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Introduction

This chapter deals with many of the issues that are discussed in greater detail elsewhere in this book. It approaches them from the practical perspective of the Association for Citizenship Teaching (ACT)¹ in the UK, which is a membership organisation promoting high quality citizenship education for all. At the time this book was produced Citizenship had been a national curriculum subject in England for twenty years. This period generated a wealth of school-based experiments and saw the development of a cadre of experienced subject specialist teachers, which led to some principles that inform the work of ACT and which underpin its planning for the future. Our starting point is that good Citizenship teachers address the emotional dimension, the role of knowledge and rational argument, and the need for citizenship to be enacted. This approach continues to inform how teachers are responding to significant on-going and emergent challenges. In considering five of these challenges this chapter reflects on what the next twenty years might hold, and what Citizenship in schools might look like in the near future.

The urgency of political literacy

Bernard Crick paved the way for citizenship education in England's national curriculum by calling for a programme of political literacy, by which he meant learning about the institutions, problems, and practices of our democracy and how to make oneself effective as a citizen (Crick, 2000)². This task must be understood in the context of several profound challenges. First, we have to acknowledge the continuing decline in satisfaction with democracy among young people – partly because of the failure of democracy to prevent rising inequality, hardship and the associated frustrations of young people (Foa et al., 2020). Second, there is some evidence that this leads to greater support for 'outsider' candidates who promise to break the mould, potentially linked to the rise in populism (Sloam & Henn, 2017)³. Third, young people's political activity often happens in broad social movements or campaigns, which keeps political action alive, but potentially does little to refresh the institutional and party-political infrastructure of democratic governance (Norris, 2004)⁴. Fourth, the legacy of Brexit seems to be a more deeply divided and polarised political culture (Hobolt, Leeper & Tilley, 2020). Fifth, one result of that polarisation may well be an increased concern among right wing parents that teachers cannot be trusted to teach politics impartially (Weinberg, 2021). Which leads to a sixth challenge – the rise in government regulation of teachers' impartiality (DfE, 2022) with the attendant concern that teaching about politics may be seen as a high risk activity, with serious consequences if a school gets it wrong (see for example Ofsted, 2021)⁵.

¹ More information about the Association for Citizenship Teaching can be found at:

www.teachingcitizenship.org.uk

² See chapters 5 and 10 in this book for more on Crick and the development of citizenship education in England.

³ See chapter 6 for a discussion of educational responses to different forms of populism.

⁴ See chapter 8 for the role of action learning in developing young people's political understanding and involvement.

⁵ See chapter 3 for a critical look at the issue of divisive concepts and political impartiality.

However, we do have some evidence that citizenship education can make a difference. The longitudinal research tracking the impact of Citizenship 2002-2010 showed us that where students received 'a lot' of citizenship education this improved their citizenship outcomes (including efficacy and intention to participate) over and above the impact of other background factors (Keating et al. 2010). A small extension of this work that followed students into young adulthood showed a lingering effect in boosting their actual levels of participation (Keating & Janmaat, 2016). Hoskins et al. (2017) point out that children from lower socio-economic backgrounds are less likely to experience the most impactful forms of citizenship education in school (open classroom discussion and participation), but their conclusion is that where schools do provide these opportunities as an entitlement for all students, citizenship education can help to close the civic gap. Weinberg (2021) has also demonstrated that more citizenship education, especially open classroom discussions of contemporary issues, can close the gap between socio-economic groups in relation to intention to participate. Weinberg's research indicates that actually meeting politicians can be counter-productive for some students, but innovative programmes such as *The Politics Project* (2021) have demonstrated that, when embedded in planned sequences of learning, such engagement can both increase the likelihood that students discuss politics at home and their belief that politicians care what they think.

Case Study 1 Power and community⁶

One school in West London has addressed these aspects of political literacy through the community organising approach, which combines learning about political institutions and processes, with real problem-solving of significance to young people and their families. The teacher wanted to start small and then grow the work into a whole school approach that ensured that their students were empowered to lead the changes in the community that they wanted to see.

Students developed their understanding of the key community organising principles and how to apply these when undertaking action. The key community organising principles include:

- *never do for others what they can do for themselves*
- *understand self-interest and what is in it for them*
- *build relationships.*

The approach sits well with the objectives of Citizenship education to 'develop active, informed and responsible citizens', build knowledge about 'the ways in which citizens work together to improve their communities', and to 'experience and evaluate different ways citizens can act together to solve problems and contribute positively to society' (DfE, 2013).

The students listened to those in the community using a range of strategies to 'listen with a purpose' and engaged with members of the school community (pupils, parents, staff) and those in the neighbourhood. Teachers worked with students to plan how to talk about the issues of concern and to find issues that were 'winnable' so that students could experience some level of success. They worked on developing skills and knowledge about how to act, so that students developed the capacity to research, read, listen, think critically, reason,

⁶ The case studies in this chapter are adapted from articles, resources and presentations developed by teachers working with the Association for Citizenship Teaching. The references in each case lead to a fuller account of each project.

negotiate and compromise. Students then worked in 'action teams' to create campaigns designed to address specific issues they had prioritised. Issues included building relationships with the school's neighbours to address local negativity about the school; local road safety; and improving student voice within the school community using a student council model.

Students became adept at relationship building and finding and using strategies to persuade local policy makers to take their ideas seriously and build empathy. They found creative ways to appeal to the emotions of those they met and talked with at the local council and developed campaigns that involved an element of surprise. For example, by attending local meetings and bringing cake for those who attended. Students had decided it would be harder for decision makers to say no when they brought home made cake to a meeting and they spent time in advance to find out which flavour those attending the meeting preferred. They became known locally as 'Kidz with Cake!' but more importantly, they got the right decision-makers in the room and helped them make the right decisions.
(Doona, 2019)

We need to redouble our efforts to raise students' critical understanding of the role of democratic politics in an age of rising scepticism. And we need to support teachers to manage this task whilst assiduously maintaining political impartiality. But impartiality does not mean neutrality and teachers need to be confident to explore democratic values and the various alternatives so students can think through what they gain, and potentially lose, because of the political system in which they live. Pagliarello et al.'s literature review (2021) suggests that citizenship education may promote political support for any party. Whilst this supports the idea that it can be non-partisan, it also means that citizenship education does not operate in any simple way to defend democracy against populist parties trading in misinformation. The challenge for the next twenty years is to be more explicit about the value of democratic citizenship and to give more students opportunities to routinely discuss political issues and to act politically. Teachers can be non-partisan but this should not undermine their commitment to facilitate students' own political development and democratic action.

Digital citizenship and media literacy

One aspect of this challenge that was barely mentioned at the beginning of our subject's arrival in the curriculum was digital media literacy. Whilst our early curriculum included the study of the 'media and the internet in providing information and affecting opinion', Facebook wasn't launched until 2004 and the iPhone in 2007, so very few people had really begun to imagine how ubiquitous mobile technology and social media would become. Now, our familiarity with online information leads to overconfidence in assessing our capacity for criticality – Ofcom (2022) research indicates that around 70% of adults and older adolescents are confident they can spot misinformation online, but only 22% of adults and 11% of adolescents are actually able to spot fake stories. This can be a matter of life and death when, as we saw during the pandemic, 40% of information online comes from unreliable sources (Kivenen & Kivenen, 2020).

In looking ahead to the next twenty years we can draw on the Council of Europe (2019) framework on Digital Citizenship Education; General Comment 25 from the UN Commission on the Rights of the Child (UN, 2021), outlining children's rights in the digital environment;

and a growing body of work about education programmes that work. Anzalone (2020) describes a programme of news literacy that was developed in the USA for undergraduates and has been taken to schools. After studying how the media works and the sources of mis/disinformation, students are empowered to engage even more with the news and to be more interested in politics. Similarly, Vogt (2020) describes how a programme developed for schools in Ukraine resulted in greater criticality towards news sources, and an improved ability to distinguish between facts and opinions and to spot fake stories. In turn this has inspired UK teachers to devise their own programme in schools (see case study below).

Case study 2 Digital and Media literacy through Citizenship

Realising that the proliferation of misinformation and conspiracy theories was becoming a significant and harmful issue not just for their secondary students but for those in many schools across the country, two teachers from schools in the South of England worked together to develop a new approach for teaching Digital and Media literacy. Their model drew on the expertise of academics and journalists they engaged with during a teacher professional development visit to the USA.

Starting with a lesson to introduce the media and its role and responsibilities in society, teaching begins by considering pupil's perceptions and behaviour using an analysis of their own consumption of information and media across different devices. Students are also encouraged to commit to a 24-hour media blackout to understand the way in which our lives are saturated by the media.

The teachers then designed their REVIEW model (Joy, 2020) to simplify the concepts and skills they wanted to teach. This includes the following elements to checking a media story:

- *Reputation – Have you heard of the source? Have they been reliable before?*
- *Evidence – What facts are cited? Are there any holes?*
- *Verify – How does this source compare to others? Does everything match up?*
- *Intent – Why was the information/story published? Is it factual and impartial?*
- *Emotions – How do you feel about the story? Are you swayed by your feelings?*
- *Weigh it up – What do you now think about what you know? Does the information/story seem plausible?*

Lessons develop knowledge and skills in relation to each part of the model, for example, lessons on 'information neighbourhoods' explore the key intent of the information/article to establish an understanding of and draw distinctions between mis-, dis- and mal-information. The teaching here draws on journalistic practices to test accountability, independence and whether information can be verified. Students sort and sift through a range of articles and social media posts to categorise the type of information as advertising, entertainment, propaganda, publicity, journalism or raw information and to explore where information overlaps between categories.

Further lessons develop lateral reading techniques and evaluation of the accuracy of news reports and verification of information. For example, students are taught to compare a source with other sources, to establish what information is consistently reported and what is being embellished or missed, and then to verify by checking to see whether there is

corroborating evidence and to establish whether the author is named and authoritative and cites sources for what is said.

We need to ensure that we equip young people with the skills to discern fact from opinion, and to distinguish between reliable and unreliable information, as the starting point for informed citizenship. But we also have to recognise that this is more than merely transferring legacy-media skills to the online context. We need to address the knowledge dimension about how the internet works, who owns what and who profits from our involvement, the challenge of regulation, and the role of media in a democratic society (Moorse, 2022). We also need to tackle these issues in the light of children's rights and learn how to balance our desire to protect children from online harms, with the enjoyment to be derived from interaction and expression online. And teachers need to engage with the fact that the internet opens up new possibilities to develop identities as members of online communities, to build networks for action online and to consider how citizens' roles are changing in an increasingly digital democracy. In maintaining our focus on political literacy we also have to be alert to the temptations of 'clicktivism' (such as endless likes and reposts) and ensure young citizens understand the difference between what one teacher memorably described as 'slacktivism' rather than 'activism' (Wright, 2011).

Equalities and social justice

It is almost a cliché to observe that young people are often motivated by a sense of fairness, but this commitment is undoubtedly linked to the popularity of issues-based campaigning politics we have already mentioned. In the UK young people are at the forefront of the BLM movement, School Strikes for Climate, and trans inclusion, but there is a backlash associated with the 'culture wars' attacking such positions as 'woke' and dangerously partisan (Leo, 2022). When citizenship education was introduced to the curriculum there was a widespread consensus in government that institutional racism had to be tackled through the police, education system and other state institutions, indeed citizenship education was seen as part of the response (Moorse, 2020). However, such explanations are now seen as more controversial by some (CRED, 2021), meaning teachers feel more susceptible to scrutiny and criticism. Similarly, whilst the Human Rights Act obliges schools to promote human rights and challenge discrimination and inequality, the topic of human rights has become more controversial as Ministers are calling for substantial reforms with a return to 'common sense' and 'typically British rights' (Ministry of Justice, 2021).

Once again, despite these challenges, there is some evidence about what works in this area. UNICEF UK has been promoting their *Rights Respecting Schools Award* programme for a number of years, with 5,000 schools (working with 1.6 million pupils) having signed up across the UK. As schools progress through the scheme they build students' knowledge of rights, their sense of efficacy and their well-being (UNICEF UK, undated). This echoes earlier work in schools on the South coast of England where adopting a rights framework led to improved relationships, better attendance, and happier staff (Covell & Howe, 2011). As with the work on political literacy, they also found that these effects could also counter some of the effects of social disadvantage, by promoting school engagement and building efficacy (Covell et al., 2011). Montague, who works with young human rights activists through Amnesty UK, has also documented how being a rights activist often leads to improvements in well-being, as young people are consolidated in their activist identity, reinforcing their

efficacy, and strengthening their meaningful relationships with others (Montague & Eiroa-Orosa, 2017). Even without the experience of consistent external activism, the relationship between well-being and children's rights has been well-documented (e.g. Lloyd & Emerson, 2017). ACT's own work in promoting human rights defenders in schools documented a range of positive experiences, not least students' feeling of connectedness to a wider struggle for social justice (Jerome, 2017). Carlile's (2020) work also demonstrates how faith schools can use a human rights framework to promote LGBTQ-inclusion in ways which build relationships with parents and local faith groups – particularly important when public demonstrations against schools have served as high-profile warning to school leaders (Christian Institute, 2019).

Case study 3 Deliberating about equality

In England schools are required to 'promote the fundamental British values' (FBVs), defined in statutory guidance as democracy, the rule of law, liberty and tolerance of religious beliefs (DfE, 2014). The Deliberative Classroom project, developed by ACT, aimed to teach the FBVs as complex political concepts requiring discussion, evaluation and application in different contexts, as opposed to being values which can be simply promoted. It was designed to develop deeper political reasoning about toleration and religious freedom through deliberative discussion (ACT, undated).

In one Church of England school in the Midlands, the debate society agreed to participate in the project and a mixed age group of student volunteers joined a deliberative discussion on religious freedom in school. Whilst the school had a Christian ethos, with religious assemblies and trips to the cathedral, a large minority of students were Muslim. The students discussed a motion about how their school should implement the principles of religious freedom and toleration in that context. These deliberative conversations demonstrated how issues of diversity and identity can be discussed in ways which are respectful, exploratory, responsive to others' ideas and experiences, and which can lead to compromise about the best way forward.

One group of Muslim boys raised the following points:

Speaker 2: ...I think people should get to wear what they want according to their religion

Speaker 1: To what extent though. You can't just come into school wearing a Jilbab or something

Speaker 2: Well obviously it's a Christian school innit

Speaker 1: Yeah you should abide by the rules that you chose

Some of the non-Muslim students commented:

Speaker 2: Personally, I think that if you are going to the cathedral it doesn't matter whatever faith you are... you don't have to take part in the prayers or the hymns...

Speaker 4: Yeah, it shouldn't be a sign of disrespect if they don't go up for a blessing or communion, if they just want to sit there they're not doing anything wrong. At least they've come.

This sentiment was echoed by a Muslim student who observed, 'We sing but we don't actually mean any of it but, we're just singing to be respectful.'

These pragmatic responses reflect Vertovec's (2007) account of how people manage the tensions that arise through diverse cultural, religious and ethical beliefs by establishing a 'vener of civility' through everyday interactions. This does not necessarily reflect an act of self-denial or oppression, rather as Gilroy (2004) describes it, it could be seen as an act of 'conviviality' where we move away from a reified sense of identity and embrace mechanisms for being different together.

Despite, or perhaps because of, the on-going political debate about human rights standards and rights in school, citizenship teachers need to sustain their efforts to build this aspect of their work. Of all the elements of citizenship education, this one seems to speak most directly to the emotions of young people, as it engages with their concerns for fairness as a starting point for action (Engelmann & Tomasello, 2019). As research undertaken for the Equalities and Human Rights Commission concluded, such work involves explicit teaching about equality and human rights, opportunities for action, and a school culture in which students are treated equally and fairly (Culhane & McGeough, 2020). This means ensuring that citizenship education is seen as more than a few lessons in the timetable and a small element of the curriculum, but runs through the life of the school and guides schools' relationships with their communities. At the same time, we need to continue to develop our approach to deepening knowledge in this area, otherwise, as Parker (2018) has argued, we will fail to consolidate our curriculum position and build the knowledge base to move these debates on.

Extremism

A fourth challenge confronting teachers, which was barely even discussed when Citizenship was being planned in the late 1990s, is how to position citizenship education in relation to efforts for countering violent extremism (CVE). Whilst teachers saw the relevance of their subject for dealing with the aftermath of 9/11 and subsequent acts of terrorism, there has been a growing call for them to be more proactively involved in CVE through promoting democratic values as an antidote to extremism, countering extremist messages, and monitoring and reporting young people demonstrating signs of extremism. In the UK this has led to the Prevent Duty, which requires schools to report concerns about students to Channel Panels, where cases are assessed with a view to offering individual interventions (Busher & Jerome, 2020). There are over 5,000 referrals each year and education currently accounts for more referrals than any other public service (including the police) and over half of all people referred are under the age of 20, with a quarter being younger than 16 years of age.

Against this backdrop there has been a tendency to turn to a narrow safeguarding approach, where the political dimension is ignored, or to focus on promoting positive democratic values, where criticality is side-lined (Vincent, 2019). Dealt with as a de-politicised pastoral or whole school issue, it has been all too easy for Muslims and other minorities (both students and staff) to feel alienated by such policies, which is exacerbated by the proliferation of simplistic messages about Britishness and British values (Jerome et al., 2019). However, young people are clear that they value the opportunity to learn about terrorism and extremism in a broad political and comparative context. They report that they have no shortage of ways to hear about terrorist atrocities when they happen, but they

need help to understand what it all means (Jerome & Elwick, 2019). There is a distinctive role for Citizenship in the curriculum here, one which ACT has explored through its *Building Resilience* programme.

Case study 4 Citizenship in an age of extremism

As part of ACT's Building Resilience programme, a South London school wanted to create a sequence of lessons to help students think about politics in a world with extremism, radicalization and acts of terror. Teachers were concerned about the myths and misinformation that young people encounter, and wanted to challenge the frequently expressed view that terrorism was a recent phenomenon that stemmed from religious beliefs in particular Islam. The lessons were designed to:

- *Define and understand the key terms extremism, radicalization and terrorism and the different definitions that are used by government and in the media.*
- *Introduce students to case studies of groups that use extremist and terrorist actions to develop a concrete understanding of these abstract terms.*
- *Define and understand radicalization, how people become radicalized and what can drive people towards extremist groups or behaviours. The teacher used a recent example of three young men who had been radicalized following their long-term experience of prejudice because of their religious beliefs.*
- *Consider whether terrorists are all the same, using critical questions to explore different notions of terrorism and groups who use terrorist methods. Two case studies of the IRA and ISIS were used to examine the different political and religious motivations and begin to consider what can be done to counter and prevent the harms caused by these groups.*
- *Examine whether a terrorist is always a terrorist using an historical case study of the ANC in South Africa, to learn about apartheid and the anti-apartheid protest movement and discuss the labelling of terrorists and the notion of freedom fighters.*

In the final lessons, students considered what government does to protect its citizens and the role of education in countering extremism and radicalization. Students were asked to carefully examine the Prevent strategy and guidance to schools and develop their own critique with recommendations for improvements. The teacher used the actual policy document with students gradually building their skills and confidence to interrogate and interpret a lengthy text. They examined the policy in pairs using a critical questioning template to help them structure their critical evaluation and identify the different types of interventions in the policy, assess the risks of doing nothing and to develop their own recommendations for where they felt the advice could be improved.

(www.teachingcitizenship.org.uk/act-building-resilience-project)

The students in this project helped us to understand that citizenship education does not need to provide definitive explanations of why terrorism (or other forms of state-sponsored political violence) occurs, nor answers about what to do. But by developing a space for critical and informed investigation of both terrorism and counter-terrorist measures, it can help young people build their own understanding of how to navigate citizenship in a world of terrorism and extremism. Citizenship education in the age of CVE has become more explicit about its contribution to safeguarding democracy and challenging the simplistic narratives that position certain groups (most notably Muslims) as outsiders or threats. These lessons demonstrate the importance of building knowledge and understanding about

complex political phenomena, and not sweeping controversial issues under the carpet as an avoidance strategy.

Sustainable citizenship education

In the first version of the national curriculum, sustainability and Agenda 21 were explicitly referenced as core knowledge, but in the current version, written in 2014, these references have been removed. Belatedly the Department for Education (2021) has issued a *Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy*, which suggests schools have an important role to play – both in providing education for sustainable citizenship, and in managing the school estate in a sustainable way. As the 3rd report of the International Panel on Climate Change (IIPC, 2022) indicates, the next twenty years will be crucial for the future of life on the planet, and so citizenship education must play its part in equipping citizens with the capacity to act.

That means confronting some of the obstacles to effective education – not least the anxiety that many people feel about climate change, which can be an obstacle to internal efficacy (Trott, 2021). And secondly, we need to recognise that external efficacy can be undermined because some young people are deterred by high profile disruptive activism (which can seem like it generates media coverage but achieves little change) and by formal politics (which can feel like it is incapable of adopting solutions at the right scale) (Dunlop et al., 2021).

Here, we are buoyed by the evidence from the field of environmental education that resonates with the approach taken by citizenship teachers. Monroe et al. (2019) conducted a systematic review of the evidence and concluded that establishing a meaningful connection between the learners and the information about climate change was important, especially as a prelude to engaging in deliberative discussions and implementing school or community projects. In successful projects, children start to assuage their anxiety by finding positive action to undertake and through their collaborations with others feel a greater sense of hope that there are movements of like-minded people working for the future (Trott, 2021). Indeed, many young people engaging in environmental activism demonstrate a ‘Do It Ourselves’ attitude to politics, where they build their own global networks for direct action, bypassing traditional party political structures and nurturing efficacy and action (Pickard, 2022).

Case study 5: Sustainability in the Citizenship Classroom

A group of teachers devised a series of lessons around citizenship and sustainability, created for a joint conference organised by ACT and Parliament Education and Engagement. The teachers recognised the importance of learning about the whole range of action available to citizens in relation to climate change and decided to focus more explicitly on how to engage with parliament, in addition to extra-parliamentary activism. These lessons engaged with a real-life parliamentary process around the Education (Environment and Sustainable Citizenship) Private Members' Bill proposed by Lord Knight of Weymouth in the House of Lords.

The sequence of lessons included information on climate change and on the Bill, which called on the government to take sustainable citizenship education more seriously. Students

learned about the draft Bill, the process of private members' bills, and the role of education in climate change policy. Because the parliamentary process was on-going, the students also had the opportunity to listen to parts of the debate, consider the variety of views being discussed, and to follow up with parliamentarians who spoke to engage in the argument or express their support.

*Through exploring the legislative framework, current proposed legislation and the detailed advocacy and debate undertaken by politicians, this project helped young people appreciate another way in which action for sustainable citizenship can be undertaken.
(Shortland, 2021)*

If humanity has any hope of turning around the impending climate catastrophe, it is highly likely we will need to tackle it through as many approaches as possible. Young people (along with everyone else) will have to consider the implications for how they consume, what jobs they seek, how they travel, how they live, and how they behave as citizens. To some extent they will need to learn that citizens need to 'do it ourselves' but they also need to think beyond individual responsible actions to find methods to influence and hold to account those with power to change political and economic systems through national government and international processes. Building the sense of efficacy to promote action (and reduce anxiety) is one necessary step. Building the political literacy to determine where to focus one's efforts is as important. And facilitating opportunities to get involved in some meaningful activity may well be the most important contribution citizenship teachers play in securing our future.

Conclusion

The citizenship education community in England, and more broadly across the UK, has embraced the challenge of introducing a new subject into the curriculum, creating a professional identity, a rich set of practices, and a strong body of evidence over twenty years. As new challenges arise, so citizenship teachers have to re-articulate their subject, and develop their practices to stay relevant and to engage with real-world issues. In this chapter we have sketched out five priorities that will shape our practices for the next twenty years, and indicated how we can build on established foundations.

In looking ahead we are clear that sustaining and improving our democracy requires citizens who believe that a democratic life is better than the alternatives, and who are willing to invest time and effort to strengthen it and defend it from threats. In part this is instrumental – democracies need to deliver better results for citizens and they need to rise to the challenges we have outlined in this chapter. But democracy itself can enhance citizens' well-being, or flourishing – through their freedom of expression, through free association with kindred spirits, through a sense of belonging and purpose, and through the optimism that drives democratic renewal. These benefits contribute to what we think of as a sense of democratic well-being. Whilst schools are far from perfect institutions, for many young people they offer a relatively stable, consistently caring, and nurturing environment where equality and inclusion are consciously promoted, and where good social relations are fostered. In that context, we aim to make a contribution to the well-being of our democracy and to nurture the democratic well-being of our young people.

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