



This paper is taken from

*Future Citizens in Europe
Proceedings of the fourth Conference of the
Children's Identity and Citizenship in Europe
Thematic Network*

London: CiCe 2002

edited by Alistair Ross, published in London by CiCe, ISBN 1 85377 356 5

Without explicit authorisation from CiCe (the copyright holder)

- only a single copy may be made by any individual or institution for the purposes of private study only
- multiple copies may be made only by
 - members of the CiCe Thematic Network Project or CiCe Association, or
 - a official of the European Commission
 - a member of the European parliament

If this paper is quoted or referred to it must always be acknowledged as

Rutter, J. (2002) Citizenship education in the UK: a radical alternative or failed communitarian experiment? in Ross, A. (ed) Future Citizens in Europe. London: CiCe, pp 73 - 78

© CiCe 2002

CiCe
Institute for Policy Studies in Education
London Metropolitan University
166 – 220 Holloway Road
London N7 8DB
UK

This paper does not necessarily represent the views of the CiCe Network.



This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained herein.

Acknowledgements:

This is taken from the book that is a collection of papers given at the annual CiCe Conference indicated. The CiCe Steering Group and the editor would like to thank

- All those who contributed to the Conference
- Cass Mitchell-Riddle, head of the CiCe Coordination Unit
- The University of North London (now part of the London Metropolitan University) for financial and other support for the programme, conference and publication
- The SOCRATES programme and the personnel of the European Commission Department of Education and Culture for their support and encouragement.

Citizenship education in the UK: a radical alternative or failed communitarian experiment?

Jill Rutter

University of North London (UK)

In July 2002 some 165 qualified citizenship teachers will graduate from English universities and teacher training programmes, ready to teach citizenship, a subject that becomes compulsory in English secondary schools in September 2002. The subject has been defined by Government as education for

‘Political literacy, Social and moral responsibility and Community participation’
(QCA, 1999)

This paper is based on observations made in the 20 secondary schools which have provided teaching practice placements to student citizenship teachers from the University of North London. With citizenship teaching already planned, these schools give an indication of how citizenship education might be implemented across English secondary schools. The paper poses questions and concerns that those involved in citizenship education need to confront.

Citizenship education in England: a history

Though not previously compulsory, citizenship education in England has a history as long as education itself (Heater 2001). The 'Empire Days' of Victorian Britain were an early example of citizenship education. From the 1950s onwards, school students could take subjects such as the British Constitution or General Studies at A-Level. The curriculum of the former looked at issues of governance, and General Studies examined contemporary issues. Scottish school students may take Modern Studies for examination courses; this academic course is meant to provide insight into contemporary political and social issues.

During the 1970s and 1980s many schools implemented programmes in ‘Personal, Health and Social Education’ (PHSE) that aimed to provide pupils with the knowledge and skills to keep healthy and safe. Today almost all English secondary schools (as well as primary schools and schools in Scotland and Wales) have PHSE in the curriculum, although it is not a compulsory part of the National Curriculum. Typical curriculum areas covered in PHSE include

- sex and relationship education
- study skills
- friendship
- bullying
- keeping healthy
- drugs and alcohol education.

So what has led up to the introduction of a new subject? The move towards citizenship education in England has different origins, namely

1. The founding of the Politics Association in the 1960s in a bid to make children more politically literate. The work of the Politics Association influenced Bernard Crick,

who chaired the Advisory Group on Citizenship Education, meeting in the 1990s (Heater, 2001).

2. The curriculum development movement of the 1970s, in which classroom teachers were encouraged to move into higher education and developed new curricula such as *Geography for the Young School Leaver* and *Nuffield Science*, both of which aimed to make the school curriculum more relevant to modern society.
3. The radical educational agendas of the 1980s – the anti-racist education of ‘development education’ promoted by NGOs such as Oxfam, Christian Aid and small local development education centres. Anti-racist education aims to challenge racism and bring about change, while development education can be loosely defined as education to promote social justice and sustainable development.
4. A fall in voter participation in local, general and European elections and concern about a lack of political participation by young people
5. Moral panic in the late 1990s over youth crime and teenage pregnancy
6. The influence of communitarian thinkers such as Etzioni on those advising David Blunkett, the new Labour Government’s first Secretary of State for Education.
7. Lobbying by small NGOs involved in citizenship education, for example the Citizenship Foundation and the Institute for Citizenship.

Herein lies a major issue confronting those involved in citizenship education, that citizenship education has many different definitions and aims. In particular, the aims of those involved in radical education may be at odds with the Department for Education definitions cited in the second paragraph.

In 1997 a Labour Government was elected in the UK, after 18 years of Conservative rule. One of the first actions by David Blunkett as Secretary of State for Education was to convene the Advisory Group on Citizenship, chaired by Bernard Crick, his former politics tutor. The Group reported in 1998, defining citizenship education, recommending that it be compulsory for all 11-16 year olds in England and suggesting a curriculum. In 1999 the Department for Education affirmed these recommendations: Citizenship Education was to be compulsory for 11-16s in all English secondary schools from September 2002. A curriculum was published; its contents are given in Appendix One (QCA, 1999). The same document envisaged that citizenship might be taught either as a discrete subject or in a cross-curricular manner.

The curriculum itself attracted a small amount of criticism: for example, race equality appears to have been added as an after-thought, and only to have been prompted by the publication of a Government report into the racist murder of Stephen Lawrence, a black London teenager (Macpherson, W. et al (1999) *The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry: the report of the inquiry by Sir William Macpherson of Cluny*, London: HMSO). Issues of gender identity and gender equality are not mentioned at all. Environmental issues are subsumed under sustainable development, thus in some schools environmental issues are not local, but rather an issue for the developing world.

Citizenship education: making it happen

In order to assist the implementation of citizenship education in England, the Department for Education created a small team of civil servants and advisors. It funded 19 teacher training institutions to run one-year post graduate (PGCE) teacher training courses in citizenship education. Some four (now five) of these chose to teach citizenship as a single subject, while the others ran courses in citizenship with another subject, usually history (but also with art, geography and social studies).

The Department also funded a small number of non-governmental organisations to produce teaching resources: commercial publishers have also responded with new books. The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, a non-departmental Government body also produced schemes of work for students. A small amount of money was set aside for in-service training of teachers.

During 2001 all schools were required to conduct an 'audit' of existing work that could be described as citizenship education, as well as to plan for the new citizenship programme of study. From September 2002 all English schools will be inspected for the quality of their citizenship provision. Inspections for the quality of citizenship education may change practice, for example if inspectors decide that citizenship teaching is too classroom-focussed.

Implementing citizenship: first observations

The University of North London was one of the 19 institutions selected to train teachers of citizenship. Some 15 trainee teachers were admitted to the course in September 2001. They receive 17 weeks of teaching and visits in the university and spend a total of 22 weeks working in two different schools. During the first year, the University placed these students in 20 different schools, all in Greater London and its environs. Almost all of these schools were advanced in their planning of citizenship education.

Of the 20 schools

- 7 had merged citizenship with PHSE and were planning to teach this combined 'subject', with different curriculum units (for example one school started with friendships then looked at the environment);
- 4 had merged citizenship with PHSE and Religious Education and were planning to teach modules in this tri-disciplinary 'subject';
- 4 were intending to teach citizenship entirely through the humanities curriculum;
- 3 schools intended to teach citizenship as a discrete subject in its own right; and
- 2 schools had merged citizenship with PHSE and careers teaching.

Three schools were intending to study the Citizenship GCSE short course (a one-year examination course taken at age 16). In two of these schools, the citizenship GCSE short course was going to be taught alongside a Religious Education GCSE short course.

Seven of the schools had School Councils. Student participation in the community, rather than in school-based action was judged to be poor. Only three schools involved students in community-based activities. In one school a programme where all 13-14 year old (Year 9) pupils were given work experience in a community group was cancelled due to staff shortages.

In three of the schools senior members of staff coordinated and had an enthusiasm for citizenship teaching. In ten of the 20 schools there was some excellent citizenship teaching and projects. One example is described below.

School A is a small 11-16 all boys school in north east London. It draws pupils from the poorer part of the local area. Many of the pupils speak English as an additional language. In 2001, many of the pupils were being mugged in the area around the school and their money and mobile phones stolen - muggings of pupils at one time rose to about six per day. A group of pupils decided that they had had enough. As part of a citizenship project they conducted an enquiry into the muggings. They assembled evidence and presented it to the police, the local community and the press. A group of students appeared on television and other met the Commissioner for Police. As a result of their work, the police trialled new procedures. Other changes were made to policing and soon muggings decreased.

Emerging issues

Based on my observations in schools, certain issues and questions emerge which are crucial to the implementation of citizenship. These are described below:

- In most schools citizenship is to be taught by non-specialist teachers, usually without a background in a social science. Would the Department of Education allow non-specialists to teach other subjects in such large numbers?
- Citizenship will probably be a classroom-based subject, involving very little out of classroom activity. Based on observations in the schools, much of the teaching is knowledge and concept focussed. Pupils rarely choose an issue pertinent to their experience and study citizenship through examining an issue, such as graffiti in the local area.
- Participation in community-based activities appears to be weak, which may be related to the previous point. Pupils are rarely encouraged to bring about real change in their schools or communities. Little attention is given to environmental activities in the citizenship programme of study (see Appendix One), but arguably schemes such as recycling, redesigning school grounds and energy conservation are among the easiest in which to involve pupils.
- Pupil motivation towards citizenship is poor. In many schools citizenship and citizenship/PHSE are perceived by pupils as ‘doss’ subjects – those where you mess around. This may be the legacy of PHSE. It may also be because citizenship is not often an examination subject. But how do you assess whether someone is a good citizen or not? Is someone who fails a GCSE in Citizenship a ‘failed’ citizen?
- The merger of PHSE and citizenship is not always a happy marriage. Political issues tended to be pushed aside by the concerns of health education.
- Many pupils, and some of the experienced classroom teachers, lacked skills in dealing with controversial issues. Local government, for example, was taught in a descriptive way, without real debate on controversial issues such as directly elected mayors or the privatisation of local services.

- Poor pupil behaviour had a major effect on student teachers. They wished to involve pupils in classroom discussions about controversial issues, but felt that they did not have the skills to manage lively or unruly classes in unstructured activities such as discussions. Their teaching, therefore became more autocratic, merely to enable them to survive. In some cases this conflicted with the ideals they brought to the profession.
- Less able pupils appeared to enjoy citizenship least, in all but one of the 20 schools. Arguably these are those ones least likely to vote or to be active in the community. So the pupils who might benefit most from citizenship are the ones who are least attracted by it. Most of the new teaching materials published in 2002 were targeted at more able pupils. Some of the schools ran clubs such as Young Amnesty clubs for pupils, but again attendance tended to be restricted to the more able.

Conclusions

The first cohort of trained teachers will qualify in July 2002. Already most are employed; all but two as teachers of citizenship. Many have already secured managerial positions as coordinators of citizenship: quite unprecedented for newly-qualified teachers. Will these teachers bring about real change in their schools, encouraging children to participate in their education and community? Or will citizenship follow the same root as modern studies in Scotland and be sidelined as a second-rate subject for non-achievers?

References

Advisory group on Citizenship (1998) *Education for Citizenship and the Teaching of Democracy in Schools*, London: HMSO

Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (1999) *Citizenship; the National Curriculum for England*, London: QCA

Appendix One

Citizenship: the National Curriculum for England

Key Stage Three (11-14 years)

Pupils should be taught about:

- A. the legal and human rights and responsibilities underpinning society, basic aspects of the criminal justice system, and how both relate to young people
- B. the diversity of national, regional, religious and ethnic identities in the United Kingdom and the need for mutual respect and understanding
- C. central and local government, the public services they offer and how they are financed and the opportunities to contribute
- D. key characteristics of parliamentary and other forms of government
- E. the electoral system and importance of voting
- F. the work of community-based, national and international voluntary groups
- G. the importance of resolving conflict fairly
- H. the significance of the media in society
- I. the world as a global community, and the political, economic, environmental and social implications of this, and the role of the European Union, the Commonwealth and the United Nations.

Pupils should be taught to

- A. think about topical political, spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues, problems and events by analysing information and its sources, including *internet*- based sources.
- B. justify orally and in writing a personal opinion about such issues, problems or events
- C. contribute to a group and exploratory class discussions and take part in debates.

Pupils should be taught to

- A. use their imagination to consider other people's experiences and be able to think about, express and explain views that are not their own
- B. negotiate, decide and take part responsibly in both school and community based activities
- C. reflect on the process of participating.