



Teachers' Perspectives on Citizenship Education in England *

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Abstract

This study aims to explore the current status of citizenship education in English schools, teachers' understanding of citizenship education, the challenges teachers face and the teaching methods they use to eliminate these challenges in the classroom. The design of this study relies on qualitative research methods where observations in Citizenship classes and interviews with teachers were conducted. The findings from this study suggest that the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) subjects have displaced Citizenship and have been weakening it since 2010. Furthermore, the nature of the subject is being challenged by something akin to new Civics and character education in which morality and nationality were more emphasised. Though the priorities have changed for policy makers, they have not completely changed for teachers. It was clear that teachers were doing more than the curriculum required. In the future, conducting more case studies and comparative research on the state of citizenship education in different English schools are suggested.

Keywords

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Introduction

England has faced numerous challenges related to education for their young citizens with increasing changes from globalisation and migration in recent decades. These two developments have made England more diverse than before. For the country, it has been a major challenge to deal with some of these societal problems such as political apathy, low turnout in elections, immigration issues, and extremism. Both education and the school system are impacted by these developments. Citizenship education emerged in this context as an important medium for exploring solutions to these problems, especially in the education of young citizens at the end of 1990s and was subsequently added to the National Curriculum (Kiwan, 2008).

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The National Curriculum in England, first established in 1989, sets the standards for education in state schools (5-16 years) throughout the country. The National curriculum briefly explains the statutory and elective courses including their learning objectives and content for the schools. A recent development in the National Curriculum was the introduction of Citizenship as a statutory subject in 2002. Despite interest in citizenship education by researchers (Jerome, 2012; Kisby, 2007; Kiwan, 2008; Pykett, 2007, 2010), especially in terms of citizenship policy, there has been little attention given to collecting recent data from schools to see how changes may have occurred since the subject became statutory in 2002 nor to how a change in government in 2010 may have impacted the subject.

An additional change was made in 2010 where academies and free schools, which make up more than 50% of primary and secondary schools in England, do not have to follow the National Curriculum. Academies are funded by the government and have the most autonomy out of all state schools in terms of expenditure of budget and freedom of determining the curriculum. Free schools are state schools where the parents and families have more say in their establishment and how they function. This change in the National Curriculum for academies and free schools created many variations in the ways citizenship education was delivered across the country. Furthermore in 2010, inspection of some school subjects including Citizenship done by the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) was stopped altogether.

Modern society exists with its citizens whom internalize rational values and civil principles and implement continuous communication among themselves. Rational values, civil principles and the presence of qualified and constant communication among citizens are the main characteristics that distinguish modern society from a crowd. In other words, there are no rational values, civilian principles or a constant communication among the individuals in a crowd. The formation of a citizen with these basic characteristics in the process of building society, and therefore social life, is one of the most important visions of education in the modern age. This article explores the challenges in citizenship education through teachers' experiences in England, which is one of the countries in Europe that has been endeavouring to continue modern and democratic social life in a healthy way. For readers in Turkey, this study can contribute to understanding for how to improve problem solving skills in citizenship education in Turkey. Turkey also strives for continuity of its distinctive democratic and modern social life. In order to realize basic features mentioned above, learning from and comparison to another European country with a similar mission could provide some valuable insights.

Due to the multiple ways citizenship education is delivered across England and to the lack of regular inspection of schools, studies like this one have a crucial role in understanding the state of the subject in schools today. In this respect, the following research questions were raised in this research process:

- What is the current status of citizenship education compared to the other school subjects?
- What are trained Citizenship teachers' understanding of citizenship education?
- What are the challenges and opportunities teachers have when delivering Citizenship lessons?

Defining Citizenship Education

The concept of citizenship can be associated with more than one discipline, but especially with law, politics and sociology. The roots of this concept can be traced back to the city states of ancient Greek and Roman times. Citizenship was first associated with the aristocracy who had the right to participate in these city states. In this historical period, it was used only to describe certain privileges of aristocratic men living in these city states. These privileges of aristocratic men had been transformed into the rights and duties of citizens after the French Revolution (Heater, 2004). In the republican citizenship that emerged with the French revolution, the state was exalted and the duties of the citizens were emphasized more than their rights. In England, the transformation of the monarchy into a parliamentary democracy over the years has led to the emergence of a more liberal understanding of citizenship. Civil, social, economic and cultural rights of citizens in England were recognized by the state with the influence of political and social developments in France and the United States from the eighteenth century onwards. In the middle of the twentieth century in England, the most widely known citizenship theory was developed by Marshall and was based on personal, political and social rights (Marshall & Bottomore, 1992).

Today citizenship has three essential and complementary elements: a status, a feeling and a practice (Osler & Starkey, 2005). As a status, citizenship refers to a number of rights and duties. Rights are not guaranteed and individuals need to constantly struggle to protect these rights. Citizenship as a feeling is about the feeling of belonging to a community of citizens (on the local, national and global level). The fact that citizens have citizenship status indicating that they belong to a country may not be sufficient enough for them to improve the feeling that they are part of the country they live in. Citizens who lack some of the privileges that other citizens may have may preclude them from feelings of belonging to the country. It is important that the majority groups understand the difficulties minority groups may face and that the state also ensures the rights of minority citizens. In practice, citizenship involves participation in social, cultural, political and economic activities. For example, if citizens are able to work in public services with a meritocracy, regardless of their race, ethnicity, belief or sex, it is a positive factor for citizenship in practice. Citizenship education is an education related to these three dimensions (status, feeling and practice) of citizenship (Osler & Starkey, 2005).

Citizenship education should be a lesson in which students learn not only about their responsibilities, but also about their rights and how to participate in the decision-making process in all matters involving them. The Council of Europe defines citizenship education as “training, awareness raising, information, practices and activities which aim, by equipping learners with knowledge, skills and understanding and developing their attitudes and behaviour, to empower them to exercise and defend their democratic rights and responsibilities in society, to value diversity and to play an active part in democratic life, with a view to the promotion and protection of democracy and the rule of law” (Council of Europe, 2010, p. 7). This definition, in which learning content is emphasized along with transforming knowledge into behaviour, is one of the most widely recognized definitions of citizenship education in the literature.

The scope of citizenship education in England was determined by two successive national policy documents prepared by different committees chaired by prominent figures in Citizenship studies. First, the Advisory Group on Citizenship was formed and their report entitled “Education for Citizenship and the Teaching of Democracy in Schools” which was published in 1998 became commonly-known as the Crick report (Crick, 1998). In this report, it was stated that citizenship education has three strands: social and moral responsibility, community involvement, and political literacy. These strands have been largely adhered to in the 2002 Citizenship program as rights and responsibilities, communities and identities, and government and democracy. These aspects were complemented by four elements: concepts, values and dispositions, skills and aptitudes, and knowledge and understanding.

According to the Crick Report, the aim and purpose of citizenship education was defined:

- to make secure and to increase the knowledge, skills and values relevant to the nature and practices of participative democracy;
- to enhance the awareness of rights and duties, and the sense of responsibilities needed for the development of pupils into active citizens;
- to establish the value to individuals, schools and society of involvement in the local and wider community (Crick, 1998, p. 40).

Citizenship is a school subject that most relates to the political dimension of education in England. This characteristic of citizenship education distinguishes it from another National Curriculum subject, personal social and health education (PSHE), which is often confused with citizenship education (Crick, 1998).

Later, another curriculum review committee was formed and the committee published their report entitled “Diversity and Citizenship” in 2007, which is known as the Ajebo Report (Ajebo, Kiwan, & Sharma, 2007). The Ajebo Report introduced a new strand: “identity and Diversity: living together in the UK”. Since then, even though there has been different implementations in schools, citizenship education has been understood mainly with these four strands (social and moral responsibility, community involvement, political literacy, and identity and diversity) from these two foundational reports (Önal, 2017; Önal, Öztürk, & Kenan 2017).

National Context

Following the election of a Labour Party Government in 1997 in England, citizenship and democracy in education received more attention in the political agenda. The Labour government in which David Blunkett served as the secretary of state for education decided to form a national committee called the Advisory Group on Citizenship and was chaired by Professor Bernard Crick. The members of the Advisory Group on Citizenship thought Citizenship as a statutory subject in the National Curriculum could help to solve some societal problems. Another argument for citizenship education was that low turnout in recent elections constituted a need for citizenship education (Heater, 2004). Some researchers associated the introduction of citizenship education with the political ideology of the Labour Party (Kisby, 2007), while others proposed that citizenship education was introduced to raise governable citizens who internalized the state’s expectations from the citizenry (Pykett, 2007). According to Kiwan (2008), the members of the Advisory Group on Citizenship considered that the most pressing citizenship problems society faced at that time were, in descending order of frequency: the political apathy of young people; society in moral crisis; low voter turnout; legal changes (e.g. Europe and the Human Rights Act); diversity/immigration issues; education- a move away from “standards” emphasis; and finally, a renegotiation between “citizen” and “state”.

Following the Crick Report, the subject became statutory in 2002 for students who were between 11 and 16 years old. However this report was criticised as being “unwittingly racist” by Osler and Starkey (2000, p. 7) due to the language used particularly for minorities in England. However, terrible attacks by suicide bombers took place in the London metro and bus lines in 2005. The attackers were from minority groups and they were born, raised and educated in Britain. After these tragic bombings, there was a widespread public controversy and debate about the integration of diverse groups in the country, including the role of education in promoting identity, diversity, citizenship and community cohesion (Osler, 2008). Following this public discussion and the recommendations of the Ajebo report, a new strand ‘identity and diversity: living together in the UK’ was introduced into the curriculum in 2008. Jerome (2012) discussed the connections between the political context of the Labour party and its citizenship education model in schools and he argued that the Labour governments had failed to achieve all that was intended.

The Labour Party lost the general election in 2010 and the Conservative Party formed a coalition government with the Liberal Democrat Party. During this period there were public discussions about issues such as multiculturalism which is closely linked to citizenship education. First, PM David Cameron claimed that state supported multiculturalism had failed which was interpreted by researchers to mean multiculturalism in education would no longer receive government attention (BBC, 2011). Furthermore, citizenship education's success in creating social cohesion was debated and some thought it should be removed from the National Curriculum (Amnesty International UK, 2011; Citizenship Foundation, 2012; The Guardian, 2011; Whiteley, 2014). There was strong lobbying by some citizenship education related NGOs during that time which helped to keep citizenship education alive and although the government decided to keep Citizenship in the National Curriculum, albeit with some critical changes, in the end a lot of schools started to withdraw Citizenship from their curriculum. Ultimately, schools have independence in interpreting the National Curriculum for their individual curriculums and whether they decide to make citizenship its own distinct subject.

In the new programme, some concepts and requirements such as human rights, multicultural society, diversity, discrimination, Europe, UN, community cohesion, and student voice were marginalised or removed. New requirements such as monarchy, money, budgeting, credit and debt, insurance, savings and pensions were inserted. In 2014, Fundamental British Values (FBV) as part of Social, Moral, Cultural, Spiritual (SMCS) education were introduced. This new requirement was considered by many of the schools as part of citizenship education. Some saw the multicultural aspect of citizenship education being downplayed to the advantage of the promotion of FBV (Hahn, 2015). Moreover, inspection of citizenship education and the bursary for Citizenship teacher training stopped. According to the Education and Inspections Act which was published in 2006 (after 2005 London bombings), it was a requirement for all schools in England to promote community cohesion and to present a report to Ofsted showing how the school promotes community cohesion (Kerr, Smith, & Twine, 2008), however this has not been the case since 2013.

Another development since 2013 is that Ofsted inspections focus on student achievements but do not focus enough on student voice (Hahn, 2015). In an era of neo-liberal focus on competition, schools' success on the General Certificate in Secondary Education (GCSE) and advanced (A and A-S) level exams are promoted on their websites with special attention to core subjects (English, Maths, and Science) but not subjects like Citizenship. With these changes and new requirements for schools, Davies and Chong (2016) noted, the context of the subject became very different than what the Crick Report had designed in 1998. The subject now seemed to focus on improving the character of students and forming them into 'good citizens' but not emphasizing critical thinking skills.

The government is currently discussing the removal of Citizenship A-Level exams, which may also cause the removal of the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) exams and lessen the importance of the subject in schools. Students take the GCSE exams at the age of 15-16. The passing grades in the GCSEs are named A*, A, B and C. The percentage of students who score between A*- C (passing grade) from 5 and more school subjects is 53.8% nationwide in 2015. These grades are used to enter high schools in England. In 2015, there was an 18% drop in the number of entries for GCSE Citizenship studies (Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation [Ofqual], 2015). At the same time, the number of universities who accept the GCSE and A-level exams in Citizenship for their application are significantly decreasing. The majority of the schools can now choose their own curriculum and they do not have to follow the National Curriculum. This means that Citizenship is not a statutory subject in practice anymore and schools may remove it from their curriculum, even if it stays in the National curriculum. Furthermore, even if schools keep the subject, there is a possibility that they may employ untrained teachers instead of trained Citizenship teachers who have the Postgraduate

Certificate of Education (PGCE) in Citizenship for the subject. While citizenship education programmes have steadily decreased, become less regulated in schools, and seem to have strayed from the original intentions of the subject outlined in the Crick and Ajegbo Reports, this study aims to uncover how citizenship education currently functions in schools.

Method

This research aims to explore the existing situation of citizenship education in schools in England. The design of this study relies on qualitative research conducted in 6 schools including a pilot school.

Participants

The first writer of this article contacted Citizenship experts in London to get their suggestions about secondary schools (11-16 ages) where an ideal example of citizenship education was implemented. School visits were arranged in these schools in order to meet teachers and students who had significant and useful experiences in citizenship education. The schools that had Citizenship lessons with at least one session (35 to 60 minutes) a week time dedication and employed trained Citizenship teachers (having PGCE in Citizenship) were selected. In this research, semi-structured and audio-recorded interviews were held for approximately an hour with 8 trained Citizenship teachers from 6 different schools. Then, these interviews were complemented by at least one semi-structured classroom observation (by an outside researcher) in the schools to see how teachers applied and interpreted National Curriculum for Citizenship in their classrooms. For this study, schools and participant teachers were selected purposefully. One school was a private boys' school which had mainly white British students and it was used as a pilot study school. One school was a state girls' school with students from diverse backgrounds aside from gender. The remainder schools were diverse in terms of gender, ethnicity, language and religion. In the state schools, the number of students eligible for free school meals (a proxy indicator of relative poverty) was around 50 %. In 2015, Key Stage 4 achievement of the schools in GCSE exams was between 42% and 83% of the school population. In other words, successful and unsuccessful schools were included in this study. The subject was called 'Citizenship' only at two schools. In the remainder schools, Citizenship was combined with subjects such as personal social and health education (PSHE). This research is limited to the schools and teachers in London who participated in this study.

Data Collection and Analyses

A semi-structured interview and observation form were designed by researchers to collect data. Then for reliability purposes of the forms, a pilot study was conducted in the private boys' secondary school. Finally the forms were revised to clarify interview questions and observation focuses. The research data was collected during the 2015 and 2016 school year. The most striking and direct quotations which give an accurate representation of all participant teachers' views were given. Direct quotations are coded as T1, T2, ... T8. Schools' names are coded as Pilot School, School A, School B ... and School E. Besides interview and classroom observation data, course materials and program documents for citizenship education were collected at the schools visited. The teacher interview data with supporting data from other sources are presented primarily to contextualise teacher interpretations (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). Three researchers analysed the data from interviews, class observations and documents. They discussed the results of the analyses to reach a higher consistency of the findings. At last, a British expert's opinion from Association for Citizenship Teaching in England was also used to increase consistency of the research findings.

Results and Discussion

Findings from this study will be given under three themes derived from research questions: the status of citizenship education, the concept of citizenship education, and the challenges and opportunities during the delivery of Citizenship education.

The Status of Citizenship Education

Our first research question was about the status of the Citizenship subject compared to other school subjects at the secondary schools visited in this study. Today citizenship education in most of the secondary schools in England means SMCS and FBV education, which are requirements from the Prevent Agenda (Home Office, 2011). Since Ofsted only inspects these requirements in schools most of the schools only dedicate time to SMSC and FBV education. Yet, these requirements do not have to be under the subject of Citizenship. During Ofsted inspection, schools can easily claim that they teach these required topics under other subjects such as religious education or history education. The problem with moving the few required Citizenship topics in conjunction with other school subjects is that it can lead to the phasing out of Citizenship as its own lesson and thus the dismissal of other important citizenship topics. A teacher's response shows this clearly:

"Now, Ofsted are looking for SMSC education, but they'll say I'm happy to see it in RE [religious education] or history or anywhere. I think it would be good if Citizenship was properly inspected in schools." T6 (School D)

Contrary to the general reluctance towards the subject among the country, Citizenship at the schools visited in this study was a valued subject. All teachers stated that they were supported by their head teachers (school principals), which was vital given the lack of ministerial support for the subject.

"I'm so lucky that the head teacher, that we have a lesson a week for every student, I think that's becoming more and more rare. She really values it." T6 (School D)

Based on the observations, it was apparent that Citizenship was not only an exam-based subject but was also expanded to outside the classroom through posters related to Citizenship topics like human rights. In some schools, projects related to social problems (such as child marriages, female genital mutilation) took place in Citizenship lessons and were carried out by Citizenship teachers. Teachers were also responsible for student clubs (i.e. debate club) in the schools in which topics related to Citizenship were discussed by students. However, there are still problems related to the status of the subject. Citizenship as a school subject did not enjoy equal status with other subjects and teachers were unhappy about this. One of the teachers' response summarises the current status of the subject in schools:

"Even though it was a valued subject, Citizenship was at the bottom of the list compared to the other school subjects. A Maths, Science or an English teacher might come and take some students in the middle of the lesson saying 'these students need more English or Maths or Science'" T4 (School C)

In the schools visited; there were one or two trained Citizenship teachers but the necessity was always more than that. Schools were not in favour of recruiting more trained teachers for Citizenship subject which led to other subject teachers such as Maths, Science, and Art teaching Citizenship. This was not the case for other school subjects. As Burton and May (2015) indicated, other subject teachers did not always teach Citizenship voluntarily and they did not know how to teach the subject. Citizenship can be an effective subject and when it is thoroughly implemented and school-supported, it is shown to increase students' achievement in national exams (GCSE exams) (Audsley, Smith, & Twine, 2013). The Citizenship Education Longitudinal Study (CELS) project also showed that a quality

citizenship education increases students' interest in politics and their engagement in political activities (Keating, Kerr, Benton, Mundy, & Lopes, 2011).

Despite these positives of citizenship education in schools, the subject is not always valued sufficiently even in these pro-Citizenship schools. Some of the participant teachers sadly emphasised how the subject was underestimated by schools. One teacher put it very clearly:

“Children are just told that the only subjects that matter are English, Maths and Science and more recently STEM subjects!” T7 (School E)

These findings were also supported by data from Ofsted. The fact that a subject is selected by pupils in national exams in England shows that the subject gets more attention in that school. Ofsted declared that the number of students who take the GCSE exam in Citizenship declined remarkably between 2009 and 2012 (The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills, 2013). Then, according to the reports of the institution responsible for regulation of exams, this decline continued in the following years (Ofqual, 2015). This can also mean that the subject is not seen as important as other school subjects in an exam based education system.

In light of the literature and findings, we would argue that when citizenship education is fully implemented, it is an effective subject for creating change. Thus, Citizenship should be a distinct subject taught by a trained teacher with a certain time dedication in schools and Citizenship should be inspected in schools regularly like other school subjects. As teachers said, this time dedication can be at least a session a week to successfully instil and establish the subject to reach the goal of National Curriculum for Citizenship.

The Concept of Citizenship Education

Our second research question was about what teachers understand from citizenship education. During interviews, some Citizenship teachers mention that Citizenship improves student skills such as increasing their capacity to live in a diverse world, political literacy, questioning world issues and engaging and taking part in school and in society. Some teachers put it very bluntly:

“Citizenship is about teaching kids to call out crap and say -that's crap” T5 (School C)

“It's about understanding what rights you have and what responsibilities that come with those, how to protect your own or other people's rights” T2 (School B)

“I look at it as us trying to develop students that are capable of living in the diverse world that we have.” T1 (School A)

We understood these responses as Citizenship is about learning rights, responsibilities and stimulating and empowering students' capacity to develop critical thinking skills which are also supported by Hahn (2015). For some other teachers, Citizenship teaches students about current affairs related to society, the country and the world, and keeps them up-to-date.

“For example, what happened in Paris, lots of students were in school really scared. There's lots of things on the internet. One of the things on the internet was a post, it was something like 'next people [terrorists] are going to come to the streets of London' and the young people are really scared, and fear breeds hate, and what you don't want is for the young people to start to marginalise or think badly of other people in society, or think of this being something against Islam, or Muslim young people. You need to talk about, which some teachers don't find very comfortable but in Citizenship we have to do it because we give them the information so that they're more tolerant.” T6 (School D)

When Paris suffered terrorist attacks in November 2015, most of the students only made sense of this in the Citizenship lessons. It seems that Citizenship also has a role to prevent marginalism among students and make them more tolerant towards each other. Teachers also reported that Citizenship helps students to be aware of local, national and global issues, and teaches them about their rights and responsibilities. Most critically, it enables students to gain both knowledge and an ability to participate in order to become active citizens.

“To teach about how society works... we also make sure that whether it’s local or national or global, encouraging them to realise that they have a part to play in all of those aspects. ... It is also about getting the knowledge and skills to participate” T4 (School C)

Since FBV (i.e. democracy, the rule of law) and financial issues are an important part of national curriculum for Citizenship in England (Department for Education [DfE], 2013), we asked teachers their idea about the place of FBV and financial issues in Citizenship. In the pilot study school of this research, one teacher said that:

“Citizenship in my school actually means teaching about FBV” T8 (Pilot School)

In some other schools, some teachers emphasized “a critical engagement with those values” related to FBV. For example, a critical understanding about what is meant by democracy or human rights that digs deep. In terms of FBV, teachers called these values ‘universal’ rather than ‘British’. A teacher stated that:

“I’m sceptical about the place for issues of personal finance within citizenship education. ... In terms of FBV, I would want to develop knowledge and awareness in a critical engagement with those values, for example, a critical understanding about what we mean when we talk about democracy” T7 (School E)

Today, it can be argued that citizenship education is losing its political strand which mainly aims to improve critical thinking skills of children in schools. As Davies and Chong (2016) stated, character education which is very different than citizenship education has been approved by policy makers in England and this trend can be seen in the national curriculum for Citizenship. Teachers were also asked about their views on financial issues as part of the Citizenship subject. Teachers were sceptical about the place for personal finance topics within citizenship education. They thought that personal finance was as part of PSHE, which is another school subject in the national curriculum. However, they were happy to talk about the political side or the public use of money in their lessons such as raising and using taxes.

Another issue is that even though there may be confusion in many schools across the country about the difference between PSHE and Citizenship, the teachers in this study were clear about the distinction. They refused to accept the attempts to transform the nature of Citizenship into a more person-centred subject. One teacher put it very clearly:

“For me PSHE is about the person, the individual; Citizenship is about society. A lot of schools, they do a combination of PSHE and Citizenship, and they will say they’re looking at a unit on smoking and Citizenship. For me, that’s not Citizenship. For me, it’s looking at real world issues” T1 (School A)

Teachers emphasized the importance of not confusing, PSHE with citizenship education, something the media does all too often. As a result, we would argue that teachers had a clear idea about what constitutes citizenship education and their understandings of citizenship education reflected the

strands of the Crick and Ajegbo Reports. Schools' Citizenship program documents, which is an interpretation of National Curriculum and changes from one school to another were analysed. After document analyses, the themes included in the year outline of Citizenship in schools were beyond the National Curriculum. Teachers were very enthusiastic to teach and discuss themes related to politics (i.e. human rights, law, justice and democracy) in their lessons more than the themes related to PSHE subject (i.e. financial issues, smoking).

The Challenges and Opportunities During Delivery of Citizenship Education

Our third research question was to explore the challenges teachers face when giving Citizenship lessons in England and the teaching methods they use to overcome these challenges. For some teachers, understanding the varied levels of students' existing knowledge related to the Citizenship topics and to find a teaching method for students with less familiarity on the subject was an important challenge in their lessons. For example, one teacher said:

“... finding the right pitch ... at eleven years of age ... Some of them will have come from households where they will regularly discuss the news, the Prime Minister, Conservatives, Labour. And some of them will arrive who have never even heard those terms before. ... it's very difficult to cater for all ...” T4 (School C)

In this school, the teacher created a book with a list of key vocabulary, terms and concepts related to Citizenship for his students and shared it with his colleagues. After learning each concept (i.e. democracy, justice) students are expected to be able to use this concept in a sentence showing they understand the concept.

Another challenge for the teachers was teaching about “British Values”. England is a diverse country so calling some values (i.e. democracy, rule of law, human rights) specifically national instead of universal does not help when teaching these values in a diverse country. For example a teacher said:

“...You'll see it in a minute, my classroom is completely diverse. ... So you also have to take into account cultural expectations and cultural issues as well.” T1 (School A)

Teaching controversial issues was also a challenge for some teachers in their Citizenship lessons. Teaching about refugees and asylum seekers were not always easy. For example, one teacher said:

“...when we were looking at refugees and asylum seekers, sometimes children can be a voice of their parent, and you can hear... well they want to come and take all our jobs. It's hard to challenge it without criticising their parent ... so you want to change their mind without annoying their parents. I think that's the biggest challenge.” T6 (School D)

Another teacher mentioned the difficulties of teaching about some sensitive issues in Citizenship lessons:

“Forced marriage, FGM [female genital mutilation], radicalisation ... some of the issues can be very sensitive. So it's about allowing students to talk about them in a way that is non-offensive, or respectful of other people's views.” T3 (School B)

To deal with these various challenges teachers created some original strategies to transform these obstacles into opportunities as we saw in the example of one teacher's Citizenship vocabulary/concepts book to support students who were less familiar with Citizenship topics. Other common teaching strategies observed were holding debates, discussions and group work. It was also observed that the classrooms were set up in a way that was conducive to encouraging interaction among students. This proved important as it was observed that the majority of the lesson depended on student participation. As Osler (2011) also observed, group work was key to increasing student participation and co-operation among students. Furthermore, as one teacher mentioned, group work provided an opportunity for students to share different experiences originating from their diverse social backgrounds to eliminate student biases towards each other and also to learn from each other. We should also remember that, as Jerome (2012) suggested, through a combination of classroom activities and additional activities beyond the classroom and school promoted by teachers could help to eliminate some of these challenges teachers faced in Citizenship lessons. It was observed that these activities were implemented to some extent in the schools visited.

Conclusion and Suggestions

In conclusion, Citizenship was a professionally implemented subject at the schools visited in England but the status of the subject mostly depended on the support of the head teacher. According to teachers, core subjects and the STEM subjects have displaced Citizenship and weakened it since 2010. Citizenship needs a better status in schools to successfully embed and establish the subject and to reach the goal set by the National Curriculum. For this purpose, we would argue that more trained Citizenship teachers should be employed in the schools and that the department of education gently pressure the schools for more time dedication for the subject. A certain time should be dedicated for the subject and this can be at least a session a week to successfully establish the subject and to reach the goal of national curriculum for Citizenship. Ofsted regular inspection should also be brought back to improve the value of Citizenship.

In terms of understanding citizenship education, it is seen as a subject stimulating and empowering students' capacity to develop critical thinking skills. Citizenship education is understood as a subject that keeps students up-to-date about current affairs. According to teachers, Citizenship also helps students to be aware of local, national, global issues and learning about their rights and responsibilities. Additionally, the subject increases students' ability to participate in order to become active citizens. In terms of FBV, teachers called these values 'universal' rather than 'British' which is the official classification of these values by the government. According to teachers, not personal finance but the political and social side or the public use of money is seen as part of citizenship education. Teachers emphasized the importance of not confusing the subject with other school subjects. For them PSHE is a subject about the individual and Citizenship is about society. The nature of Citizenship is being challenged by something akin to new civics and character education which has more emphasis on knowledge of the political and legal system and societal morality instead of a push for critical engagement.

When we think about the importance of critical thinking skills for individuals in modern democracies and its particular significance for citizenship education, this recent trend of under-valuing this skill may lead to adverse effects on the development of citizenship education. However, while the priorities have changed for policy makers, they have not completely changed for teachers. In light of the class observations and document analyses of school programmes, it is clear that teachers were doing more than the curriculum required. They taught topics closely related to the breadth of the Crick and Ajebo Reports which were beyond what the National Curriculum required. The authorities should be

more careful about their definition of citizenship education because they might create confusion in schools which is difficult to clarify later. Teachers should also be encouraged to continue teaching political aspects of the subject.

Finally, teachers mainly see the following as challenges during delivery of citizenship education: students' existing Citizenship knowledge, being required to teach some universal values as "fundamentally British" even though England is a diverse country, and teaching controversial and sensitive issues such as forced marriage, female genital mutilation, and radicalisation. Teachers found some interactive and original strategies to deal with these challenges. However, they often needed more guidance and time dedication to meet the new requirements and in order to balance these requirements with, as Osler and Starkey (2005) stated clearly, the principles of democracy and universal human rights. Teachers should be encouraged to use a combination of activities in different levels: classroom, school and the outside world.

In our study, we found that the teachers generally went above and beyond the basic requirements for Citizenship education and had a strong understanding of what should be included in lessons and were enthusiastic about the importance of teaching these lessons. However, further studies, more in depth qualitative case studies, based on "grounded theory" perhaps, can be implemented to investigate the state of citizenship education among the different schools in England. The most important lesson to be drawn from England's citizenship education experience is that simply requiring the subject to be taught does not mean a successful development of the programme will take place. Placement of the subject in schools for a certain period of time should not be seen as a guarantee. Policy makers should show more effort to ensure the programme effectiveness and furthermore schools should be inspected regularly for continuity of the subject in schools in light of universal principles of democracy and human rights.

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