



Ofsted Subject Conference Report: Citizenship

Title: Citizenship in secondary schools

Venue: Sanctuary Buildings, London

Date: 13 July 2004

Speakers:

- Stephen Twigg MP, Minister for Schools
- Scott Harrison HMI, Specialist Subject Adviser for citizenship
- Marjorie Findlay Stone and Catherine Fallon, Eltham Hill Technology College for Girls
- Jessica Gold, School Council UK, with students from Haggerston School, Hackney
- Liz Craft, Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA)
- Peter Brett, Department for Education and Skills (DfES) regional consultant.

Information was also provided by:

- David Kerr, on the National Foundation for Education Research (NFER) report 'Making Citizenship Education Real'
- John Lloyd on the DfES self evaluation toolkit
- Yusef Azad on the work of the Hansard Commission

Synopsis

The aim of the conference was to consider issues emerging from the inspection of citizenship in secondary schools, and ways in which they have been addressed. The 75 conference members included Her Majesty's Chief Inspector, HMI, teachers, Local Education Authority (LEA) advisers, initial teacher training providers and officers from DfES and QCA.

Summaries of conference sessions

Introduction to the conference. Stephen Twigg MP, Minister for Schools.

Stephen Twigg affirmed the importance of citizenship education and the government's commitment to it, in association with other government agendas such as:

- inclusion
- personalised learning and offering choice
- putting children first
- active communities
- community cohesion
- robust and enduring democracy.

He then cited developments such as the extension of the post-16 citizenship pilot, interest in citizenship across Europe, and the high value placed on citizenship education by employers. However, he acknowledged that there are challenges which Ofsted and the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) have identified. He saw the need to build capacity in the system by training specialist teachers and opening specialist schools. Finally, the Minister thanked the conference members for coming and acknowledged the value of collaboration between all interested parties in citizenship development.

Issues arising from Ofsted's inspection evidence. Scott Harrison HMI

Scott Harrison gave evidence of emerging good practice in some schools, but also suggested a number of reasons why others have been slow to develop strong programmes. These included:

- the ambition of National Curriculum citizenship was not recognised by school leadership and some subject leaders were given insufficient status
- there is a genuine confusion between National Curriculum citizenship and citizenship in a more general sense; schools 'thought they were doing it already'
- the National Curriculum, particularly the significance of the three strands, was misunderstood, assuming that a programme could be identified through the existing curriculum without adding anything 'extra'
- 'curricular inertia' and vested interests made it difficult to introduce a new subject in the curriculum
- citizenship was 'planted' within personal, social and health education (PSHE) without recognising the individuality of each
- the school has other priorities.

As a consequence, in some schools:

- the time available is very limited
- topics are 'covered' in one lesson in the whole key stage

- some aspects are not addressed at all
- there is little depth to work and little record of what has been done.

And, in these circumstances:

- some teaching is tokenistic
- some teachers are unhappy to address citizenship issues, and are inexperienced
- expectations are sometimes very low, and this is reflected in low standards
- work is not properly assessed and there is no progression.

Scott concluded by offering the view that:

- this is not 'just another initiative'
- the great weight of support for subject development needs to be turned into action in schools
- senior managers' full support is needed for citizenship to develop
- hard decisions need to be made on the curriculum, the timetable and staffing.

Citizenship for all. Marjorie Findlay Stone, Headteacher, and Cathy Fallon, Head of Citizenship, Eltham Hill Technology College for Girls, Greenwich.

The presentation outlined the challenges faced by the school at the time of the appointment of the new head teacher. These included poor behaviour, low expectations, and a lack of care for the school's environment. A pastoral programme was seen as inadequate, and the school was teaching below the time recommended by the DfES.

In 2001 the decision was made to introduce citizenship, providing an hour per week by using tutor time and extending the school day up to the recommended time. A head of citizenship was appointed, and given a suite of rooms and a specialist team. The school also became involved in the London Institute of Education citizenship Post-graduate Certificate of Education (PGCE) programme, providing placements for trainees and contributing to the course as a whole.

Having developed a core citizenship programme which also includes PSHE elements, the school is now looking to develop cross-curricular contributions and extension activities to strengthen particular aspects of the course. In 2002 Eltham Hill received a much improved Ofsted inspection report, with excellent features and overall provision for citizenship was described as very good. The report noted:

- A good and rapidly improving school
- Culture and ethos – attitudes and behaviour are good
- Relationships between pupils are good.

The implementation of citizenship is seen as an important factor in this improvement.

The path taken by the school in implementing citizenship also addresses many of the weaknesses identified by Ofsted in Session 2, and shows how with firm leadership and vision a strong programme of citizenship can be developed.

School Councils, Jessica Gold, School Council UK

Jessica described the range of work of School Council UK. Details of these activities can be obtained from Jessica Gold: 020 8349 2459 Jess@schoolcouncils.org, www.schoolcouncils.org

Jessica outlined a range of benefits that can be associated with school councils:

- higher than expected attainment compared with similar schools
- reduced pupil exclusions
- improved behavior, attitudes, academic work, relationships with staff, relationships between pupils, attendance
- students feel they are being listened to, even if their request is turned down (provided reasons are given)
- a school council is a source of information for Ofsted, and can also communicate the process to the wider student body; schools think it a 'smart' thing to do pre-Ofsted

Jessica outlined the plans currently being considered in Wales for statutory school councils.

- The school council must meet at least once every half term.
- All pupils to have a voice in choosing council members.
- All year groups in the school, to be separately represented and special needs units to have their own representatives.
- Feedback from each meeting to be provided to pupils and the governing body.
- The governing body to consider that feedback.

Draft requirements under consideration in Wales were discussed by conference members, who were asked to consider three issues.

- What are the barriers which presently prevent schools from having effective school councils?
- Would having legislation like Wales assist us in making our council structures better?
- Are there ways you would strengthen the Welsh legislative guidelines?

Five students from Haggerston School then made a presentation of the ways in which they evaluated the activities of their school council in order to identify strengths and weaknesses. By setting success criteria and marking their performance against each of these, they were able to target future activity.

References

- L. Davies, School Councils and Pupil Exclusions School Councils UK, 1998
D. Clay, J. Gold, D. Hannam, Secondary School Councils Toolkit. School Councils UK, 2001
G. Lyons (ed), School Council Handbook for Secondary Students School Councils UK, 2003

Assessment. Liz Craft, QCA

Liz outlined the current regulations.

- A teacher judgement must be made using the end of Key Stage 3 description (working towards, working at, working beyond).
- Schools must keep records of citizenship including results of teacher assessment.
- A report to parents on progress and achievement in citizenship must be provided for pupils in Years 7,8,9,10,11.
- Schools do not have to report summary assessment data to the QCA.

The following principles should underpin assessment in citizenship.

- It should reflect the learning and achievement of all pupils.
- It should raise standards and achievement.
- It should be formative and summative.
- Equal weighting should be given to skills, knowledge and understanding.
- Pupils should be involved as partners.

A shared understanding of the standards required can come through:

- emerging practice in assessment
- application of the end of Key Stage 3 description (level 5/6)
- consideration of the GCSE grade descriptions
- experience of other subjects and joint work in citizenship
- National Curriculum in action www.ncaction.org.uk.

Further information from QCA can be found at www.qca.org.uk/citizenship.

The GCSE in citizenship. Peter Brett, GCSE Chief Examiner, DfES regional consultant

Peter Brett noted the growing numbers of candidates for citizenship GCSE. He tackled some of the concerns that teachers have about a GCSE in citizenship, and described the significant advantages that it offers.

- The 50%+ coursework requirement has the potential to lead to active and beneficial community projects.
- GSE accreditation gives citizenship value and credibility

- The courses promote problem-solving, argument, debate and active engagement with contemporary issues

Across the specifications offered by the three awarding bodies, there are a number of common elements:

- all are 60% examination and 40% coursework
- there are no tiered papers
- all comply with National Curriculum Key Stage 4 requirements
- all exam papers contain a short answer and/or multiple choice section; an opportunity to respond to stimulus material and apply evaluative skills and an extended 'essay' section
- there are slightly different coursework specifications but across the 3 boards coursework is internally assessed and externally moderated.

Peter introduced some GCSE work that exemplified good practice. He concluded by commenting on the particular benefits in terms of participation, as described in this Chief Examiner's report:

The impression was that almost all candidates participated in a positive way, often in activities which would not normally find a place in the classroom-based curriculum.

Further information

Ofsted reports on citizenship can be found at www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications