

**HANSARD SOCIETY/OFSTED LECTURE: 17  
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***Introduction***

What does it mean to be a citizen?

Does it mean having the right to put a cross in a box on a ballot paper every four or so years? Does it mean having the responsibility to pay your taxes every month? Is it being involved in your local community or having a sense of pride in your country? Is it feeling part of something much greater and considering yourself a citizen of the world? Or is it something less tangible but still significant in everyday life?

I would suggest that being a citizen is about all this and more.

And that is why the introduction of citizenship as a National Curriculum subject has brought with it such high expectations. Principally, it has brought to the fore a belief that our education system, and the curriculum taught in schools, has a role to play in fostering a sense of community and social responsibility and awareness among today's younger generation.

And yet Ofsted evidence shows that citizenship is the worst taught subject at Key Stages 3 and 4. Schools are seldom judged to deliver very good teaching in this subject. Even though it is early days in terms of implementation, this is unacceptable when one considers the important role the subject has in providing an opportunity to discuss the public dimension of pupils' development, including their rights and responsibilities.

With a general election likely this year, the timing of this speech is also significant. The turnout for the 2001 UK general election was just 59%. This is the lowest turnout for any post war UK general election. Turnout for local and European elections is even lower.

Even more worrying is that interest in politics is falling among young people. There is a line of argument that young people do care about political and social issues, but not necessarily traditional party political issues. However, in a small scale opinion poll conducted by Ofsted, 45% of 14-16 year old pupils said they didn't think it was important for them know more about what the major political parties stand for, and 70 per cent were not involved in any kind of community activity outside school.

Facts and figures like these demonstrate the importance of ensuring young citizens feel connected with their society. Citizenship education is one way of trying to do this. So, I want to look today at **how** citizenship is being taught to our children as well as **what** is being taught. But citizenship – perhaps more so than other school subjects - needs to have relevance for young people and a connection to the real world they are living in. So I also want to consider the concept of citizenship. To look at national identity, what it means to be a citizen, what it means to be British.

***Citizenship in schools: the early evidence***

I am delighted to be holding this event in partnership with the Hansard Society, which for many years has encouraged the development of political education in schools. Over 25 years ago, in 1978, the Society published its *Programme for Political Education*. This set an agenda to challenge apathy and cynicism about politics. It also sought a programme in schools which would go much further than lessons on 'British Constitution' with its main focus on constitutional rules and institutional forms.

Fast forward to 1997 and the Hansard Society was again prominent in its response to the white paper *Excellence in Schools*. This time it cast the net wider in its emphasis on the importance of values in education - honour and integrity, leadership and team skills, pride in ourselves and our community. This was no doubt influential in the deliberations of Sir Bernard Crick's advisory group on citizenship education. The ambition of this report is clear: *'We aim at no less than a change in the political culture of this country both nationally and locally'*. The starting point was, of course, the appearance in 2000 of citizenship as a National Curriculum subject.

So, it has been a long and winding road that has led us to the citizenship programme that we have in schools today. And two years on since the statutory requirement for secondary schools to teach citizenship came into force, I am able to comment on the progress made by schools.

There is some cause for celebration! In many good schools, the new requirements built on work they had been doing in citizenship education for years. It had not always gone by this name of course, but it could be seen in work pupils were already doing in the community, in contributions pupils made to the running of the school or simply in the way that what children learnt **in** the classroom related to what was going on **outside** the school gate.

In schools that have recognised the ambition and scope of the new requirements, school leaders and governors have given full consideration to the aims of National Curriculum citizenship, and how it can support and augment all these citizenship-related activities that were going on in school already.

They have thought carefully about the curriculum and staff deployment and have found constructive ways to establish a core of citizenship teaching, sometimes within new citizenship departments. In these circumstances, pupils have embraced the new subject with enthusiasm, valuing its relevance and valuing the opportunity they are given to offer their views and make a difference.

Let me give you one or two examples.

Deincourt School in Derbyshire has sharpened its already substantial citizenship programme to address the National Curriculum requirements. After visiting this school, my inspector told me what an outward-looking attitude he found among the pupils. He sat in on a lesson where the children were discussing Britain's multicultural society. One pupil said, 'we are proud to be British because it means we are open to new ideas'. Pupils' work is in depth and they are very positive about their course.

By way of contrast, Eltham Girls School in Greenwich had no real citizenship education before 1990. It has now been successfully transformed into a school where citizenship is a strength. They have found the time to

give an hour a week for lessons. They have a team of specialist teachers. And children are enjoying their lessons spent considering government priorities and writing election manifestos. Look out Tony Blair, Michael Howard and Charles Kennedy!

Many schools, both primary and secondary have had great success in developing the work of their school councils. This is an ideal way to develop participation and representation and the introduction of school councils has given pupils a genuine taste of democracy and decision-making. My visit earlier today to Haggerston School in London gave me the chance to see an excellent example of this type of pupil participation in action.

The teachers here today from other schools where citizenship has been developing well will no doubt have many equally positive stories to tell. It is also encouraging to note that there are now specific teacher training courses preparing trainees to teach citizenship in secondary schools, and these courses are generally good.

***Citizenship in schools: emerging issues***

On the other hand, there are schools which have responded slowly, with a substantial number failing to address the key issues. During the last academic year, the citizenship provision in one quarter of schools was judged by my inspectors to be unsatisfactory, and some that were judged satisfactory were still at a relatively early stage of development.

As I have already pointed out, citizenship education is the worst taught subject in secondary schools. This might help explain why, in our opinion poll, more than half of pupils either did not know what citizenship education is or could offer no examples of what they had learned.

How can we explain this apparent lack of enthusiasm or action on the part of some schools? Is the problem inherent in what was proposed originally by the Hansard Society, and later by Sir Bernard Crick's advisory group on citizenship in schools? Does the difficulty lie in its translation into the National Curriculum? Or is the issue with the schools themselves – with an antipathy to what is proposed or simply feeling unable to refine the timetable to take on a new curriculum subject?



Even some of the strongest advocates of the introduction of citizenship into schools have held back from the notion of citizenship as a subject. For example, the Hansard report of 1978, ambitious in other respects, drew back from

*'.....staking out another territorial claim for the already grossly overloaded timetable.....'*

Instead, it advocated that the identified core programme should be taught through the existing subjects of the curriculum. Such concerns reflected both philosophical and practical anxieties.

Practically, there continues to be a concern about other pressures on schools and 'initiative overload'; and, put simply, how can time be found for another subject? Philosophically, there is genuine concern that the spirit of citizenship is different from other subjects and that it should not be timetabled, taught and assessed in the same way. There is also the view from some on the political right that it is a non-subject, infused with the worst of progressive ideology. On the political left, there

are some who argue that citizenship is in danger of becoming a 'Rule Britannia' approach to the curriculum.

In schools, my inspectors have also found, both in the offices of a few head teachers and in some staffrooms, scepticism, cynicism and even fear surrounding the introduction of citizenship. The scepticism is often ill-informed, for instance, that interest in citizenship will be short-lived. The cynicism often focuses on the potential for indoctrination. The fear can be about dealing with complex, sensitive or controversial issues such as the European Union, public finance or matters to do with race and ethnicity.

There is an irony in this. The very purpose of citizenship is to equip pupils to become involved, make choices and take action based upon their knowledge and understanding. 'Reasoned' citizenship, taught by properly qualified and knowledgeable teachers is at the heart of everything we do and will always remain significant. This is recognised even in the focus on outcomes for children specified in the 2004 Children Act in which encouraging young people to make a sustained and meaningful contribution to the community is one of the principal aims.

And what of the approaches to citizenship taken by schools?

In a minority, a block of time has been found for citizenship, either to provide a core programme or indeed to address the whole programme of study. Sometimes, as at Eltham Hill, this block of time is shared with PSHE (that is Personal Social and Health Education) and this can work well provided that both are substantial overall.

In the majority of schools much or all of citizenship has been placed **within** PSHE programmes, either timetabled as a subject, or taking place in tutorial time and assembly. In many schools however, the perceived close relationship between citizenship and PSHE is proving problematic. Taking the broad view, PSHE is about the private, individual dimension of pupils' development, whereas citizenship concerns the public dimension. They do not sit easily together, particularly when little time is devoted to them. Often, schools claim the content of lessons is citizenship when it is in fact PSHE.

Problems have also arisen where schools have taken a cross curricular route, seeking to identify or provide citizenship through subjects. Many schools prepared for the introduction of citizenship with an audit of links to citizenship, typically compiling a matrix that showed where citizenship content could be found. But our evidence suggests that, so far, pupils are confused by cross-curricular approaches, and sometimes are not aware that they have had a citizenship programme at all.

These difficulties taken together show us that citizenship is at a crossroads. Decisions need to be taken as to which direction it goes in. If citizenship is to succeed, many schools need to think or think again about the necessary conditions to be set in place, in particular about staffing, timetabling and resources. There is now considerable guidance available on these issues, as well as Ofsted reports, which schools can draw upon.

But is this enough? There are other issues at stake here. Citizenship lessons provide an opportunity, as never before, for young people to think about who they are and what kind of society they want to live in.

We must not be afraid to give power to the pupils, to give them the opportunity to consider these issues. We must not ignore the fact that society is changing fast. And we certainly must not underestimate young people's capacity to adapt to changing traditions and challenge current expectations.

### ***Understanding national identity***

One of the most ambitious aspects of National Curriculum citizenship requires pupils to understand the diversity of national, regional, religious and ethnic identities in the United Kingdom, and the need for mutual respect and understanding. At its heart, lies the thorny question of national identity. What is it that binds us together as a nation? What does national identity mean in practice? Can we possess multiple identities?

To find concrete answers is more difficult. Almost nine out of ten respondents to the 2004 *British Social Attitudes* report thought that being able to speak English was the most important factor in defining a person's 'Britishness'. This was closely followed by having British citizenship and respecting Britain's political institutions and laws.

Britishness in the 21<sup>st</sup> century now seems to be seen as taking a common pride in shared principles and values.

As well as telling us what national identity might mean in practice, this also gives us an idea of what identity **isn't**. In today's Britain, ethnic characteristics seem to be increasingly irrelevant when defining ourselves. This is a positive step forward towards a multi-cultural society.

In a recent opinion poll, Ofsted found that 64 per cent of pupils (and 81 per cent of teachers) identified as 'British', while one in three pupils identified as 'English'. Only 2 per cent of pupils and 3 per cent of teachers identified as 'European'.

Those surveyed were also asked some more light hearted questions about the symbols and foods that they most readily identify with being British, with the majority of both pupils and teachers choosing the Union Jack, and fish and chips.

And what of multiple identities? As a British citizen I am automatically a European citizen. And this should not detract from my ability to be, to feel, British as well as

Scottish. Should it? In the same way, religion appears to be less of a defining factor in our national identity. I can be fully Muslim, or Christian, or other, or not – and at the same time fully British.

Respect for difference has an element of knowledge about identities, attitudes and beliefs, and a disposition to understanding and tolerance. Our opinion poll showed that 70 per cent of respondents thought pupils should learn more about Britain's cultural diversity, with even higher support among younger teachers. But equally, the study of diversity should deal with what we hold in common: in our case; of allegiance to British nationality, whether white, black, Asian or other; as subject to common laws, and beneficiaries of common rights; as payers of tax and sharers of common services; as fellow students and workers and with shared interests. In short, there is a sensible balance between diversity and cohesion. Citizenship has an important part to play in addressing these issues of balance, respecting identities but identifying shared interests and goals.

Britain's diversity has the potential to be one of its greatest strengths. But diverse does not need to mean

completely different and it certainly must not mean segregated or separate. Religious segregation in schools, for example, must not put our coherence at risk.

As my Annual Report published next month will show there has been a significant growth in the number of independent faith schools. There are now around 300 such schools including over 50 Jewish schools, around 100 Muslim schools and over 100 Evangelical Christian Schools.

To an extent this mirrors the growth in certain sectors of the population and increasing confidence in pursuing traditional beliefs and way of life in a multi-cultural Britain. I believe that it is right that parents should be able to choose how their children are educated and should be able to pay to do so. That is the mark of free and open society. Yet, on the other hand, faith should not be blind. I worry that many young people are being educated in faith-based schools, with little appreciation of their wider responsibilities and obligations to British society. As my Annual Report will say about Muslim schools:



*.....many schools must adapt their curriculum to ensure that it provides pupils with a broad general knowledge of public institutions and services in England and helps them to acquire an appreciation of and respect for other cultures in a way that promotes tolerance and harmony.*

Many of these new faith schools are being opened by a younger generation of British Muslims who recognise that traditional Islamic education does not entirely fit pupils for their lives as Muslims in modern Britain. The Association of Muslim Schools is reviewing its role in order to support schools more effectively. I would urge them to continue with this vital work.

This growth in faith schools needs to be carefully but sensitively monitored by government to ensure that pupils at **all** schools, receive an understanding of not only their own faith but of other faiths and the wider tenets of British society. We must not allow our recognition of diversity to become apathy in the face of any challenge to our coherence as a nation.

I would go further and say that an awareness of our common heritage as British citizens, equal under the law, should enable us to assert with confidence that we are intolerant of intolerance, illiberalism and attitudes and values that demean the place of certain sections of our community, be they women or people living in non-traditional relationships.

Pupils should know the positives of a diverse community, and its importance in a world where too many communities are fractured. Citizenship education can be a positive force for good in this regard – promoting acceptance of different faiths and cultures as well as alternative lifestyles. Pupils can learn when to draw lines: how to say no to racial and religious intolerance; how to stand up to injustice; how to bring about change in policies that are unacceptable.

These are tricky issues, even for adults. But national identity stands as an example of a topic that provides lively content for citizenship teachers. And I know from talking to teenagers in a number of schools that it is an issue that interests them, not least because they are

helping to shape the 'new Britain' by how they live, what they think and who they have as their friends.

***Service: citizenship in action?***

So far, I have spent the majority of my time discussing the content of the citizenship curriculum. That is right and proper because, as I have demonstrated, there are a number of issues that remain unresolved in these early days of implementation. However, I want to touch on one other issue and that is citizenship as service.

I believe that schools should both teach the content of citizenship and encourage their students to become good citizens through participation and responsible action. As well as the work that pupils do in their citizenship courses, schools can provide a wealth of other opportunities. That might be through participation in a school council. It might be through extra-curricular activities. It might be through taking part in charitable activities or community service or by exercising leadership. In one sense, the specifics are unimportant. What matters is the 'doing' and it seems to me that finally and rather belatedly, we have recognised

the value of such work through the proposals within Mike Tomlinson's report on the future of 14 to 19 education.

We need to ensure that schools help to open up young people's eyes to service in all its different manifestations. Here, I would highlight the contribution of the armed services. Over the past year, I have been deeply impressed by the example set by our army, navy and air force in Iraq. The services continue to stand as a beacon of excellence in living out the timeless values of duty, honour, courage and sacrifice.

Yet, at the same time, their example demonstrates that service is not simply about blind, unthinking obedience. Rather, it is about working to a common cause and operating in an environment where the exercise of leadership has to be accompanied by the acquisition of respect. In today's armed forces values ride alongside valour. Increasingly, as our armed forces take on a wider range of complex roles that extend beyond war fighting and into peace making and nation building, they need soldiers, sailors and airmen with a developed and more sophisticated understanding of their civic duty.

Young people too can benefit from this kind of approach to service through involvement in organisations such as the Army Cadet Force or the Air Cadets. It's important too that all young people with leadership potential benefit from the kinds of opportunities which, at present, tend to be restricted to independent schools which run Combined Cadet Forces. After all, tomorrow's leaders in the armed forces are as likely to come from the playgrounds of Enfield as they are the playing fields of Eton.

We should however be concerned that a recent small scale survey of 14-16 year olds found that 70% were not involved in voluntary or community activities – a worrying trend. So there is more to be done to encourage young people to see the value in service to others. Because through service, young people learn to lead, to take initiative, to work in a team, to support others; in short all the skills that we would want tomorrow's citizens to exhibit.

An excellent example of youth participation is provided by the UK Youth Parliament, where 400 11-18 year olds who have been elected by their peers meet annually to express

their views and concerns at the highest level. This initiative is supported by the three major political parties.

One other point. We must demolish the myth that public service only resides in the public sector. Voluntary organisations up and down the country prove the opposite as do countless thousands of companies and businesses that contribute to the wealth and well-being of the nation. And that is why I strongly support the emphasis within citizenship of pupils understanding what it means to live in a mixed economy. Our young people should understand that business and commerce is integral to a successful economy, which, in turn enables us to provide a wide range of public services.

To put it simply, citizenship is likely to be most powerful where pupils learn through action. They must be given opportunities to go beyond textbooks and tuition. They must confront the questions of the day and pose solutions. They must learn to think and act for themselves.

### ***Conclusion***

In drawing my speech to a close, I note with interest that a number of otherwise high performing schools, have found their provision for citizenship to be judged as unsatisfactory by inspectors. Sometimes, it is the only aspect of their work to be so judged. The root of the problem here is often misunderstanding. National Curriculum citizenship is not about the way a school goes about its business, or its ethos, although these factors are important. Neither is it participation by *some* pupils in extra curricular or community activities. Obviously, such activities are of great worth to the pupils involved in them, but National Curriculum citizenship is, and should be, *an entitlement for all pupils*.

I have talked about reluctance, resistance, scepticism, but let me finish by returning to the notion of citizenship and democracy. It is a good question for the headteachers and governors in the audience to ask once again what sort of school they want to be a part of. Indeed, all of you here can ask what sort of **society** you want to be a part of.

The introduction of citizenship challenges some assumptions about the status quo because it is intended

to empower pupils. The trick is to harness that power in a democratic school where the pupils recognise their ownership and the opportunities presented to them. For some schools, this is a long journey. They need to go back to their aims and values to ask what their education is about. An important part of any answer should be **citizenship**. Developing citizenship is ultimately about developing citizens, an aim I believe that all of us here today would agree is vital to the future success of a healthy, vibrant and coherent British society.

Thank you.