
ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP AND YOUNG PEOPLE: OPPORTUNITIES, EXPERIENCES AND CHALLENGES IN AND BEYOND SCHOOL

CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION LONGITUDINAL STUDY: FOURTH ANNUAL REPORT

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Introduction

The Citizenship Education Longitudinal Study, conducted by the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) on behalf of the Department for Education and Skills (DfES), aims to identify measure and evaluate the extent to which effective practice in citizenship education develops in schools¹. The study began in 2001 and will conclude in 2009². The report sets out the findings from the second longitudinal survey and visits to ten case-study schools.

Key findings

Approaches to citizenship education in schools: an update

The analysis provides an important update with regard to the status and practice of citizenship education in schools. The findings from this update are listed in brief below:

- Analysis suggests that the main change in approach to citizenship education in schools has been an **increased focus** on curriculum aspects of citizenship education provision. The proportion of schools described as *progressing* and *implicit*, in the typology of schools developed in 2003, remained largely unchanged in 2005. However, the proportion of schools described as *minimalist* decreased, while the proportion described as *focused* increased.
- Schools continued to use a **variety** of citizenship **delivery models**. However, there was a notable increase in the use of **dedicated timeslots** and in the use of assembly time.
- Teachers were more likely in 2005, than in 2003, to believe that citizenship education was best approached as a specific subject and through extra-curricular activities.
- School leaders and teachers were **more familiar** with a range of **key documents** related to citizenship education in 2005 than in 2003.
- Teacher confidence in teaching citizenship-related topics saw a moderate increase in 2005, although overall confidence levels remained relatively low.

¹ For further information about the Citizenship Education Longitudinal Study and details of previous annual reports visit www.nfer.ac.uk/research-areas/citizenship

² The second longitudinal survey involved a nationally representative sample of 91 schools, and reports the responses of 81 school leaders, 301 teachers and 13,643 students in Year 9 (age 14 to 15). The case-study school visits involved in-depth interviews with Key Stage 3 and 4 students, teachers and senior managers. The data was collected in the academic year 2004-2005.

- Students were **more aware** of citizenship in 2005 than in 2003. The main ways in which they reported learning about citizenship was: through personal, social and health education (PSHE), religious education, as a discrete subject and tutor groups.
- Descriptions of citizenship education that encompassed '**active**' components, such as voting and politics, were relatively uncommon amongst students, although a sizeable proportion identified the importance of belonging to the community.
- Although **traditional teaching and learning methods** continued to dominate in citizenship and other subjects, a range of more active methods were also used. There was also an increase in the use of computers, the internet and external agencies, and a decrease in the use of textbooks.
- There was a substantial **increase** in the proportion of schools with an **assessment policy** for citizenship education in 2005, and the use of formal assessment methods was considerably more widespread than in 2003.
- Teachers received more **training** in citizenship in 2005 than in 2003. Despite this there was a **high demand** for further training in relation to subject matter, assessment and reporting and teaching methods.
- The **main challenges** to citizenship education were felt, by school leaders and teachers, to include time pressure, assessment, the status of citizenship and teachers' subject expertise with student engagement and participation seen as lesser challenges.

Background

The report has a specific focus on *active citizenship* and *young people*. This is in direct response to a growing recognition of the link between citizenship education in schools and wider policy initiatives which attempt to increase the participation and engagement of children and young people in society. The report uses the latest data from the Study in three ways: firstly, to update the progress of the development of citizenship education, as an active practice, in schools generally from 2003 to 2005; secondly, to probe the nature and extent of the opportunities and experiences that students have had in relation to citizenship as an active practice in their schools, and in wider

communities (i.e. in contexts beyond school) and the challenges involved in providing such opportunities and experiences; and, thirdly, to explore the readiness of citizenship education practice in schools to contribute to wider policy initiatives, notably the **make a positive contribution** outcome in the *Every Child Matters: Change for Children* programme and civil renewal action plan. The report's discussion and conclusions focus on the key challenges to the promotion of active citizenship in and beyond school.

Potential for citizenship education as an active practice to take place in and beyond school

The findings from the study highlight the considerable potential for citizenship education, as an active practice, (a) to take place, especially in schools, with links to wider communities, and (b) to contribute to the *Every Child Matters: Change for Children* programme action plan. They suggest that a number of the key underlying factors, which foster and sustain active citizenship, were already evident to, and supported by, students in their daily lives in and beyond school.

These factors include:

- **Sense of community and belonging** - students valued the concept of community and welcome the sense of belonging that being part of a community can bring. They want to be part of strong, safe communities that are based on networks and friendships that foster trust, concern for individual well-being, a sense of self-worth and that encourage individual and collective social responsibility.
- **Attachment to the school community** - the majority of students viewed school as the main social and participative community in their lives. This was because of the amount of time they spend there and the friendships they make and networks they join. They saw school as providing a social and participative experience as much as an educational one.
- **Attachment to wider communities** - though wider communities, particularly the local community, were not the major community in which young people participated, they still valued being part of this wider community. They cared about what happened in the wider community and valued being part of family and neighbourhood networks, where these were present.

- **Having a voice** - young people believed that they should have a voice on matters that affect them, especially in school. Most students said that whilst it might not always be appropriate for them to have the final say, they valued being involved in decision making and wanted to be consulted about issues that affect them. They were keen to show that they can use their voice, both individually and collectively, in a responsible manner.
- **Making a contribution** - most young people were keen to make an active and responsible contribution to the communities to which they belong, particularly the school community. Many students, particularly older ones, felt that they should take responsibility for themselves, their schools and their peers. They demonstrated considerable sophistication in their views of the need for a balance between the granting of rights and exercise of responsibilities. However, they also revealed a clearer awareness of their rights than of their responsibilities.
- **Linking opportunities and experiences** - young people made links between their opportunities and experiences of active citizenship in different contexts. They were able to compare and contrast their experiences between, as well as within, schools, and between school and their local community. They were sensitive to change in their opportunities and experiences of active citizenship, in these different contexts.

These factors are reinforced through educational policy and legal statute, notably:

- **Statutory citizenship education in schools** - schools have a legal duty to ensure that all students receive their statutory entitlement to citizenship education. The aims and processes of the new subject, as detailed in the curriculum Order, afford considerable potential for the development of citizenship as an active practice. Most students have the capacity to and show an interest in taking part and making a contribution through citizenship education, as an active practice, in their schools.
- **New statutory frameworks for the inspection of schools and of children's services** - these new frameworks encourage schools and those in charge of children's services at a local level to ensure that children and young people have a voice, feel safe, secure and valued and are

involved in making a positive contribution, in partnership with others. They also actively involve children and young people in the actual review and inspection process in schools and local communities. The frameworks support the change for children programme action plan.

Recognition and realisation of potential for active citizenship in practice

Despite the existence of supportive student attitudes and legislative frameworks the evidence from the survey data and case-study schools suggests that the potential for citizenship education, as an active practice, to take place is only partially being realised at present. This, in turn, limits the potential of citizenship education to contribute to the new *Every Child Matters: Change for Children* programme.

The evidence in the report confirms that although students currently have opportunities and experiences of active citizenship, in general, these:

- were largely confined to the **school context**;
- comprised largely '**horizontal**' rather than '**vertical**' participation and engagement³. They concerned opportunities to **take part** rather than opportunities to effect **real change** by engaging with the decision-making process;
- did not often **connect** opportunities and experiences in the curriculum with those in the whole school;
- often only involved **certain groups** of students rather than all students, despite an invitation for all students to participate;
- did not regularly link to **wider contexts** and communities beyond school.

The case-study school experiences also highlighted the variation in the contribution of citizenship, as a national curriculum subject, to students' opportunities and experiences of active citizenship. While there was evidence of considerable efforts underway in some schools to make the contribution real and meaningful for students, this was not the case in all schools.

³ Jochum *et al.*, 2005 draw a distinction between 'horizontal' and 'vertical' participation. 'Horizontal' participation relates to participation in community activities, charities, sports clubs, associations and is less formal. 'Vertical' participation, meanwhile, relates to participation in political affairs, including participation in political processes and governance related to the decision-making processes in institutions and in society.

Recommendations concerning active citizenship for audiences involved in citizenship education

The findings suggest a number of recommendations that the main audiences currently involved in citizenship education at a range of levels should consider in order to take active citizenship forward. Some of the recommendations for policy makers at national and local level, practitioners in schools and representatives of the wider community are listed below. There is a particular focus on four key measures that help to lay secure foundations for active citizenship in schools:

Recommendations for policy makers at national and local level

- Increase awareness and understanding about citizenship as an active practice and of the **key contribution** that schools can make in laying the foundations for such practice.
- Publicise and make **more explicit** the links between the promotion of active citizenship in schools and the wider participation and civil renewal agendas, notably *Every Child Matters: Change for Children* programme action plan, and emphasise the particular contribution of the citizenship curriculum to participation.
- Work to provide a more **coordinated** approach to the development of citizenship as an active practice, particularly at a **local level**, that links schools with key community partners and organisations, and affords more **'joined up'** opportunities and experiences for young people.
- Ensure that young people have opportunities and experiences of active citizenship in the community that offer experiences of both 'horizontal' and 'vertical' participation and enable **real engagement** with decision-making processes.
- Provide requisite **training and resources**, particularly in schools for school leaders, citizenship coordinators and teachers, as well as for students. This training should focus on improving the understanding of citizenship as an active practice, and increase the confidence of its delivery through more active learning and teaching approaches.
- Work in **multi-agency partnerships**, involving schools, to tackle the challenge of encouraging increased engagement and participation from

those **students** who are underachieving, disaffected or socially excluded.

Recommendations for school leaders, coordinators and teachers

The cumulative practice from the case-study schools identifies four measures that were important in enhancing the active citizenship opportunities and experiences for students in those schools. These four measures suggest that in order to improve the chances of laying secure foundations for citizenship as an active practice within the curriculum, with links to the whole school and wider community beyond, schools should consider ensuring that they:

1. Build and maintain a strong sense of belonging to the school community (with links to belonging to the local community).

There are a number of measures that schools can take to develop a sense of belonging for students within the school community including:

- Giving students a voice.
- Creating a climate for mutual respect between teachers and students.
- Ensuring that there is equality of opportunity for all students.
- Dividing the school community up into smaller communities.
- Improving the quality of the school buildings and facilities that students use.

2. Develop an ongoing, active focus in the delivery of citizenship education

This includes:

- 'Bringing to life' citizenship-related lessons for students.
- Providing an equal focus on rights and responsibilities.
- Encouraging students to be critically active and reflective.
- Ensuring citizenship-related lessons and topics are sufficiently differentiated.
- Considering the skills and knowledge development needs of students and teachers.

3. Assist students to participate in decision-making processes in school and beyond, on a regular basis

Schools need to do more to help students to:

- Understand why having a voice is important.
- Use their voice effectively.
- Understand the mechanisms and processes of influencing policy and change.
- Believe that their voice will be heard, taken seriously and acted upon.

4. Provide sufficient training and development in relation to active citizenship for teachers and students.

At present, many citizenship coordinators and teachers regard active citizenship as something distinct from the citizenship curriculum, and are struggling with a sense of what it means and how it should be approached. Training is needed to help develop a view of active citizenship as an integral feature of learning and teaching in citizenship education. Training of teachers should take place in parallel with that of students.

Recommendations for representatives of the wider community

- Recognise that the provision of opportunities and experiences of active citizenship is not solely the responsibility of schools. Schools can make a major contribution but they cannot develop citizenship as an active practice effectively without the support of those in the wider community.
- **Take responsibility** for their actions and the impact that these have on young people. Students in the case-study schools were influenced by the attitudes and behaviour of those in their families, neighbourhoods and those they saw in the media. Work hard to promote a strong sense of belonging, particularly to the local neighbourhood or community, and actively involve young people in that process.
- Recognise that for many students the **school** is their main social and participative community and learn from best practice in how schools foster a sense of belonging to the school community. Those in the wider community can benefit from working with and in schools and sharing and promoting good practice.

- **Encourage** students to build on the knowledge, understanding and skills that they develop through active citizenship in schools by providing them with further opportunities for active involvement and participation in communities beyond school, that show them that their contribution is important and valued.

Moving forward

The findings from the fourth annual report underline the potency of the Study in helping to identify, measure and evaluate the extent to which effective practice in citizenship education is developing in schools. Though these are interim findings they help to shed more light on the progress of citizenship education in schools and, in particular, on how well practitioners are defining and approaching citizenship as an active practice. They suggest recommendations for key audiences involved in citizenship education. They also prepare the ground for further analysis of active citizenship in future surveys and school case-study visits through the Citizenship Education Longitudinal Study.

Additional Information

Copies of the full report (RR732) - priced £4.95 - are available by writing to DfES Publications, PO Box 5050, Sherwood Park, Annesley, Nottingham NG15 0DJ.

Cheques should be made payable to "DfES Priced Publications".

Copies of this Research Brief (RB732) are available free of charge from the above address (tel: 0845 60 222 60). Research Briefs and Research Reports can also be accessed at www.dfes.gov.uk/research/

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