

The Deliberative Classroom



Talking about rights without talking about rights?
On the absence (and presence) of knowledge in classroom discussions

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Overview of this presentation

Part 1: Thinking about knowledge in HRE and the role of deliberation

A quick word about methods and context

Part 2: Four insights about the challenge of knowledge in the classroom

Jerome, L., Liddle, A., & Young, H. (2021). Talking about rights without talking about rights: on the absence of knowledge in classroom discussions. *Human Rights Education Review*, 4(1), 8–26. <https://doi.org/10.7527/hrecr.3979>

Jerome, L., Liddle, A., & Young, H. (2021). Talking Tolerance: Being Deliberative about Fundamental British Values. *PRISM*, Early View. <https://doi.org/10.24377/prism.4m.u.0302204>

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Part 1: Thinking about knowledge in HRE and the role of deliberation

- Parker's (2018) challenge to HRE to provide a more compelling account of knowledge (so we can be serious about the curriculum)
 - Vygotsky's distinction between everyday / scientific (conceptual) knowledge
 - New conceptual knowledge can be transformational (powerful?)
- Deliberation requires students to attend to diverse opinions about shared topics, encourages us to review our own positions, and potentially leads to 'deeper' learning
- Hess (2009) sees controversial issues as a conduit to 'perennial issues' (human rights concepts?)
- Mercer (1995) described talk as the 'guided construction of knowledge'

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Part 1

Reznitskaya and Gregory (2013) argue there are three processes:

- (i) Discussion gives students experience of rational thinking, which they can then internalise.
- (ii) The cumulative experiences of such discussion help students build an 'argument schema' for a general understanding of how arguments are constructed and questioned, which enables students to judge between different interpretations.
- (iii) Students develop an increasingly complex understanding of disciplinary knowledge, i.e. what it means to understand and think with concepts like rights.

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Part 1

But, the literature indicates why not all talk is equally valuable:

- Lack of teacher clarity may be a problem
- Students may accumulate points uncritically - exchanging 'unexamined platitudes' (Mercer, 1995)
- Students may 'ventriloquise' what the teacher wants to hear (Pace, 2015)
- Students may not test views and evidence to hold each other to account.

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Methods

- Visits to four secondary schools in England which were using the Deliberative Classroom resources
- Recordings of students' small group discussions and class plenaries
- Analysis using qualitative coding



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Part 2: Four emerging themes about the challenge of knowledge in the classroom

A. Opinions and restricted empathy

The example of polygamy



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Image: <https://www.digitalschool.com/photography/learn-guide-to-the-various-types-of-paints-1000/>

Part 2

B. Task completion and 'certainty'

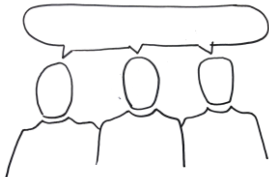
'Can we have another discussion?'

'Shall we go to case study 3, what's this, Hindu complains about tallow in the new £5 notes [reads information about the next case study].'

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Part 2

C. Consensus



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<https://theadeliberativeclassroom.com/decision-making/>

Part 2

D. Sources of knowledge



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<https://www.educationquizzes.com/education-matters/step-comics/uploads/2014/05/crayon.jpg>

Part 2: Four insights

Insight 1: We need to be more explicit about teaching human rights as a discourse that can usefully frame our consideration of socio-political issues

Insight 2: We need to attend to the connections between understanding human rights and the broader development of political understanding

Insight 3: Deliberation and consensus-seeking may restrict critical engagement with others' views and thus encourage a superficial engagement with the topic if processes are not clearly explained and modelled.

Insight 4: Interdisciplinary perspectives are helpful but may need to be facilitated more deliberately as students do not spontaneously make connections between HRE and other relevant school knowledge

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Any questions?

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