

‘What should personal and social education sessions be about?’

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One can imagine a list of important topics being collated in response to this question. ‘Health and Well-Being’ particularly mental health and happiness could be dimensions of personal and social education, as are citizenship, ethics, philosophy and so on. But rather than elaborate such a list, I would like to emphasise how the framing of the question might itself presuppose some problems that may not otherwise go away.

Firstly, how is the personal related to the social in this categorisation? Presumably this is deliberate and so I suppose it is seeking ideas where the personal and social intersect. Is this correct or are the terms intended to be a broader catchall for items that do not otherwise fit in the curriculum? If so, you already probably have a rough list of those items. Would it not be sensible to share those along with the rationale for this subject title?

I am not as familiar with the details of the existing curriculum for Personal and Social Education (PSE) as I would like, but I agree with a general criticism of the CfE which I suspect is particularly pronounced in PSE, namely that the capacities that frame the curriculum seem to have too strong a conception of what students should become, above and beyond what they should learn. While particular conceptions of identity formation might be valid goals for education (and have rich histories in the Greek concept of *Paideia* or the German *Bildung* tradition), I would be concerned that the ‘becoming’ of the child within Scottish education draws too much (perhaps unconsciously) from neo-liberal concerns for what is useful to society. I suspect that advocating against framing PSE in utilitarian terms might not be quite as difficult in Scotland as it might be in other parts of the UK (I am more familiar with the English context), but nevertheless, this opens up a range of complex issues about what we think we are educating for. A good place to develop this discussion is Priestley and Blesta’s book ‘Reinventing the Curriculum’ (Bloomsbury 2013).