

PGCE Assignment: University of Bristol

Brief: to write a persuasive article for an educational journal that will convince teachers of the value and contribution of citizenship education.

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The role and purpose of Citizenship in the curriculum

Citizenship was introduced to the National Curriculum in 2002, but since then has struggled to establish itself as a fully-fledged subject, despite constant expansion. This essay will examine the history of citizenship education in England before discussing the challenges faced by it generally and in England today. I will then argue that despite these problems Citizenship is too valuable to be neglected from the curriculum. Having shown this I will describe my vision for Citizenship.

The history of citizenship

To begin, I will examine the history of citizenship. I will identify two changes to the *meaning* of 'citizenship' and argue that this has led to many of the events in the history of citizenship education. I will then describe the introduction of Citizenship to the National Curriculum.

There have been two shifts in definitions of 'citizenship' – from localised to universal, and from active to passive. Firstly, the notion of citizenship has its roots in Ancient Greece, where citizenship was a localised notion – only part of the Greek adult population were considered citizens. This changed during the American and French civil wars, in which citizenship became largely universal in nature. Secondly, we find that citizenship has transformed from a passive to an active doctrine. Heater, D. (2001) notes that as late as the 1900-1950s period the UK was characterised by a notion of citizenship that espoused loyalty and support of the status quo. Crick (2000) notes that we had a 'top-down' notion of citizenship, whereby some were groomed to lead and others to follow. This 'passive' notion of citizenship has shifted to an 'active' notion, including *playing a role in changing the law*. This shift largely began in the 1970s when the 'political literacy' movement showed a "way of teaching politics that was neither instrumental nor class-based" (Huddleston, 2006). Thus there has been in the UK a shift from a passive to an active notion of 'citizenship'.

These shifts have led to ramifications for citizenship and citizenship education. Let us note that an understanding of citizenship that is active *and* universal naturally leads to universal citizenship education – if *all* people are to be effective citizens then they must learn the skills needed to do so. As Hoggart notes, *not* educating young people in citizenship is to "throw them into shark infested waters unprepared" (Hoggart, 1990, quoted in Crick, 2000). However, models of citizenship that are not both active and universal do not lead naturally to citizenship education – a partial programme of political education for the governing elite would suffice. Heater (2001) highlights this, arguing that the change to an active notion of citizenship also changed opinions over the need for citizenship education. We

may conclude that shifts in the notion of citizenship gave impetus to its introduction to the National Curriculum.

I shall now describe the introduction of Citizenship to the National Curriculum. From the beginning of this century to the introduction of the National Curriculum in 1988, teaching citizenship was dependant on “the initiative of individual teachers” (Dufour 2006). By 1988 it lacked sufficient status to gain a statutory position when the National Curriculum arrived. However, by 1990 the National Curriculum Council had identified Citizenship as a ‘cross-curricular theme’, meaning it was to be taught *across* the curriculum, but was *not* a statutory requirement. However, this approach failed to provide an effective education in citizenship – as Breslin and Dufour (2006), commenting on the NFER longitudinal study of citizenship education, point out it “clearly shows that a purely cross-curricular approach is inappropriate”. Only with the success of the Labour party in the 1997 did the door open for Citizenship. With the arrival of the Blair Government, Sir Bernard Crick was asked to chair a committee on introducing Citizenship to the National Curriculum. This led to the Crick Report (QCA, 1998) and the introduction of the Citizenship Order in the new National Curriculum in 2002. Since then Citizenship has been growing in schools in England.

Citizenship – interpretations and definitions

Let us now move on to a discussion of the meaning of ‘citizenship’. I will argue that attempts to pin-down this notion will fail, due to the contested nature of citizenship.

Historically Specific

It is clear from Section 1) of my essay that the notion of citizenship has changed throughout history. Thus in this section I would like to highlight that the meaning of ‘citizenship’ is *historically specific* i.e. it changes through different historical periods.

Geographically specific

Given that interpretations of citizenship are historically-specific, I will argue that they are also geographically-specific. Kerr (1999) notes that ideas of citizenship differ globally. He highlights there is...

...a continuum of citizenship and citizenship education... Each end of the continuum displays different characteristics, which affect the definition of, and approach to, citizenship education. (Kerr, 1999)

This continuum ranges from what he calls ‘minimal’ citizenship to ‘maximal’ citizenship. Minimal citizenship (practised in countries such as Japan) is characterised by its ‘value-explicit’ nature, meaning values were actively taught and prescribed. Maximal citizenship (more common in Europe) is ‘value-neutral’, meaning values are not described and that broad ranges of values are accepted. The evidence therefore suggests that citizenship is a geographically-specific concept – thus (my italics) “the *complex*

and *contested* nature of the concept of citizenship leads to a broad range in interpretations” (Kerr, 1999).

Citizenship education in the UK

Citizenship is not only contested in different times and regions, but within the UK itself. To show this, let us first present the convention on the meaning of ‘citizenship’ in the UK. This is derived from T.H. Marshall’s book, *Citizenship and Social Class, and other Essays* (1950). Marshall’s understanding of citizenship has three strands:

1. Rights and responsibility
2. Political literacy
3. Community involvement

This definition has become the orthodoxy. However, several powerful challenges have been made to it, particularly by Faulks (2006). I will now examine some of these challenges to show that even in England the orthodoxy masks the contested nature of citizenship.

Crick has a rigid notion of multiculturalism

Faulks (2006) and Osler (2003) have argued that Crick has an individual notion of inclusion/exclusion, and thus that his model of citizenship cannot deal with *structural* problems of exclusion. Faulks argues that Crick fails to distinguish between citizenship and nationality, and thus that he cannot appreciate the notion of multiple identities – the possibility that someone can be both an effective British citizen *and* from a non-British national group. Exclusion/inclusion thus comes down to an issue of tolerance and conformity. This can be supported by quotations from the Crick Report (QCA, 1998):

...due regard be given to the homelands of our minority communities

...minorities must learn to respect the laws, codes and conventions as much as the majority.

Osler (2003) adds that Crick’s notion of social inclusion/exclusion is individualistic. This highlights the fact that Crick’s model of exclusion ignores the *structural* elements, focusing exclusively on relations between individuals. Thus difference is “portrayed as problematic, ignoring the reality that in society there are likely to be tensions and that tensions can be creative and not necessarily destructive” (Faulks, 2006).

Therefore the orthodoxy fails to take account of exclusion as a societal force, and thus fails to address a major anti-democratic force.

Changing definitions of the ‘political’

Faulks (2006) argues that Crick allows bias into his system by adopting one particular notion of politics, when in fact there are many. He argues that Crick emphasises compliance and the status

quo, neglecting other ideals. In particular, we can argue that Crick emphasises the importance of voting, whereas other definitions of the political do not. This is backed up by Weller (2007) who, in a study of students in the Isle of Wight, argues that students have their own ideas of political action, and in particular that voting is perceived in different ways. Weller's point on this issue is backed up by Douglas (2003) who notes "A number (of students) argued that it was more irresponsible to vote in ignorance – without knowledge of the candidates/issues – than to not vote at all". In this way the views of students on issues including voting diverge from Crick's own narrow view of politics, in which voting is perceived positively. In addition students have different notions of political *action*, with Osler (2003) noting that rather than vote, "a considerable number of young people are engaged through such activities as volunteering and campaigning". Thus it would appear that the Crick Report's notion of citizenship rests on one notion of the political, whereas this is disputed.

Our definition of citizenship

As we have seen the notion of citizenship is not only historically and geographically specific, but also disputed even in England today. What should we conclude from this? As Davison and Arthur (2006) note we cannot have a 'monolithic' definition of citizenship - "such a position is untenable". Thus we should have flexibility in our definition and aim to adopt 'working definitions' of citizenship which are open to challenge and adaptation.

Having thus considered the history and interpretations of Citizenship, I will now consider the problems faced in implementing Citizenship, before considering why we value it.

The Dangers of Citizenship Education

In this section I will discuss the potential problems that arise in any model of citizenship education (as opposed to the specific ones we face in England, which I will discuss later). Firstly, the teaching of citizenship can lead to bias, due to the fact that 'citizenship' can have variable interpretations. Secondly, I will examine the issue of assessment in Citizenship.

The risk of bias

There are two issues of bias that arise in Citizenship. The first is direct indoctrination. Education in citizenship provides an opportunity for political indoctrination of the young – as Crick (2000) notes "there was compulsory Citizenship education in the Soviet Union just as there was in nearly all states of the USA". What kind of citizenship education should we aim to adopt in order to avoid this? We must "distinguish between the promotion of a particular set of moral values and improving students' ability to discuss moral questions in general" (Rowe, 2006). Our primary aim should thus be to equip pupils with the tools to decide themselves.

However, as Hayward (2007) points out, this is not a satisfactory solution since education in values is inevitably part of any educational process. Every choice we make in schools is an expression of value, from our classroom etiquette down to the existence of the school itself. This Hayward concludes "It is impossible for education to be value-free". Given that we cannot avoid teaching values,

how can we avoid indoctrination? Hayward's response is that as a society we share far more values than we realise, such as respect for the law, fairness, and liberty, and that it is desirable to teach these values. Thus "Identifying a range of values as commonly held should be sufficient to suggest they should inform teaching" (Hayward, 2007). In this way we can solve the problem of direct indoctrination.

However, there is also the risk of what I will call *indirect* indoctrination. As discussed above, 'citizenship' itself has varied interpretations. If our model of teaching citizenship is not to indoctrinate it *cannot presume the correctness of one of these interpretations*. However it would appear that this is precisely what Crick has done (Faulks, 2006) – he prescribes a notion of the 'political' and thus could be accused of bias. In response to this we should note that the Crick Report refers to its definition as a 'working definition', and that it supports what David Blunkett coined the 'light touch' approach, by which schools have much autonomy in delivering Citizenship. This approach is criticized by Faulks (2006) as well as Breslin (2004) as leading to wide-scale confusion. However, we might respond that "There is a tension, if not a contradiction, between a prescriptive National Curriculum which all schools are required to follow, and a concept of Citizenship which involves pupils taking decisions in their own lives" (Alexander, 2002). It would appear that if we are to avoid the accusation of indoctrination we must allow schools and students to develop their own ideas of 'citizenship' and thus adopt the 'light touch' approach, despite the risks this approach has.

Assessment issues

Two issues arise concerning assessment in Citizenship. I will examine these before arguing that exams are needed in Citizenship, if only to give Citizenship status in schools.

1. 'Failing' at citizenship

Assessing students would seem to inevitably require placing them on a scale of success, and in turn this would lead to some students doing less well than others at the subject, with the implication that a student can fail at Citizenship. This means we run the risk of alienating students as citizens (Breslin, 2004). Thus "'failing' in Citizenship carries a different baggage than probably any other subject" (Breslin, 2006). We may like to argue that "that failing Citizenship *Studies* is not failing citizenship" (Breslin, 2006), though many still feel there are philosophical and moral problems with assessing Citizenship.

2. How to assess?

It seems clear that examination and active Citizenship do not fit easily together – as Breslin (2006) notes, "*assessing* citizenship seems to go against the grain of what active, effective citizenship is". Crick agrees, arguing that the aim of Citizenship is not to achieve a (examinable) standard but to change behaviour. This leads to problems identifying exactly *how* we should examine Citizenship. The literature agrees:

Citizenship generates neither the precision correctness of Mathematics at this level nor the factual certainty of scientific experimentation (Breslin, 2006)

This problem is acute in the area of Citizenship skills, where effective means of testing skills such as advocacy and responsible action still elude us.

Despite these problems, the practical benefits of assessing in Citizenship have led to a consensus that it must be formally assessed. These benefits include giving pupils a sense of direction and raising the status of the subject in schools and in the minds of parents (Breslin, 2006). As a result “it appears that it is the practical concerns rather than the philosophical ones that are in the ascendancy” (Breslin, 2006).

Challenges faced by Citizenship

Of course, these general issues are not the only ones facing Citizenship in England. Citizenship is new to our curriculum, and there are still problems in providing effective Citizenship. I will now examine these problems before considering the benefits of Citizenship.

Overcrowding

The Crick Report does not address directly the issue of how Citizenship will fit into the curriculum, saying that the Citizenship “should not be at the expense of other subjects” (QCA, 1998). However, since Citizenship is intended to take up about 5% of the curriculum it is unclear how this will be achieved, and overcrowding of the curriculum in schools can lead to neglect of the subject – “sometimes such a lack of action (in delivering Citizenship) was associated with a negative attitude towards Citizenship, particularly with regard to the perceived overcrowding of the curriculum” (Ofsted, 2002).

Management

As argued above, Citizenship should be delivered with the ‘light touch’ approach, and this is precisely what the Crick Report outlines. However, this flexibility has led to problems in providing effective Citizenship. In particular overcrowding has led schools to attempt to deliver Citizenship in a purely cross-curricular way (only 15% of schools do it in discrete timetable slots (Cleaver et al, 2006)). As Breslin (2004) notes, research suggests that effective Citizenship requires dedicated lesson time. Furthermore, Alexander (2002) highlights that “subject status is enshrined in the timetable” and that without its own lesson time Citizenship loses status.

This congestion has also led to an excessive use of PHSE as a carrier subject for Citizenship (90% of schools address Citizenship through PHSE in all or part (Cleaver et al, 2006)). This has led to the problem that the distinction between Citizenship and PHSE has become blurred and the belief that Citizenship is reducible to good PHSE (Ofsted, 2002). Citizenship thus faces the need to reassert its identity as a subject concerning issues that are fundamentally non-personal, as opposed to the personal focus of PHSE.

Overcrowding additionally leads schools to perform audits to identify areas of Citizenship that are already addressed in their current provision. It is common in this approach that the different elements of Citizenship are addressed *individually* across the curriculum rather than taken together as a *body* of knowledge and skills. Doing this can undermine the effective teaching of Citizenship – it is the *interaction* of citizenship skills and knowledge that produces effective citizens (Leighton, 2005). Batchelor (2003) points out that without this interaction we may be able to deliver some of the skills and knowledge required by the National Curriculum, but students will not gain a “sense of personal efficacy and self-confidence” or an awareness that “individuals of any age can ‘make a difference’”. Thus attempts to deliver Citizenship using only audits of the curriculum can undermine the goal of citizenship education – producing effective citizens.

Lack of sufficient training and resources

Citizenship suffers from a lack of resources for classroom teaching itself. Effective Citizenship requires effective professional training for teachers. The reasons for this are twofold. Firstly, in the majority of schools a large proportion of the teaching staff will be required to address some aspects of the curriculum due to cross-curricular approaches to Citizenship. Secondly, Citizenship requires a unique set of teaching methods – its own pedagogy – which many teachers will be unfamiliar with (Breslin, 2004). Despite this need there is an under-provision of specially trained Citizenship teachers – Cleaver et al. (2006) point out that 83% of teachers felt ill equipped to teach Citizenship.

In addition, there is a lack of teaching resources – Cleaver et al. (2006) argue that a lack of funding is a major challenge to Citizenship. This puts strain on voluntary organisations to provide teaching resources, especially since these resources must be updated regularly. This strain on both resources and teaching time means schools find it difficult to provide active learning experiences outside the classroom for *all* pupils. For example, many schools have school council which are excellent in teaching citizenship skills to those on the committee, but which provides little engagement for those outside of it. This not only means some students have limitations on their Citizenship learning, but can also lead to resentment and a feeling of exclusion.

The context

Crick’s model of Citizenship requires that Citizenship *must* be compulsory, since a universal democracy requires a universal entitlement to Citizenship (Crick, 2002). However, Faulks (2006) argues that such a universal provision is compromised by the variety of schools in our school system. He notes that there is a growing list of different models of schools, including:

- Faith schools
- Academies
- Private schools

Faulks then notes how this variety can lead to a problem, since it is “in tension with a conception of citizenship which is truly egalitarian and inclusive” (Faulks, 2006). He highlights this by noting that private schools are not required to teach Citizenship. In particular, Faulks argues that faith schools

undermine the notion of universal Citizenship provision, since “even where faith schools make a genuine effort to provide a rounded citizenship education, the necessarily exclusive context in which this is delivered is unlikely to engender the values associated with democratic citizenship” (Faulks, 2006).

We may add it is not only the *school* context but also the *societal* context that leads to difficulties in educating in citizenship. As Weller (2007) argues, pupils are subject to much patronisation and punishment outside of school time, and often live in areas where they are blamed (unfairly) for problems such as vandalism. This treatment contradicts attempts to dispel apathy and to become active members of the community.

The Value of Citizenship

Given this list of difficulties faced by Citizenship, why should we embrace it? I believe there are three inescapably strong reasons for doing so:

1. The political health of the country/local area and the individual

Citizenship is needed to dispel growing apathy and reengage young people in the political system. Ord notes three reasons for this; the need to make difficult decisions today, the need to do so in the future, and finally that “a healthy democracy relies on a politically informed and involved population” (Ord, 2003). Citizenship can play a vital role in reengaging young people in politics, and can inject life back into our ailing democracy.

Citizenship can also play a role in the lives of individuals. Referring to the Every Child Matters Framework, by teaching students the skills, motivations and knowledge needed to be active citizens, Citizenship plays an important role in ensuring all pupils can make a positive contribution.

2. Enhancing community cohesion

From 2007 all schools will have the duty to promote community cohesion. However, the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) identifies three barriers to community cohesion:

...mistrust of different groups, particularly those new to the local community; a perception that local authorities are giving others special treatment; and a lack of spaces for meaningful interaction (DCSF, 2007)

From this point, the DCSF highlights the importance of education in overcoming these problems. Citizenship can enhance understanding between groups as well as encourage community activity. Thus effective citizenship education can help schools meet the requirement to promote community cohesion.

3. Benefits for the school

A body of research is forming which indicates that effective, active Citizenship can enhance the academic performance of schools and improve behaviour. A strong case is made by Hannam (2003) who took a sample of 'more-than usually participative schools' and showed that attainment was higher (67% had above average or better results in 2000, as opposed to 40% nationally) and attendance was better. Ofsted (2002) agree, noting "it was acknowledged by senior managers (of most schools) that Citizenship complements the aims and values of the school and, in most cases, that it will enhance those aims and values". In addition to this, Wales (2006) notes that Citizenship can have a 'transforming' effect on some pupils. As a result we can conclude that Citizenship gives benefits across the curriculum.

These three reasons provide a compelling case for teaching of Citizenship in any school. Despite significant problems, the need to reengage young people in democracy, and to enhance community cohesion, is reason enough to have Citizenship on the timetable. This is further supported by the general benefits it yields.

My vision for Citizenship

Having shown that the value of Citizenship is too great for the subject to be neglected (despite myriad problems) I will now outline what I believe are the two essential elements to make Citizenship effective.

Active citizenship

For citizenship education to be effective it must actively engage pupils by encouraging them not only to learn about politics and the community, but to be actors in both. Clearly such an approach has its drawbacks (not least in the large amount of resources and planning it may require) but the benefits are clear:

1) It engages the pupils

Citizenship is *not* merely a body of knowledge and facts, but is about equipping pupils with the skills *and* the motivation to be active citizens. If we adopt a rote-learning approach, this risks disengaging students. Douglas (2003) agrees, arguing "if teaching political literacy is not to end up as a series of dry civics lessons teachers need to come up with a range of approaches that excite real interest".

2) It teaches 'soft' skills and 'hard' facts

Motivation and facts are not sufficient to create effective citizens. Skills and attitudes to use them are also required. Simple 'rote-learning' of facts does not provide the 'soft' skills needed by citizens (Breslin, 2004). Such abilities include knowing how to undertake responsible action, understanding the views of others, debate etc. Students must gain a series of dispositions also, for example a certain self-belief and empowerment. Active learning is the only effective method to deliver

these soft skills alongside hard facts – as Davison and Arthur (2006) note, (my italics) “the ability to think *and act* on social and political concerns underpins effective citizenship education”.

3) *The accusation of bias*

Lastly, Citizenship should take a ‘light touch’ approach to citizenship themes, thus allowing pupils to independently decide on the meaning of terms such as ‘political’ and ‘citizen’. Active citizenship lessons take a vital role in doing this, since without them pupils lack both the *opportunity* and the *ability* to decide on such issues themselves.

Citizenship schools

Effective Citizenship requires not only the successful implementation of classroom learning, but also the construction of ‘citizenship schools’ (Alexander, 2002). Creating such a school ethos is necessary for Citizenship since education in citizenship is ineffective unless policies within the school reflect and reinforce learning in the classroom. We cannot encourage students to be active citizens if they are barred from doing so in their primary community setting – the school itself. Without such policies we risk inconsistency – as Hayward (2007) points out values can be taught both explicitly and by observing action, and that there is a certain risk that these two methods can contradict each other.

Conclusion and my commitment to Citizenship

In this essay I discussed the history of citizenship and the problems it faces. I then showed that despite these problems Citizenship is too valuable to be neglected - Citizenship provides young people with more than a body of knowledge or job-skills, but with essential life skills such as responsible action, empathy, and critical thinking. Without such skills not only will democracy suffer, but also the community and the individual.

Since the value of Citizenship is undeniable, the task remaining is teaching it effectively. I argued that Citizenship requires active learning and changes to the ethos of schools. Implementing these changes may be difficult, but they are necessary, and working to implement them is part of the exciting task facing future Citizenship teachers.

Through Citizenship I hope to help pupils understand the value of democracy, to escape feelings of alienation, and to be active in politics and the community. This is a fascinating opportunity that I feel the Citizenship teacher is in a unique position to take.

Furthermore, Citizenship is an exciting subject – it is growing and evolving, embedding itself in schools. Being at the forefront of a growing subject provides an opportunity that other established subjects do not. The prospect of teaching citizenship and helping to build its foundations is truly exciting.

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