This paper is taken from

Teaching Citizenship
Proceedings of the seventh Conference of the
Children's Identity and Citizenship in Europe
Thematic Network

London: CiCe 2005

edited by Alistair Ross, published in London by CiCe,   ISBN 1 85377 389 1

'No school left behind?' An analysis of the impact of professional development activities for Citizenship Education undertaken by Citizenship Coordinators in secondary schools in the North-West of England.

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Introduction

Citizenship Education became a statutory requirement of the English National Curriculum in September 2002. Nearly three years later the evidence emerging from schools presents a picture of limited progress. Kerr et al (2004) have developed a typology of schools with different approaches to Citizenship Education:

- **Progressing schools** were the most advanced in terms of citizenship education, developing citizenship in the curriculum, school community and wider community;

- **Focused schools** were concentrating almost exclusively on developing citizenship in the curriculum but needed to build opportunities for active citizenship in the school and the wider community;

- **Minimalist schools** were at an early stage of development in terms of citizenship education;

- **Implicit schools** were not yet focusing explicitly on citizenship in the curriculum.

(Kerr et al, 2004, p.91)

Only a minority of schools have developed effective provision that is motivating students and achieving good learning outcomes. In their most recent inspection report, the national school inspection agency Ofsted observed:

In 2003/04, in one school in seven provision for citizenship was judged to be very good, and in a further one school in four it was judged to be good… increasingly there are good examples of citizenship provision to show what is possible.' (Ofsted, 2005, p4)

Many schools are still struggling to establish coherent and effective programmes. David Bell, Chief Inspector of Schools, offered the following verdicts in a speech to the Hansard Society:

> Ofsted evidence shows that citizenship is the worst taught subject at Key Stages 3 and 4. Schools are seldom judged to deliver very good teaching in this subject … more than half of pupils either did not know what Citizenship Education is or could offer no examples of what they had learned. (Bell, 2005)

Growing research evidence suggests that a key factor in the successful provision of Citizenship Education is a dedicated, enthusiastic and well-trained coordinator (Kerr et al, 2004; Ofsted, 2005). However, training of teachers for citizenship education is an area of concern. For example, a CSV survey (2004) concluded: 'Although it is early days in the development of the subject, it is clear that training and support for teachers needs strengthening to sustain this important addition to the curriculum' (CSV, 2004, p 9).

This small-scale piece of research, carried out with designated Citizenship Coordinators in secondary schools in the North-West of England, investigates what professional development they have undertaken for Citizenship Education and the use they have made of this in the Citizenship programmes for which they are responsible.

The Research

The two main research questions were:

- What training or development activities have Citizenship Coordinators undertaken to prepare them for and support them in their role?

- What impact has this training and development had on their knowledge, understanding and practice of Citizenship Education?

The questionnaire and subsequent semi-structured interview comprised both quantitative elements (such as the nature, length of courses attended, citizenship curriculum in school) and qualitative elements (perceptions of training needs, quality and relevance of training on offer). A questionnaire was sent to 150 secondary schools in the North-West of England. Citizenship Co-ordinators from 109 schools completed the questionnaire, a response rate of 72.6%. 46 respondents (42.2%) also participated in a semi-structured interview.

Main findings

1. Areas of Responsibility as Citizenship Coordinator

I am responsible for the school's policy on Citizenship Education	61%
I teach all timetabled Citizenship lessons	26%
I teach some Citizenship lessons and coordinate a small team of colleagues who also teach Citizenship	22%
I provide materials for Citizenship lessons that are taught by form tutors	52%
I am responsible for auditing cross-curricular Citizenship provision	68%
I am responsible for coordinating cross-curricular Citizenship	73%
I am involved as Citizenship Coordinator in community activities undertaken by the students	18%
I am involved as Citizenship Coordinator in the School Council (or other consultative body which includes the 'student voice')	26%

The principal responsibilities of Citizenship Coordinators related to the curriculum programme. In about half of schools (48%), Citizenship is timetabled either as a separate subject or as a discrete module in the Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) programme. In about a quarter of schools (26%), the timetable was arranged so that the coordinator taught all Citizenship lessons. A similar number (22%) had the coordinator leading a small team of teachers who taught Citizenship. In the other half of schools (52%), coordinators were responsible for providing schemes of work and lesson materials to be delivered by form tutors within tutorial time and/or PSHE programmes. Around three quarters (73%) of coordinators also had responsibility for auditing and supporting elements of Citizenship being delivered through the subject-based curriculum.

Citizenship Coordinators had much less involvement in the other two elements of Citizenship, community activity and student democracy. Fewer than one in five (18%) had any responsibility for community activities undertaken by students whilst only about a quarter (26%) had a formal role with the School Council or other student consultative structures.

2. Training Needs on appointment as Citizenship Coordinator

I felt I could undertake the role via personal preparation without any additional training	11%
I needed additional training in how to develop a Citizenship Education (CE) policy	58%
I needed additional training in how to develop a scheme of work for CE	81%
I needed additional training in how to develop lesson materials for CE	86%
I needed additional training in how to coordinate CE across the curriculum	51%

Unsurprisingly, given their main responsibility for the curriculum element of Citizenship Education, more than four out of five coordinators identified their main training needs on appointment as being developing a scheme of work (81%) and developing lesson materials (86%). Around half identified broader aspects of their role; cross-curricular coordination (51%) and policy development (58%). Around one in ten (11%) felt they did not need additional training for the role.

3. Training Undertaken for Citizenship Education

I have to date NOT undertaken any specific training for CE	19%
I trained as a specialist teacher of CE in my Initial Teacher Training	3%
I have undertaken/am undertaking an accredited CPD course in CE	5%
I have undertaken one or more non-accredited short courses in CE run by my LEA (please indicate how many and their duration)	62%
I have undertaken one or more non-accredited short courses in CE run by training organizations other than my LEA (please indicate how many and their duration)	55%

Only 3% of coordinators were trained specialist Citizenship teachers and a similar number (5%) were undertaking accredited postgraduate study related to Citizenship.

Almost two thirds of coordinators (62%) had undertaken a non-accredited course of one or two days' duration put on by their local education authority (LEA). More than half (55%) had attended courses of similar type and duration offered by private training organisations and citizenship organisations. Overall, around three quarters (72%) had undertaken between 1 and 3 days' unaccredited training to prepare for their role.

Around one in five (19%) coordinators had not undertaken any specific training for Citizenship, i.e. double the number who had indicated that they did not need any training.

4. Coordinators who have not undertaken training for Citizenship Education (21 respondents in total to this section)

I am confident that I can deliver CE by means of personal research rather than by attending training	45%
I am interested in postgraduate study in CE but there are no suitable courses available	10%
There have been short courses in CE available to apply for in my area but none of them met my needs	30%
There have not been any short courses in CE available to apply for in my area	25%
Available courses were not at convenient times	20%
Release from school to attend courses was not possible	15%

Just under half (45%) of those who had not attended training were confident that personal research would enable them to fulfil their role. The other offered a range of reasons why they had not undertaken training, with 25% citing lack of suitable training opportunities, around a third (30%) saying available courses were inappropriate to their needs and a similar number (35%) indicating problems with timing of courses and/or difficulties of release from school.

5. Effectiveness of training in meeting your training needs / Impact of training on your practice (88 respondents in total to this section) **YES**

The CE training I have received has fully met my training needs	27%
The CE training I have received has met some but not all of my training needs	65%
The CE training I have received has largely failed to meet my training needs	8%
The training helped me to formulate the school's CE policy	18%
The training helped me to develop a coherent scheme of work for CE lessons	47%
The training helped me to find and/or develop appropriate lesson materials for CE	68%
The training helped me develop a strategy for coordinating cross-curricular elements of CE	26%
The training helped me to plan how to establish a School Council	7%

Around a quarter (27%) were very happy with the training they had received and felt it had fully delivered in terms of meeting their needs with a further two thirds (65%) satisfied that their needs had at least to some extent been met. A small number (8%) had nothing good to say for the training they had received.

In terms of the impact of training, it is again unsurprising that the major impact was in the areas of developing a scheme of work (47%) and devising lesson materials (68%). Around a quarter (26%) had been helped in developing a coordination strategy for Citizenship across the curriculum, although this was also the element where most respondents felt their needs had been least well met.

6. Your future training needs for Citizenship Education	Definitely	Possibly	Probably not	Definitely not
Accredited Postgraduate course (PGCert., PGDip., MA) in CE	12%	31%	31%	26%
Non-accredited short course on developing a rationale for CE	3%	26%	38%	33%
Non-accredited short course on developing a scheme of work and/or lesson materials for CE	54%	38%	7%	0%
Non-accredited short course on coordinating CE across the curriculum	37%	32%	22%	9%
Non-accredited short course on developing student democracy e.g. School Council	12%	39%	22%	26%

In terms of future training needs, coordinators continued to identify their main priorities as non-accredited short courses designed to provide practical solutions in key aspects of their management role. More than nine out of ten (92%) highlighted schemes of work and lesson materials as a definite or possible training need, whilst more than two thirds (69%) identified issues of coordinating Citizenship across the subjects of the curriculum as an on-going need. Only around one in eight (12%) showed strong interest in accredited postgraduate study with about a third (31%) suggesting they saw this as a possibility.

Analysis

The most striking issue to emerge from this research is the extent to which Citizenship Coordinators prioritised training opportunities that would provide practical solutions in delivering a curriculum programme in Citizenship Education. Coordinators consistently sought short training activities and evaluated them largely on the extent to which they supported the development of schemes of work and lesson materials. Most coordinators faced a situation where they were expected to provide teaching materials for colleagues, either a small team of designated teachers of Citizenship or form tutors charged with teaching Citizenship within the tutorial/PSHE programme. One coordinator's comment was typical:

> It can be difficult because staff reaction is so mixed. A few are really up for it but most are not sure what they're meant to be doing and see it as yet another burden. I try to provide imaginative lessons only to get complaints from some who just want a worksheet to keep the kids quiet.

Ofsted (2005) reported that there are growing numbers of expert teachers, and most teaching is satisfactory, but Citizenship is generally less well taught where tutors are involved. However, even where the coordinator had a small team of teachers, there were often problems. As one commented:

> The trouble is, we have a team of six but only two chose to be there. The others were told they were teaching Citizenship because they had some slack on their timetable.

This view was confirmed by Kerr *et al* (2004):

> Some school recruited staff to teach citizenship education based on those people that had time free on their timetable… These teachers were not always committed, enthusiastic or experienced in citizenship education (p 49).

The semi-structured interviews, in particular, revealed that many of the coordinators had actually valued the elements of their training that had focused on more philosophical aspects of the rationale and nature of Citizenship Education. There was a range of interesting and thoughtful reflections, for example:

> I have problems with a Citizenship curriculum that is really about the government defending and justifying the political system from which they draw power.

> There's such a contradiction – one minute, we are being told that Citizenship Education is a new and crucial element of the curriculum, the next that it is something that good schools have been doing for years.

> It does seem to me that there is uncertainty about our role. Is it just about encouraging pupils to vote and participate in the political system? Should we also be encouraging them to protest and challenge the system?

However, in almost all cases, they had little opportunity to engage colleagues in school in these kinds of discussions. As one put it:

> *There's a lot of weary scepticism about what is seen as just another attempt to solve a problem by dumping it an already overcrowded curriculum and expecting teachers to work miracles.*

Another commented:

> *It's hard to generate a calm, reasonable discussion about what we should be doing. Those on the political right think it is all about rights rather than responsibilities and those on the left think it is just another instrument of control.*

One of the main challenges identified by coordinators was the responsibility for auditing and coordinating the delivery of Citizenship through the subjects of the curriculum. There was widespread disappointment that the training they had done had not provided much beyond curriculum audit tools. One typical comment was:

> *It seems to be an exercise in trying to prove that all manner of Citizenship Education is already happening in curriculum subjects. Some of it may be, for some pupils, some of the time but you can't base a curriculum entitlement on that.*

Ofsted (2005) also cast doubt on the effectiveness of the cross-curricular approach:

> *Problems have also arisen where schools have taken a cross curricular route, seeking to identify or provide citizenship through subjects…our evidence suggests that, so far, pupils are confused by cross-curricular approaches, and sometimes are not aware that they have had a citizenship programme at all. (p10)*

The other two key elements of Citizenship Education, i.e. community involvement and student participation, barely featured in most coordinators' training priorities. Ofsted inspection evidence confirmed that these areas are often little developed in schools:

> Participation and responsible action remain an issue in many schools. Most schools create opportunities for some pupils, but in National Curriculum Citizenship, this should be an entitlement for all. (Ofsted, 2005, p 14).

However, it seems clear that the pressure to deliver the statutory requirement for Citizenship within the curriculum dominates the agenda of coordinators, possibly to the detriment of other aspects. In the words of one respondent:

> When you are struggling to achieve what is compulsory, the desirable doesn't get a look in.

Conclusions

The research findings suggest that, approaching three years after Citizenship became compulsory in the English secondary national curriculum, levels of engagement with Citizenship Education and its associated professional development opportunities vary widely. Few schools had a coordinator with significant specialist training. Virtually all coordinators had either had Citizenship added to their existing responsibilities or had volunteered for the role. A significant minority had not undertaken any professional development other than personal research, a surprising and disturbing finding. Most had accessed short (one or two day) courses, focused largely on solving challenges of providing a curriculum programme. Only a small minority had taken or was taking an accredited course.

These findings raise the question: how could Citizenship Education be strengthened by providing development opportunities that are in their nature and focus better tuned to the needs of Citizenship Coordinators? Misiejuk *et al* (2004) offer an interesting analysis of how training could approach developing teachers to handle challenging and controversial issues:

> One of the acute difficulties for teachers in their practice is that they must both reassure students and at the same time disquiet or provoke them with questions on important controversial issues. The same dilemma occurs in teacher training; it is necessary to reassure them so that they become self-confident as teachers, and also to disquiet them sufficiently to develop a questioning attitude towards their own practices and prejudices and to induce attempts to change teaching. (p 2)

David Bell (2005) emphasises the need for training to facilitate all three dimensions of citizenship:

> I believe that schools should both teach the content of citizenship and encourage their students to become good citizens through participation and responsible action. That might be through participation in a school council. It might be through extra-curricular activities. It might be through taking part in charitable activities or community service or by exercising leadership. In one sense, the specifics are unimportant. What matters is the doing. (Bell, 2005)

Paradoxically, the imposition on schools of a statutory requirement to include Citizenship as a curriculum subject appears (at least in some schools) to be working against the broader aims of school and community participation. It is evident that Citizenship Education is at its most effective where all pupils are working in the community, contributing to the running of the school and enabled to relate what they learn in the

classroom to what is going on outside school. A lighter touch in relation to statutory curriculum requirements might empower Citizenship Coordinators to seek more open and imaginative staff development activities linked to providing pupils with opportunities that have relevance to them and a connection to the real world in which they live.

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