings have profound implications for public policy on schooling that go beyond programme design and curricular content. Hence, the implications for public policy to promote CSE may be as much about hidden curricula at the local level, as well as system-design effects at a more macro-level, than in any specific measures, curriculum or assessments to instruct students about civics and civic engagement.

At this point, we move from looking purely at various aspects of CSE as they are claimed to result from schooling to how social networks in school communities reinforce CSE (as well as academic achievement). Campbell cites previous work by Coleman (1990) and Bryk, Lee and Holland (1993) to refer to the example of Roman Catholic schools in the United States. The claim made is that segregated schooling with strong reserves of "bonding" social capital (a term not used by Coleman or Bryk, Lee and Holland) correlate with higher levels of CSE among students. Assuming that this effect is representative of an independent causative effect of denominational schooling we can ask two questions: Are these outcomes peculiar to the US school system and social context? And are there other impacts – some of which could be negative – on CSE not captured on the outcome side. Transplanting the question to Northern Ireland, for example, we might question about the specific effects of denominational and segregated schooling on (i) intra-community bonding and civic engagement and (ii) cross-community bridging and civic engagement.[6] There are no clear answers to these questions in the many research studies undertaken.

In the discussion of civics education and the empirical findings of the CivEd data source, Campbell reiterates the importance of an open classroom climate in fostering debate and critical thinking about civic and political issues – a finding also echoed in many previous studies (*e.g.* see literature review in Whiteley, 2005, p. 20). Earlier – mainly US-based – research had indicated a limited impact of civics education. However, analysis of longitudinal data in the United Kingdom (Whiteley, 2005) and the cross-country analysis of IEA data indicate strong impacts from education – including

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[6] And possibly, also, engagement by whole communities in Northern Ireland with hierarchical institutions such as the State or local public authorities.

citizenship education in the case of the UK data[7]. Presumably these impacts complement (or compensate for) given climates in the families and communities from which students are drawn. At this point, one has to ask if such a finding suggests a wider set of cultural issues and traits embedded in the societies in which schools are located. In other words, the capacity to question, explore, debate and to find a generally welcoming environment to do that is not the same everywhere. Cultures of deference to authority in society and the classroom as well as a shared sense that some topics, issues and debating styles are "off limits" can pervade. What is the appropriate scope for debate, autonomy and exploration; at which stage of formal education; and relative to what set of societal and school norms? There are no clear-cut answers to these questions.

The importance of peer and "community-level" effects is brought out very well in Campbell's review of the CivEd data. There, through use of classroom-level means he is able to report the impact of classroom-level factors such as openness to dialogue, participation in school affairs and shared ideas of what constitutes "good citizenship". The impact of these latter three classroom-level variables is significant. New social movement norms (although vaguely defined in CivEd) provide an interesting case of where young people, who engage in various types of protest or advocacy-type activities (around human rights, environment, etc), are not "politically" engaged as defined in CivEd and, not surprisingly, tend not to trust various institutions. Reference is made to "service learning". However, as Campbell points out, "service learning" is not really captured in the CivEd data. Hence, the finding that community voluntarism, in my view incorrectly coupled with "service learning", has no impact on anticipated civic engagement should be treated with caution. I understand "service learning" to involve some direct linkage of curriculum and service in the community and not just a coincidence of engagement outside the school and education within the school.

Use of longitudinal data from the United States to explore the long-term impact of extra-curricular and out-of-school involvement by young people in various types of clubs and associations is valuable. Campbell reports positive impacts for such involvement. This is an important finding in so far as it underlines the potential of schools to facilitate and complement other forms of social engagement and learning parallel to formal education at a crucial stage of young peoples' development and transition to adulthood. Yet, the absence, in the CivEd data, of any positive relationship between extra-curricular group membership and a range of civic outcomes such as civic knowledge, skills, anticipated inclination to vote and tolerance suggests that the classic *Tocquevillian* hypothesis might not hold across the board – the more people are engaged in civic associations the more they trust others and the healthier is the state of democracy. However, at least Campbell does report statistically significant impacts of group membership on anticipated civic and political engagement (Table 3.4.2).

A received wisdom is that home trumps school across a range of student outcomes from academic achievement to various social skills. However, Campbell suggests that the CivEd findings indicate that classroom climate (open dialogue) has a stronger impact on most of the measures of civic engagement and trust than "political conversations" at home. However, political conversations at home do have a consistently strong and positive relationship with all of the measurable civic outcomes and this factor outweighs classroom climate in the case of political engagement outcomes.

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[7] However, these impacts are difficult to differentiate in terms of education programme. Some of the impact could be cross-curricular as well as specific to civics classes.

Some gaps and some questions

Campbell suggests, or hints at, a number of very fruitful lines of approach in future research on the CSE outcomes of schooling:

- contextual studies (and by implication more qualitative approaches to complement large-scale empirical studies);

- greater consistency in survey approach and question coverage internationally (to enable analysts to compare similar phenomena across countries, time and situations);

- longitudinal surveys including parents as well as students that trace behaviour over time for a given cohort;

- adaptation of survey questions on engagement, school climate, etc. from previous surveys such as CivEd;

- randomised experiments to uncover, over time, the benefits and impacts of different policy interventions and educational practices on the ground. It is worth repeating the fundamental assertion also made by Campbell that correlations do not prove causality and a significant and strong positive relationship between two variables may be seriously contaminated by "selection" effects – people who are more engaged are also more prone to interest themselves in, and avail of, "civic education" experiences. As a second-best alternative to randomised experiments, Campbell suggest an Instrumental Variable (IV) to isolate out the impact of a given variable;[8] and

- system-level information that captures possible relationships between macro-level features of national or sub-national school systems and civic outcomes of schooling.

Care is needed in generalising from just one international survey (albeit one that contains many countries and a large overall number of student respondents) at one point in time. One suspects that, qualitatively, some of the findings and correlations might be reversed in another study.[9]

An issue that has not been explored by Campbell is the extent to which active learning can contribute to civic and social outcomes. In addition to open classroom climate, learning that is associated with application, experimentation, experience and project-work could be very effective. One recalls the saying ascribed to Confucius: "Tell me and I forget; Show me and I remember; Let me do and I understand". Active learning involves: investigation, discovery, application and communication:

- learners *want* to change themselves or their environment;

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[8] So, for example, a variable correlated with classroom climate as an independent variable but not correlated with civic engagement as a dependent variable could be introduced into the explanatory model. This approach is common, for example, in many micro-level studies of schooling impacts on income. In practice it is very difficult to identify and use some available instrumental variable.

[9] Moreover, a generally positive relationship at international level may not hold up at national level. In one study of civic behaviour in the adult population in Ireland it emerged that contrary to findings elsewhere, there appears to be no correlation between highest level of educational attainment on the one hand and voting or trust, on the other (Healy, 2005).

- they *want* to engage with others;

- they *discover* through a variety of means;

- their *appropriated* knowledge is applied in practice;

- they continue to *reflect* on this knowledge; and

- this knowledge is *communicated*.

At times, the review assesses the state of the literature; at other points it develops new analysis and evidence (from the ESS). The review might benefit from

- a shorter overview of key findings, insights and policy implications followed by a longer and more technical appendix for those interested;

- discussion of results on student engagement[10] and participation[11] from the OECD Progamme for International Student Assessment (PISA) (Willms, 2003); and

- more coverage of some very significant European reviews (I am thinking, for example, of the EUYOUPART survey[12] and the Political Participation of Young People in Europe indicator project, the Wider Benefits of Learning project in the United Kingdom,[13] the UK Citizenship Education Longitudinal Study which began in 2001 (Whiteley, 2005, Baudelot *et al.*, 2004, Green, Preston and Malmberg, 2004).

And so what?

Campbell makes a vitally important observation – and this is worth situating in a larger contemporary debate about the goals, priorities and purpose of formal education. He writes:

> *"Some educators may be wary that the widespread adoption of an open classroom climate and student participation in school governance would, at best, divert schools from their core educational mission and, at worst, invite disorder by subverting the authority of teachers and school administrators."*

These are very reasonable concerns – especially the latter one about mission drift. I have heard it argued, more than once, that too much of a public school (or adult learning) focus on active citizenship and social skills as core competencies, along with others such as literacy and numeracy, risks diluting the claimed absolute and over-riding priority of targeting low levels of literacy and numeracy especially among socially disadvantaged groups. However, I wonder if this is necessarily a zero-sum game. I tend to agree with Campbell when he goes on to say:

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[10] PISA is an international study of student achievement at age 15 in over 40 countries. Engagement was measured according to the extent to which students felt that they belonged to a school, were included and could make friends, etc.

[11] Participation was measured by the extent to which students were in attendance and punctual.

[12] See *www.sora.at/de/start.asp?b=236*. Some 8 countries have participated to date: Austria, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Slovakia and the United Kingdom. The survey covers questions on political interest and participation among young people aged 15-25.

[13] Refer to: *www.learningbenefits.net/Index.htm*

"A closer look, however, suggests that educators need not worry. An open classroom climate simply refers to a style of instruction; instead of rote learning, students are given the opportunity to discuss and debate compelling issues with a teacher's guidance. Similarly, the confidence in school participation index makes reference to students' opinions being treated respectfully by teachers and administrators, hardly a recipe for anarchy."

In other words, open and learner-centred education can cut across all subject or learning domains and leave a generally positive impact in terms of both civic attitude and behaviour and – at the same time – standard academic achievement and basic skills in listening, writing and reading.

Some over-arching conclusions can be guessed:

- in general, other things equal, higher levels of schooling contribute to higher and better levels of civic and social engagement;

- a discussion of the social outcomes of learning is useful in recognising the multiple roles that formal education plays from economic to social, cultural and personal;

- schooling interacts with factors such as social class, gender, ethnic status – understanding these inter-relationships is still very limited;

- even still, as Campbell shows, socioeconomic status is not the only determinant of civic outcomes – looking at civic engagement within and across various social groups shows that some generic lessons and applications are possible;

- some forms of learning seem to work better than others in fostering CSE – learning environments that stress responsibility, open dialogue, respect and application of theory and ideas in practical and group-orientated work seem to work better than just "civics education" on its own;

- many other factors impact on CSE as well as schooling – schooling is not a panacea; and

- not all forms of CSE are socially desirable.

An important insight that emerges from the review (as indeed other empirical analyses) is that CSE is not a unitary good. Activities such as joining various associations, voting, engaging in different types of political action (meeting politicians, signing petitions, writing to the newspapers, etc) may have very different relationships to the underlying demographic, socioeconomic and educational profiles of survey respondents. One of the intriguing issues posed by a study of the social outcomes of learning is whether particular institutional arrangements at the schooling level facilitate, or not, effective democracies and social engagement. For example, in a highly polarised and sectarian society, does segregated schooling reinforce social and inter-group divisions? What is the policy leverage for bringing about greater social integration and mutual understanding through the schooling process? The same question could be asked in relation to increasingly diverse (ethnically and otherwise) European societies. Can schooling be an effective public policy to promote social cohesion and what tradeoffs exist between this and other considerations such as school choice and local autonomy?

Epilogue

If we were to find ourselves in an elevator/lift for 40 seconds with the Minister for Schools what useful things might we say on foot of this stage of the SOL project's deliberation on CSE? I would suggest the following:

- education is good for civic and social engagement – lots of data show this and that reputable body, OECD, says so;

- encouraging young people to be involved in their own learning – applying it inside and outside the classroom, school and local community is well worth pursuing;

- some, but not all, of this learning can be in civics programmes, "service learning", student councils at secondary and tertiary levels and project-based learning involving teamwork, inter-personal skills and problem-solving together;

- but, above all, having an open classroom climate in which students are encouraged to debate, question and explore is a winner whether in terms of civic knowledge, skills, anticipated voting, political and civic engagement and trust and tolerance toward other;

- however, there is a lot we don't know in terms of "what works" and "why" and at which "level of education" – hence we need more and better data, research and interaction between researchers and policy makers.

- so, please Minister support the OECD SOL project.

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