

Citizenship

Seminar report

THE CONTRIBUTION OF CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION TO SCHOOLS, COMMUNITIES AND INDIVIDUALS



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The Seminar

On October 22nd 2009 a seminar was held to explore the impact Citizenship education has on schools, communities and individuals. Fifty people from the world of Citizenship education, The Baroness Garden of Frognal – Liberal Democrat spokesperson for Children, Schools and Families and The Baroness Verma of Leicester – Shadow Minister for Children Schools and Families came together to discuss the issue and consider how political parties can support the future development of the subject.

A change of government could lead to a change of attitude to Citizenship education. The seminar provided an opportunity to explore the benefits it offers in practical terms as it offered the experiences of a head teacher and students. It also offered the outcomes of the latest report from NFER's longitudinal study which shows the changes that have taken place since Citizenship has become a statutory part of the curriculum.

Baroness Garden and Baroness Verma explained the views of their parties to the future of Citizenship education.

The report from the seminar brings together the perspectives and the conclusions of the discussion session.



The seminar was chaired by Richard Garner, Education Editor of the Independent.



It was organised by Jenny Wales, recent Director of Education for Citizenship, Nuffield Foundation.

Key Outcomes

What contribution does Citizenship education make to communities, schools and individuals?

- Citizenship gives pupils the skills and understanding to take responsibility for their own lives.
- Citizenship enables students to discuss their opinions and gives them the ability to articulate their ideas. It enables them to deal with current issues and come to their own conclusions.
- Pupils experience democracy for themselves, and find out what making compromises between different points of view is about.
- It gives pupils a more responsible attitude to school and the community.
- Effective Citizenship education gives firm foundations for school improvement.
- Citizenship education provides opportunities for the less able to engage and to be praised by their teacher.
- Students learn to be more effective in the community.

How can government help to support the future development of Citizenship education?

- As Citizenship is a new subject and should be left alone to mature.
- The subject should not become a cross curricular theme. While its inclusion in other subjects strengthens the ethos of a school, there is clear research evidence that cross curricular themes do not work.
- There needs to be commitment from the top, both from government and from Senior Leaders in school.
- Investment in teachers is obviously needed both in initial teacher training and professional development.
- Adults need Citizenship education as well as young people.

Session 1 How has Citizenship education contributed to the school, the individual and the community?



Putting Citizenship at the heart of school improvement

Katie Dixon, Deputy Head of Birches Head High School, Stoke-on-Trent

Citizenship is at the heart of our school. We aim to enable pupils to develop their whole personality as well as gaining their GCSEs. Core values and the need for respect as part of a global community are very important. At Key Stage 3, Citizenship is built in to the 'Futures' skill-based curriculum. This curriculum involves a whole new way of teaching – a brave decision.

Stoke-on-Trent pupils need encouragement to stay in education. Challenges in the area include BNP councillors and a high rate of teenage pregnancies. Birches Head High School has come out of Special Measures with the help of our new Head, Karen Healey, and pupils' attitudes are no longer so negative. The school is now more of a community. Pupils feel safe, and there is usually a calm atmosphere at break-time. A centre within the school gives assistance to children who need this.

At Birches Head High School pupils now take responsibility for their own learning: they are involved in building their own learning, and at KS3 can decide whether their skills-based learning focuses on History, Geography, RE, and so on. Other choices include the opportunity to work outside the school. The new secondary curriculum has made all this easier.

The 'Transferring Learning' group consists of volunteer teachers who meet at weekends. They have developed the 'Futures' curriculum and are now working on leadership throughout the School. Student action teams are linked to leadership areas in school and have input into its management and evaluation. 'Inspirers' are skilled members of staff who help both teachers and pupils.

Citizenship and personalization are at the heart of all these developments. They are driven by a passionate head, but all in the school have signed up to them.

Respect, Inspire, Challenge, Honesty

Where are we now.....

External evaluation June 08 found:

- Pupils in Year 7 have a high level of personal confidence and after two and a half terms have mostly developed the skills needed for independent learning and responsible citizens"
- The school gives (students) a wide range of opportunities to influence decision making in the school and this work has been recognised as an example of best practice at a national level.
- Many take part in projects to improve the school environment and help to evaluate the quality of teaching and of the curriculum.
- They are becoming increasingly involved in projects within the local community
- Students socialise well and behaviour in public spaces is
- considerate and calm.

Citizenship: its contribution to my education



Peace Poroku, a former Citizenship student

“I was involved in the pilot of the Citizenship course seven years ago at Richmond-on-Thames College and have attended national Citizenship conferences and youth events, where we debated with politicians about lowering the voting age and the minimum wage.

I valued the holistic approach to learning and education in Citizenship education. It has been influential in my personal development, enabling me to be an active rather than a passive learner. I have realized that I can have an effect as I now have the knowledge, skills and political tools to be a proactive citizen. Citizenship has helped me to reflect on her role in an institution, the local area and globally, and to understand the links between theoretical knowledge and its wider application in the world.”

Peace is now studying part-time at the Open University and is looking to do a Psychology degree, with a view to getting into voluntary work and then into a well-paid rewarding job.



Alex Brown, a former Citizenship student

“During my last two years at secondary school I developed the skills to put the head of his college under the spotlight and to organize fundraising for an HIV charity. I have since worked with the Learning Skills Network on various aspects of Citizenship education.

I have reflected on how seriously learner opinions are taken in Citizenship education and how empowering this is. Having just graduated I have many friends who are out of work. Citizenship education offers a lot to learners, especially with regard to getting jobs. It develops critical and analytical skills and the ability to listen. It enables you to be adaptable, to think for yourself, to be innovative, and to have a good understanding of the educational, social and political context from which you are starting. It gives you the ability to start projects and to know how to make things happen.”

Alex is now looking for a career as a theatre director, connecting with people and communities.

Citizenship: the long run impact



David Kerr from NFER reported on key findings from the 9-year Citizenship Education Longitudinal Study (CELS). To date CELS has collected qualitative and quantitative data from 816 schools and colleges, 37,809 students, 2,626 teachers, 679 school leaders and 133 college leaders. The latest report was published by DCSF at the end of October 2009. The Study's Final Report will be published in 2010. Schools reported:

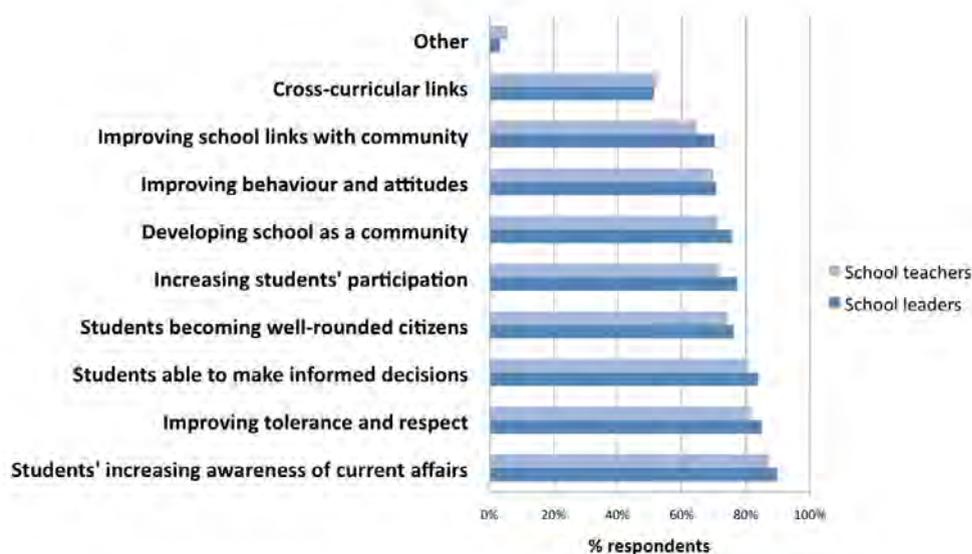
'Citizenship and being a good citizen run through the school like a stick of rock. It affects everything we do, from our teaching and learning policy to our pastoral policy.' (Headteacher, Blackrock School).

'I think CE is an important subject to be taught to actually show them [the young people] that we part of a wider society and wider world.' (CE teacher, King Street School).

All political parties agreed to the introduction of Citizenship education in 2001, and all schools do Citizenship within the curriculum. The policy aims of Citizenship education are 'Social and moral responsibility', 'Political literacy', 'Community involvement', and, since 2008, a new strand: 'Identity and diversity'.

There are different combinations of approaches to organising the teaching of Citizenship found in schools: the two most common approaches found in the latest data are Citizenship as a dedicated timetable slot (45%) and Citizenship within PSHE (48%), and other schools have a variety of approaches including embedding it within other subjects including RE, or cover it in assemblies or special events. Most use a combination of these approaches to ensure that all topics are covered.

Areas CE is having an impact



Schools in the latest CELS survey are increasingly recognising the benefits and impact of Citizenship education. There is a general sense of in-school benefit as well as encouraging student involvement outside school in future. It broadens pupils' horizons, increasing their awareness of current affairs. Citizenship is the forward-looking part of the curriculum, building a sense of a democratic community, developing knowledge and skills in a relatively safe environment. It has relevance to students' lives, giving them the opportunity to discuss current issues such as whether it is fair to invite the BNP to appear on BBC Question Time. It needs well-trained teachers to handle such issues as whether to allow a BNP candidate in a mock election. Citizenship encourages students' active participation in school, and 95% of schools now have a student council. However student take-up of this is challenging – as students get older they do not perceive it as either cool or relevant to be involved in this. It also depends on the commitment of the School to actually listen to pupils – KS4 pupils quickly notice if they don't have a 'real' voice.

Citizenship is part of the new revised curriculum. The 2007 National Curriculum states: 'Citizenship equips pupils with the knowledge and skills needed for effective and democratic participation. It helps pupils to become informed, critical, active citizens who have the confidence and conviction to work collaboratively, take action and try to make a difference in their communities and the wider world.'

Citizenship enables students in an age of increasing uncertainty to feel confident that issues can be taken on and solved, so that they can find the evidence they need to make up their own minds – 'informed sceptics'. This is vital for the strength of our democracy. We still have a 'democratic deficit' in society and should never drop our guard, as Bernard Crick said, and become complacent about democratic society. As William Hastings said 'Citizenship is a journey not a destination' and Bernard Crick said 'The devil is always in the detail.' It begs the question 'Why are more politicians not more positive about supporting Citizenship education?' given its recognised benefits in educating the next generations to be informed and active citizens.

For more information see www.nfer.ac.uk/cels

Feedback from the groups



What would schools notice if Citizenship Education were abolished?

- Citizenship gives pupils the skills and understanding to take responsibility for their own lives.
- Citizenship is the only forum in which pupils can discuss their opinions and gives them the ability to articulate their ideas. It enables them to deal with issues such as diversity, making them more aware of the issues and preventing problems.
- Pupils experience democracy for themselves, and find out what making compromises between different points of view is about. It gives pupil a more responsible attitude to school: there is better attendance, pupils are happier, and there are fewer complaints about bad behaviour from the dinner ladies. Pupils may also learn about Citizenship from their communities and from discussions with family and friends. However, the community outside school may not be prepared for kids to have opinions and take action, and they may experience negative attitudes.
- Monoculture now comes as a shock. We are all humans and should not be afraid of difference. We need to face issues of identity and diversity, but should be aware of the danger of exacerbating the problem.
- CE is inclusive – it provides an opportunity for the less able to engage and to be praised by their teacher. It improves literacy and oracy in schools in challenging areas, giving pupils the language and confidence to express themselves. It feeds through into pupils' work in other subjects, and helps with the KS3/KS4 transition for less academic pupils. A joined-up whole-school approach and a cross-curricular approach to CE can all make links in people's minds.
- Why choose Citizenship teaching? It is for those who want to teach for change and to inspire children. It is an active inclusive subject with fewer correct or wrong answers. It is about rights and responsibilities and gives confidence to all young people. It is likely that there will be more effect on the community at large as time passes – see what Peace Poroku and Alex Brown said about the effect of CE on their lives.

Session 2 How can government help to support the future development of Citizenship education?



The Liberal Democrat perspective on Citizenship education: The Baroness Garden of Frognal – Liberal Democrat spokesperson for Children, Schools and Families

The Baroness Garden told us that the Liberal Democrats entirely endorse Citizenship education. They are also pleased that the Government has agreed that PSHE education should be part of the curriculum. A relevant curriculum is needed to engage and interest every pupil, but skills of vital importance to the community are not given the status they deserve.

Freedom, fairness and trust are enshrined in Liberal Democrat thinking. The facts are laid out before you, but you decide. There are record numbers of young offenders in prison, and support and training is needed. The pupil premium policy is for funding to follow disadvantaged pupils to help redress what is lacking. Citizenship gives individuals the confidence and skills to be productive citizens. Centralised government disempowers people. Constitutional reform is needed of how politics is run and how politicians are rewarded. Taxation for social ends is also needed, to redistribute wealth from rich to poor for the benefit of the whole of society.

The European Union was set up to promote peaceful dialogue, and it needs citizens to be part of it. If young people have stronger links between different groups it makes conflict less likely. As citizens we need to work collaboratively to address issues of global warming, and the UK needs to fill its role in this. Young people can do many things at 16 – why can they not vote? Campaigns and projects are part of their culture and taking part in these makes them more likely to go on to fulfilling lives.

People do still respond to principles, and most politicians do want to improve the world. How valuable it is to find out at school how many opportunities there are to make a difference.



The Conservative perspective on Citizenship education: The Baroness Verma of Leicester – Shadow Minister for Children Schools and Families

The Baroness Verma told us that all political parties are signed up to Citizenship as an important part of school life, though how we deliver it may be different. Teachers must have proper training and full support for their teaching of students from different communities and backgrounds to be effective.

Citizenship tends to be an add-on rather than a constant for pupils, and it should be far more embedded in all core subjects at every level and in every subject. But this ideal can be frustrated by what is possible in schools.

Citizenship is not a panacea for all problems, and won't cause all ills to go away. New challenges and difficulties arise. The media have just fanned a furore over the appearance of the BNP on the BBC Question Time programme. We can be pawns in a media-led society, but Citizenship classes must develop good critical thinking and enable students to develop the skills to think about rights and wrongs for themselves. Citizenship should build up a sense of civic duty.

As an 11-year-old, the Baroness Verma was empowered by a conversation with Greville Janner. Leicester where Baroness Verma comes from, does have difficulties and under-currents as well as very positive features. Britain includes diverse people with different identities, but they should not be separated off from one another – all share a common life as equal citizens. How can young people be encouraged to face difficult questions and to act appropriately? It is easier to be a global citizen than a local one. Good Citizenship classes are needed for all this.

Feedback from the groups



- As Citizenship is a new subject and should be left alone to mature.
- The subject should not become a cross curricular theme. While its inclusion in other subjects strengthens the ethos of a school, there is clear research evidence that cross curricular themes do not work because teachers do not have ownership and their main subject responsibility always takes priority. Students also do not make the links and connections that the discrete subject offers.
- There needs to be commitment from the top, both from government and from Senior Leaders in school. There is the continuing pressure of league tables and the criteria on which schools are judged.
- Investment in teachers is obviously needed, because it is often taught by those without specialised training. Only 250 teachers are currently being trained in Britain – not much for a national subject.
- Citizenship should encourage a questioning attitude, rather than being an attempt to influence behaviour in a particular direction.
- Citizenship is for life-long learning – adults need to learn about it as well as kids.
- A positive portrayal of young people is needed. They are citizens now, not just in future.

Association for Citizenship Teaching

Chris Waller stated that the Citizenship agenda is aspirational, aiming to develop agency and political will in young people.

Chris reminded those present that after the Good Friday agreement we started to talk about how young people could be empowered, and there was a call to action by major educational and political figures. There was a five-nation conference to discuss Citizenship and values education, aiming to impact on how our societies function.

Conclusion

Jenny Wales thanked Richard Garner for chairing this meeting, and the speakers and all those present for their input.

Delegate List

Pilar Aguilera	Barcelona and IoE
John Annette	Birkbeck College
Jamie Audsley	The Citizen Organising Foundation
Carina Badger	IoE PGCE
Ekta Bassi	London Met
Adam Bennett	London Met
Marcus Bhargava	London Metropolitan University
Sally Brian	IoE PGCE
Alex Brown	Citizenship student
Laura Callaghan	IoE PGCE
Isabelle Delatour	IoE PGCE
Deryn Fletcher	London Met
Sue Garden The Baroness Garden of Frogal	Liberal Democrat spokesperson for Children, Schools and Families
Richard Garner	Independent
Liam Gearon	Plymouth University
Ben Hammond	The Citizen Organising Foundation
Victoria Harris	London Met
Peter Hayes	CSV Education
Jeremy Hayward	Institute of Education
Karen Healey	Birches Head High School
Asher Jacobsberg	Involver
Laura Johnson	Global Citizenship Education
Michalis Kakos	University of Leicester
David Kerr	NFER
Colin Levy	London Met
Karen McNulty	Edexcel
Mike Mitchell	University of Plymouth
Kathleen Partington	Sarah Bonnell School
Leonel Perez	IoE PGCE
Peace Pokoru	Citizenship student
Katie Raber	IoE PGCE
Rina Ramrekha	Soar Valley College Leicester
Claire Reeves	IoE PGCE
Jamal Reid	London Met

PTO

Don Rowe	Citizenship Foundation
Greg Sanderson	Involver
Hugh Starkey	Institute of Education
Sandip Verma The Baroness Verma of Leicester	Shadow Minister for Children Schools and Families
Jenny Wales	Education for Citizenship
Chris Waller	Association for Citizenship Teaching
Margaret Whitehead	IoE PGCE
Helen Wiles	LSN
Jonathon Woodcraft Howis	UCL

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