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# Citizenship education: ideas, issues and actions

A presentation by Ian Davies for the conference 'Promoting Active Citizenship', Cyprus Pedagogical Institute, June 2014





1. Context – the importance of citizenship education around the world and the reasons for its introduction
2. The development of citizenship education in England 1998-2013; and from 2014 onwards
3. Examples of citizenship education
4. Conclusions and recommendations: the need to recognise the new context that is influencing citizenship education and the need to continue to promote valuable forms of education



# CONTEXT



# Citizenship education is significant around the world

- England – National Curriculum for citizenship (revised version starting in September 2014)
- Council of Europe – Education for Democratic Citizenship (2013 was the Year of Citizenship through Education)
- China *National Guidelines on Medium and Long-term Educational Reform and Development (2010–2020)*
- *Australia – first ever National Curriculum will include civics and citizenship*
- *Japan – many initiatives (e.g. Shinagawa and Kanagawa wards in Tokyo).*



- International Citizenship and Civic Education Study (ICCS) ICCS 2009: Young students and citizenship ([http://www.iea.nl/iccs\\_2009.html](http://www.iea.nl/iccs_2009.html));
- the European Social Survey ([www.europeansocialsurvey.org](http://www.europeansocialsurvey.org));
- the World Values Survey ([www.valuessurvey.org](http://www.valuessurvey.org));
- Eurobarometer ([http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion));
- National Foundation for Educational Research (CELS);
- Ofsted reports (government inspection agency)
- many other individual projects and publications.



- Only 22-23% of Europeans aged over 15 are involved in volunteering;
- Voter turnout is low and very low among young people;
- Issues about Britishness (referendum in Scotland 2014 about the future of the UK in which 16 year olds can vote);
- Law and order / social exclusion / terrorism: in the UK 2001 riots lead to the Cantle Report emphasising community; 2005 terrorist attacks lead to the Ajegebo report emphasising diversity; riots in English cities in 2011;
- Economic crisis may heighten the need for young people to understand society and develop the skills to participate



- Status
- Identity
- Action



- Liberal – individual rights with an emphasis on private contexts (I am a citizen and have rights to express myself)
- Civic republican – responsibilities with an emphasis on public contexts (I am a citizen and so need to do my duty for others)



- **Status** (Citizenship may be used to exclude those who do not belong);
- **Identity** (Possible misalignment between status and identity);
- **Action** (In what context and for whose benefit? Are 'personal' matters relevant to citizenship? Are those who cannot act as well as others destined to become second class citizens?)



# Citizenship Education

1998-2013

2014 -



- ***self-confidence and socially and morally responsible behaviour both in and beyond the classroom,***
- ***community involvement and service to the community.***
- ***pupils learning about and how to make themselves effective in public life through knowledge, skills and values (political literacy)***

- Key concepts (democracy and justice; rights and responsibilities; identity and diversity);
- Key processes (critical thinking and enquiry; advocacy and representation; taking informed and responsible action)
- Wide range of local, national and international content



- Overall, citizenship education (CE) has become increasingly embedded and established in secondary schools in England from 2002 to 2008. Citizenship is more visible in school structures and processes and school leaders and teachers are more aware of and supportive of its impact and wider benefits for schools, students and local communities.

There is evidence that provision and outcomes for students are improving overall. Progress in establishing citizenship securely in the curriculum has been steady. Even in the schools visited where provision was weak, there was mostly an encouraging direction of travel.



- Provision for citizenship was good or outstanding in 21 of the 23 primary schools visited.
- The good practice visits made to a very small number of post-16 providers revealed that these were developing a rich and varied range of opportunities for citizenship.



- citizenship education had a positive impact on three key components of civic engagement: efficacy, political participation and political knowledge. This suggests that the reform is likely to help offset some of the trends in civic participation among young people which have shown a sharp decline in key activities like voting and voluntary activities over time.



- In nearly all of the primary schools visited in this survey, citizenship was thriving....  
The quality of citizenship education in the secondary schools visited in this survey was stronger than in the schools that participated in the earlier citizenship survey, which was published in 2010



- Why did the government decide to retain citizenship education as a National Curriculum subject?
- Why did the government decide to change the nature of the National Curriculum for citizenship?



- The situation is uneven, bumpy and fractured. The progress of CE is not always linear and positive but is marked by considerable ebb and flow. (NFER 2009)



- **Infusion:** more schools delivering citizenship through other subjects than was the case in the previous survey, but with mixed results.
- **Policy changes:** uncertainty over the subject's future had diminished the level of attention schools had afforded to citizenship.
- **Assessment:** formal grading and recording of pupils' work remains weak.
- **Status:** evidence of weak leadership



- Low levels of participation
- Certain topics are hard to teach (government, politics, diversity, identity)
- 50% of citizenship teachers have not received any training in citizenship education



- ▶ We have sunk in international league tables and the National Curriculum is substandard....Our children are being left behind. The previous curriculum failed to prepare us for the future. We must change course. (Michael Gove, 2010).



# Challenges for citizenship educators: the political context

More children from one public school - Westminster - make it to the top universities than the entire population of poor boys and girls.....

This waste of talent, this squandering of human potential, this grotesque failure to give all our fellow citizens an equal chance is a reproach to our conscience. It can't be allowed to continue.



“We urgently need to ensure our children study rigorous disciplines instead of pseudo-subjects. Otherwise we will be left behind.

Children are growing up ignorant of one of the most inspiring stories I know - the history of our United Kingdom”.

(Michael Gove)



- Key concepts (rights and responsibilities; democracy and justice; identity and diversity)
- Key processes (critical thinking and enquiry; advocacy and representation; participation and taking informed and responsible action)
- Range and content



# The National Curriculum for citizenship, September 2014

- acquire a sound knowledge and understanding of how the United Kingdom is governed, its political system and how citizens participate actively in its democratic systems of government
- develop a sound knowledge and understanding of the role of law and the justice system in our society and how laws are shaped and enforced
- develop an interest in, and commitment to, participation in volunteering
- are equipped with the skills to think critically and debate political questions, to enable them to manage their money on a day-to-day basis, and plan for future financial needs



When a right wing government is in office and when the economy struggles there is likely to be an emphasis on:

- The nation
- Civic content
- An individual's responsibility to obey the law, to manage one's own money and to support the community
- Entrepreneurship (schools and universities as businesses as well as teaching people to be enterprising)

And ....

it is likely that government will be less involved in explicit forms of citizenship education.



- The National Curriculum does not apply to most schools (academies and free schools are 'free' to decide their own curriculum)
- The power of local government is reduced in favour of individual schools and their sponsors
- Teacher training will be more school-based (thus reducing the power of universities)
- University students now pay £9k each year in fees with an expectation of increased consumer power.



# Citizenship Education in Practice: what actions should we take?



- Contemporary content
- Public context
- Relevant concepts (power, authority, justice, representation, community)
- Participation
- Reflection on participation.



# Can citizenship be taught through other subjects?

- There are significant conceptual and content overlaps between citizenship and other subjects
- But –
- Cross curricular learning is difficult
- Collaboration is resisted by subject specialists



- Powerful people and pictures
- Medieval portraits are analysed raising questions about the ways powerful people have used art to manage their image. Pupils visit an art gallery and deconstruct pictures to identify key symbols and messages. The starter activity involves interpreting posters of President Obama and David Beckham. (Adapted from an activity written by Lee Jerome).



- As part of a study of world war 2, pupils investigate the Holocaust. They explore the roots of anti-Semitism and the rise of the Nazis to understand how Jews and others suffered prejudice, discrimination, imprisonment and murder. (Adapted from an activity written by Lee Jerome).



- Teaching about the Holocaust examines preconceptions about ‘victims’, ‘bystanders’ and ‘perpetrators’. Primary sources are analysed. The same terms are then used to investigate a current or recent example of genocide or persecution and to reflect on events in pupils’ lives.
- (Adapted from an activity by Lee Jerome).



- Following up an enquiry into industrialisation, pupils visit a graveyard that is about to be developed. Pupils meet people from a heritage preservation group. Pupils divide into 3 groups: preservation; developers; and local councillors. The first 2 groups devise plans to submit to the councillors who then hold a mock planning meeting to decide the fate of the site. (Activity written by Lee Jerome).



- Schools are very active in promoting citizenship and community
- Teachers use a wide variety of strategies
- Schools provide a strong sense of community
- Schools face strategic challenges
- Few schools feel that the majority of their students are engaged
- Schools recognise barriers to engagement for certain groups
- A minority of schools are making full and explicit links between community engagement and citizenship education

(<http://www.york.ac.uk/education/research/cresj/researchthemes/citizenship-education/citizenship-communities/>)



- Organising **special ‘off timetable’ events** (e.g., community action days)
- **Making links** with: community projects, the wider curriculum, the whole curriculum
- Involving external speakers
- Encouraging face to face and virtual **student involvement in community and environmental groups** (e.g. Fair Trade groups)
- **Mock elections**
- **School councils**



Ensure that 2 bridges are built:

- 1. the citizenship curriculum specialist should work closely with the whole school community co-ordinator
- 2. school students should be seen as possessing useful knowledge and experience from which further educational work can take place.



- The work of Michael Sandel on 'Justice' is very useful for exploring key issues and making connections with key concepts



# Summary conclusions and Recommendations



- Citizenship policy has emphasised responsibility in a blend of civic republican and liberal approaches
- We now know what works when educating young people to understand and become involved in contemporary society
- The current UK government is developing a new form of citizenship education in a new social and political context



- Citizenship needs to be clearly characterised (legal and political status, identity and action)
- Citizenship needs to be high status with appropriate co-ordination within and across national government departments and transnational organisations
- Ensure that research is undertaken rigorously and systematically
- Ensure that appropriate support mechanisms are in place for teachers



- ensure that educational work is explicit, high status and appropriate

i.e. teaching and learning should be concerned with issues that are of enduring significance, framed in ways that are relevant and meaningful to young people and practised in ways that allow for engagement and reflection on engagement in an open, inclusive environment