



Citizenship Education in England: Policy and Curriculum

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Abstract

This chapter outlines the context and key developments that led to the introduction of citizenship education in schools in England and examines some of the recent education policy changes that have had an impact on the subject. Despite many previous initiatives connected to Education for Citizenship, it was not until 1999 that citizenship was introduced formally as a national curriculum subject for secondary schools in England. As Bernard Crick (Parliamentary Aff 55:488–504, 2002), who had chaired the influential *Advisory Group on Education for Citizenship and the Teaching of Democracy in Schools*, put it, the lack of formal citizenship education prior to the new curriculum subject was

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primarily “because, of course, we thought we didn’t need it.” Tracing key policy developments, provides an account of the key people, context, and events that led to the introduction and continuation of citizenship as a subject in the school curriculum in England and explains how policy has changed over time. The processes used to construct the content for the national curriculum and successive curricula reviews, as well as influential shifts in the ideological context in which policy development has occurred, are also explored. The chapter closes with a discussion of how these processes and ideological influences have impacted in particular on the inclusion of active citizenship in the curriculum for citizenship and highlights how debates about the purpose, status, and content for citizenship in England are set to continue.

Keywords

Citizenship · National curriculum · Citizenship education · National curriculum review · Active citizenship · Crick · Education · Policy

Introduction

At the time of writing, citizenship is on its third iteration as a national curriculum subject in England. For the purposes of this chapter, “citizenship” is the title of the national curriculum subject in England, and as such the term is used when specifically discussing the subject. “Citizenship education” is used when discussing the concept more broadly; the GCSE qualification is titled “Citizenship Studies” and is referred to as such. Over the last 20 years, a number of factors have influenced and shaped citizenship education policy and curriculum. Such factors include moments of policy opportunity and political will that led to the subject being introduced in the late 1990s to recent shifts in the way citizenship and in particular “active citizenship” are included in the curriculum. Two key factors stand out: first, differences in the processes used to consult on and construct the national curriculum, and, second, shifts in the education priorities and the ideological influences that have shaped the curriculum. Twenty years on from its introduction into the curriculum in England, debates about purpose and policy for citizenship education endure, and these will continue to influence the curriculum subject and its status in schools.

This chapter begins by tracing the early context for citizenship education well before the national curriculum was created in the 1980s and then discusses how the subject was introduced and has evolved over a series of periodic reviews of the national curriculum initiated by successive governments – first under labour administrations in the late 1990s/2000s and then in the early 2010s by the Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition Government. An account of the key influences, politics, and policy moments is provided, followed by an exploration of how the aims, purpose, and content of citizenship as a subject have developed and changed. The chapter closes with an examination of active citizenship, an essential component of the subject which should be understood as both a key concept and

process within the content of what is taught, as well as a pedagogy for teaching pupils how to participate in democratic decision-making. In this final section, it is argued that the way active citizenship is positioned reflects sensitivities around the term and the different views held by respective governments as to the kinds of citizens young people are to become.

The History of Citizenship Education in England: A Brief Overview

The development of citizenship education is often linked to important periods of social and political change. Historically, reasons for introducing citizenship education have included state formation and a desire to establish or renew a sense of identity and belonging among citizens (Johnson and Morris 2010). In England, explanations for policy attention on citizenship education are more complex and appear to shift over time. Over the last 70 or so years, these explanations include moments of policy opportunity or “policy windows,” the political will that has led to the subject being introduced and then retained in the school curriculum, shifts in education priorities often influenced by political ideology, and the effects of processes used to construct, consult on, and reform the national curriculum.

Perhaps the easiest place to begin to trace the development of citizenship education in England is between the two world wars. This is also a good place to illustrate how the concept and practice of citizenship has changed through recent history (Heater 2001). In the inter-war period, real concerns existed about the growth of fascism in Europe, leading to a desire to use schools as a means to strengthen liberal democracy and, subsequently, the establishment of the Association for Education in Citizenship (AEC) in 1934 (Heater 2001). Oliver Stanley MP, the President of the Board of Education (now the Department for Education), captured the context in his foreword to the Association’s publication, “Citizenship in Secondary Schools” (1935):

The decay of democracy abroad has led many people to the conclusion that, if those democratic institutions which we in this country agree are essential for the full development of the individual are to be preserved, some systematic training in the duties of citizenship is necessary.

The founding members of the AEC, Sir Ernest Simon and Eva Hubback, set out the aims of education in citizenship as being a sense of responsibility, a love of truth and freedom, the power of clear thinking in everyday affairs, and a knowledge of the broad and economic facts. They advocated a direct method of Education for Citizenship through the new subjects of Politics, Public Affairs, and Current History, rather than relying on teaching through traditional subjects in the curriculum and the school ethos (Clarke 2007).

Interest in political education gathered momentum in the 1970s, fuelled by a decline in membership of political parties among young people and the lowering of the voting age to 18 in 1970 (Clarke 2007). Around this time the Nuffield

Foundation provided funding to the Hansard Society, with cooperation from the Politics Association, to launch the “Programme for Political Education” (PPE). This initiative involved curriculum work with schools aimed at developing young peoples’ political literacy through the specific teaching of political education. The program was based on work by Crick and Porter (1978) with the aim “to develop a critical awareness of political phenomena, rather than an uncritical acceptance of the status quo.” However, political events (including the election of the New Right Conservative government in 1979) and economic recession caused a shift away from broader education to a focus on basic skills and employability (cf. Clarke 2007). Kisby (2006) also suggests that the Conservative government under Margaret Thatcher was suspicious of the PPE and the possibility of indoctrination of pupils by teachers.

During the 1980s, a number of high-profile people and organizations began to call for educational change, including a focus on Education for Citizenship. Notably, a *Commission on Citizenship* was set up in 1988 by the Speaker of the House of Commons, the Rt Hon Bernard Weatherill, in order to consider how to “encourage, develop, and recognize active citizenship within a wide range of groups in the community, both local and national, including school students.” The Commission’s report was published as *Encouraging Citizenship* (HMSO 1990), and the opening sentence of the report continues to resonate today. “Citizenship. . . has to be learned, like everything else.”

By the late 1980s, an increasing number of prominent organizations and people were calling for citizenship education to be more formally taught in schools. The Speaker’s Commission report had noted that the introduction of Education for Citizenship to the national curriculum, as one of several cross-curricular themes, had not had the desired impact in schools. The Citizenship Foundation (now also known as Young Citizens), set in up 1989 by Andrew (Lord) Philips OBE, called for education to address a lack of public legal understanding. Similarly, Community Service Volunteers, an organization led by Dame Elisabeth Hoodless, called for schools to take a greater role in promoting voluntary activity and community service. Both organizations, together with the Hansard Society, subsequently acted as key contributors to the development and implementation of citizenship education in schools in England (Democratic Life 2011b). However, while there was a broad consensus that citizenship education was needed in some form, debates about its status as a subject and purpose in the curriculum continued.

Toward a Curriculum for Citizenship Education in England

For most of the twentieth century, then, citizenship education had been identified, and sometimes supported, as a meaningful focus for schools in England. However, by the late 1980s, no real curriculum for citizenship education existed. Indeed, the majority of guidance published concerning citizenship education followed the pattern identified by Kerr (1999, p. 204) of “. . . noble intentions, which are then turned into general pronouncements, which, in turn, become minimal guidance for

schools.” At the time, there also seemed to be a lack of political conviction and will on the part of the Conservative government to give prominence and status to the teaching of citizenship education in schools as a subject. In this section, the shift from this context to the introduction of citizenship education in 1999 is traced. It is argued that two factors, each now considered in turn, were crucial in this shift: policy opportunity and political will. Key moments in the development of citizenship education between 1988 and 2018 are also summarized in Table 1.

Policy Opportunity

In the late 1980s, a policy opportunity emerged, as education policy began to shift toward a greater specification at national level of what should be taught in schools in England. A subject-based, national curriculum for England was introduced by Kenneth Baker (then Education Secretary) for the first time, in 1988. The rationale for this decision was described as having four intentions: establishing an entitlement to a broad and balanced curriculum, improving school accountability, improving curriculum coherence, and aiding “public understanding” of schools (House of Commons Library 2018).

In part the move to a national curriculum reflected a desire for education that better prepared young people for adulthood, including to contribute to the economic prosperity of the country. The 1988 Education Reform Act, which established the national curriculum, did not provide a place for statutory citizenship education. However, the Act did place a responsibility on schools to provide a broad and balanced curriculum, promoting the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental, and physical development of pupils and to prepare pupils for the opportunities and experiences of adult life. In 1990, “Education for Citizenship” was included nationally as a cross-curricular theme along with other themes on health education, economic and industrial understanding, careers education and guidance, and environmental understanding (Tilbury 1997, p. 93). These themes did not have statutory force but were intended to help schools deal with important matters that crossed over individual subjects.

At this time, schools were expected to take responsibility for introducing these themes into their curriculum, and teachers would address them through their subject teaching. Research suggests, however, that the cross-curricular themes did not work in practice. Many teachers were too busy teaching their subject according to the requirements of the national curriculum to have time to think about them and implement them properly (Tilbury 1997, p. 93). In addition, the theme “Education for Citizenship” was criticized for leading to fragmented and incoherent learning, dry civics teaching and for being marginalized from the rest of the curriculum (Oliver and Heater 1994, pp. 163–4). Crick himself wrote about this issue in his *Essays on Citizenship* (2000) describing “the aspiration of many individuals and interest groups frustrated by the marginalisation of citizenship as a cross curricular theme in the 1990s and by its general absence from the curriculum in the decades before.”

Table 1 Key moments in the development of citizenship education 1988–2019

1988	National curriculum for England was introduced in primary and secondary schools
1990	Cross-curricular theme “Education for Citizenship” introduced in Curriculum Guidance 8, for schools
1997	Schools White Paper “Excellence in Schools” announced Advisory Group on Education for Citizenship and the Teaching of Democracy in Schools
1998	Crick Advisory Group report “Education for Citizenship and the teaching of democracy in schools” published, recommending citizenship becomes a national curriculum subject Recommendations accepted in full by government
1999	Revised national curriculum published including statutory programme of study for citizenship at key stages 3 and 4 (secondary) making citizenship a national curriculum subject A non-statutory framework for personal, social, and health education and citizenship is published for use in primary schools
2001	National Foundation for Educational Research commissioned by government to undertake a longitudinal study into the impact of citizenship Qualifications and Curriculum Authority launch national guidance and teaching exemplification for citizenship in the form of schemes of work for citizenship Post 16 citizenship support program launched with government funding
2002	First teaching of national curriculum for citizenship in schools GCSE Citizenship Studies qualification becomes available as a “short” course (50% of full GCSE)
2005	Government announces a review of the national curriculum in schools
2005–2006	House of Commons Select Committee Inquiry into the impact of citizenship education
2006	Ofsted publish report on inspection subject monitoring findings “Towards Consensus? Citizenship in secondary schools”
2007	Sir Keith Ajegbo reports on “Review of Diversity and Citizenship in the curriculum” for government
2007	Revised national curriculum published, including revised teaching requirements for citizenship and attainment targets for pupils described as an 8 level scale
2008	Reformed A level Citizenship Studies available for first teaching
2009	GCSE Citizenship Studies qualification (full course) available for first teaching with 60% weighting on active citizenship
2010	Ofsted report on school subject inspection findings “Citizenship established?” National Foundation for Educational Research Longitudinal Study for citizenship, final report on impact published
2011	Coalition government launches a review of the national curriculum for primary and secondary schools
2013	Ofsted publish subject monitoring report, “Citizenship Consolidated?”
2014	Reformed national curriculum is published including revised program of study for citizenship with new teaching requirement on political institutions and aspects of personal finance education
2016	Reformed GCSE Citizenship Studies qualifications available with greater emphasis on knowledge of constitution and institutions and reduction of active citizenship to 15%
2018	House of Lord Select Committee Citizenship and Civic Engagement Committee – recommends statutory citizenship in every school primary and secondary
2019	Citizenship is included explicitly in the new School Inspection Framework: as a national curriculum subject under Quality of Education measure and as a leading subject under the personal development measure

A shift in policy commitment started when, in 1993, Ofsted – the agency responsible for school inspection – developed a “Framework for the Inspection of Schools” that recognized the role and importance of citizenship education. The framework stated:

Judgements should be based on the extent to which the school encourages pupils to: relate positively to others, take responsibility, participate fully in the community, and develop an understanding of citizenship; and teaches pupils to understand their own cultural traditions and the richness and diversity of other cultures.

The policy opportunity to pay more explicit attention to citizenship education in the school curriculum was also informed by the fact that in the mid-1990s, public concern had developed about the morality and values of young people. These concerns were highlighted by a number of high-profile murders: of Jamie Bulger 2-year-old-child killed by two other children; of Stephen Lawrence, a black teenager killed by white youths at a bus stop in East London; and of Head Teacher Philip Lawrence who was stabbed while trying to protect a pupil at his London school who had been assaulted.

However, a revised national curriculum in 1995 (School Curriculum and Assessment Authority 1994) offered little reassurance for advocates of citizenship education. Notably, the reduced subject requirements did not include the cross-curricular themes from 1990, and many felt that the materials discarded by the slimmer curriculum were those very parts that helped subjects to promote more explicitly the wider purpose of the curriculum. Taken together these were “to promote pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development” and “prepare them for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life” (1988 Education Reform Act; see also Moorse 2015).

Political Will

The turning point for citizenship education came in 1997. With the Labour government elected to power, and David Blunkett appointed as Secretary of State for Education and Employment, the commitment to citizenship education began to shape policy (Jerome and Moorse 2016). The significance of David Blunkett in the development of citizenship education is clear; he was “an absolutely key figure in the initiative” (Kisby 2006). However citizenship education was not a “flagship policy” of the Blair government; it did not, for example, feature in the Labour Party manifesto or in the Queen’s speech. Indeed, Mycock and Tonge (2012) suggest the inclusion of citizenship education in the White Paper “Excellence in Schools” (1997) was a surprise to many in the party. However, the policy did fit with broader objectives to create political change and democratization through political reform, devolution, and increased transparency through Freedom of Information, all aiming to enhance social capital (Kisby 2006).

The commitment to citizenship education in “Excellence in Schools” was clear. The White Paper set out the new Labour government’s education policy priorities and stated that schools should:

help to ensure that young people feel they have a stake in society and the community in which they live by teaching them the nature of democracy and the duties, responsibilities and rights of citizens. (para 6.42, p. 63)

An Advisory Group was announced with a remit to examine citizenship education and the teaching of democracy in schools. Professor Bernard Crick, Blunkett's former teacher and mentor, accepted the role as chair of the group (Kisby 2006). The group was managed by the body with responsibility for the national curriculum, the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority (SCAA later the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority or QCA), and reported directly to the Secretary of State. Attempts were made from the start to ensure the work had cross-party political support, if not formal endorsement. The Advisory Group's terms of reference were:

to provide advice on effective education for citizenship in schools – to include the nature and practices of participation in democracy; the duties, responsibilities and rights of individual citizens; and the value to individuals and society of community activity. (QCA 1998, p. 4)

The Advisory Group worked together for a year and during that time had dialogue with hundreds of organizations and individuals (all are listed at the end of the report). A series of national consultation conferences were organized across the country for school governing bodies, parents, teachers and teacher associations, local authorities, youth, community and voluntary bodies, and employer and employee associations (QCA 1998, p. 72). The group also looked to learn from existing national curriculum subjects and drew lessons from best practice in other countries following an international seminar in London (Crick 2002, p. 495).

The Advisory Group reported in 1998 and set out their view of *Education for Citizenship and the Teaching of Democracy in Schools* (QCA 1998). Commonly known as the Crick report, the document made the case for statutory citizenship and set out what constitutes effective citizenship education (Jerome and Moorse 2016). The group was ambitious about what it wanted to achieve through citizenship education:

We aim at no less than a change in the political culture of this country both nationally and locally: for people to think of themselves as active citizens, willing, able and equipped to have an influence in public life and with the critical capacities to weigh evidence before speaking and acting. (QCA 1998, p. 7)

In addition, the report recommended:

that citizenship and the teaching of democracy . . . is so important both for schools and the life of the nation that there must be a statutory requirement on schools to ensure that it is part of the entitlement for all pupils. It can no longer sensibly be left as uncoordinated local initiatives which vary greatly in number, content and method. This is an inadequate basis for animating the idea of a common citizenship with democratic values. (QCA 1998, p. 7)

Three essential strands of citizenship education were put forward:

- *Social and moral responsibility*, knowing from the very beginning of education about fairness, rules, and the difference between right and wrong and social responsibility
- *Community involvement*, becoming helpfully involved in the life and concerns of communities and learning through community involvement
- *Political literacy*, the knowledge, skills, and values needed to be informed, active, and responsible citizens and be effective in public life (Crick 2002)

The report was accepted in full by the government, and the three strands of effective citizenship along with a framework of key concepts, skills, attitudes, and values were the basis from which the first national curriculum programme of study was developed in 1999. The next section will examine the features and shifts in the national curriculum for citizenship since 1999.

The National Curriculum for Citizenship Since 1999

The First National Curriculum for Citizenship

In 1999, an order was placed before parliament to introduce citizenship as a national curriculum foundation subject. The national curriculum provided a “strong bare bones” (Crick 2002, p. 498) rather than detailed or prescriptive teaching requirements and set out the aim of the subject as being to develop “knowledge and skills necessary for effective and democratic participation” (DCSF/QCA 2007). First teaching would begin in 2002, giving schools 2 years to prepare for the new subject. Programmes of study – a description of teaching requirements comprising knowledge, understanding, and skills – set out what must be addressed by schools in their teaching at key stage 3 (11–14 year olds) and key stage 4 (14–16 year olds). A non-statutory framework for personal, social, and health education and citizenship had been introduced for primary schools in 2000 and provided for progression from what should be taught to 5–11 year olds to the subject in secondary education. National qualifications at GCSE and A level were developed to publicly recognize pupil achievement in citizenship.

An emphasis on using knowledge and understanding to take action was deliberate to ensure citizenship did not become civics and was active where pupils learned through participation with others.

National Curriculum Programmes of Study for Citizenship 2002

Key stage 3 programme of study

Citizenship

During key stage 3 pupils study, reflect upon and discuss topical political, spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues, problems and events. They learn to identify the role of the legal, political, religious, social and economic institutions and systems that influence their lives and communities. They continue to be actively involved in the life of their school, neighbourhood and wider communities and learn to become more effective in public life. They learn about fairness, social justice, respect for democracy and diversity at school, local, national and global level, and through taking part responsibly in community activities.

1a → links to other subjects
This requirement builds on Hi/10, 13.

1b → links to other subjects
This requirement builds on Hi/2b and Gg/6f and A&D/5d and Mu/5e.

1c–1e → links to other subjects
These requirements build on Hi/9, 10.

1h, 1i → ICT opportunity
Pupils could explore the growing importance of the internet, email and e-commerce.

1i → links to other subjects
This requirement builds on Sc2/5a and Hi/13 and Gg/3b, 3e, 5a, 5b, 6f, 6h–6k and MFL/4c.

2a → links to other subjects
This requirement builds on En2/4a–4c.

2b → links to other subjects
This requirement builds on En1/1a–1e and En3/1i–1o.

2b → ICT opportunity
Pupils could use email to exchange views.

2c → links to other subjects
This requirement builds on En1/3.

Knowledge, skills and understanding

Teaching should ensure that knowledge and understanding about becoming informed citizens are acquired and applied when developing skills of enquiry and communication, and participation and responsible action.

Knowledge and understanding about becoming informed citizens

- 1 Pupils should be taught about:
 - a the legal and human rights and responsibilities underpinning society, basic aspects of the criminal justice system, and how both relate to young people
 - b the diversity of national, regional, religious and ethnic identities in the United Kingdom and the need for mutual respect and understanding
 - c central and local government, the public services they offer and how they are financed, and the opportunities to contribute
 - d the key characteristics of parliamentary and other forms of government
 - e the electoral system and the importance of voting
 - f the work of community-based, national and international voluntary groups
 - g the importance of resolving conflict fairly
 - h the significance of the media in society
 - i the world as a global community, and the political, economic, environmental and social implications of this, and the role of the European Union, the Commonwealth and the United Nations.

Developing skills of enquiry and communication

- 2 Pupils should be taught to:
 - a think about topical political, spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues, problems and events by analysing information and its sources, including ICT-based sources
 - b justify orally and in writing a personal opinion about such issues, problems or events
 - c contribute to group and exploratory class discussions, and take part in debates.

Developing skills of participation and responsible action

- 3 Pupils should be taught to:
 - a use their imagination to consider other people's experiences and be able to think about, express and explain views that are not their own
 - b negotiate, decide and take part responsibly in both school and community-based activities
 - c reflect on the process of participating.

Key stage 4 programme of study

Citizenship

During key stage 4 students continue to study, think about and discuss topical political, spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues, problems and events. They study the legal, political, religious, social, constitutional and economic systems that influence their lives and communities, looking more closely at how they work and their effects. They continue to be actively involved in the life of their school, neighbourhood and wider communities, taking greater responsibility. They develop a range of skills to help them do this, with a growing emphasis on critical awareness and evaluation. They develop knowledge, skills and understanding in these areas through, for example, learning more about fairness, social justice, respect for democracy and diversity at school, local, national and global level, and through taking part in community activities.

1i → links to other subjects

This requirement builds on MFL/Si.

Note for 1j

Local Agenda 21 gives local authorities responsibility to improve sustainable development.

1j → links to other subjects

This requirement builds on Sc2/4b, 4c (single) and Sc2/5b, 5c (double).

2a → links to other subjects

This requirement builds on En2/4a–4c and Ma4/5k (foundation and higher).

2b → links to other subjects

This requirement builds on En1/1a–1e and En3/1i–1o.

2c → links to other subjects

This requirement builds on En1/3.

Knowledge, skills and understanding

Teaching should ensure that knowledge and understanding about becoming informed citizens are acquired and applied when developing skills of enquiry and communication, and participation and responsible action.

Knowledge and understanding about becoming informed citizens

- 1 Students should be taught about:
 - a the legal and human rights and responsibilities underpinning society and how they relate to citizens, including the role and operation of the criminal and civil justice systems
 - b the origins and implications of the diverse national, regional, religious and ethnic identities in the United Kingdom and the need for mutual respect and understanding
 - c the work of parliament, the government and the courts in making and shaping the law
 - d the importance of playing an active part in democratic and electoral processes
 - e how the economy functions, including the role of business and financial services
 - f the opportunities for individuals and voluntary groups to bring about social change locally, nationally, in Europe and internationally
 - g the importance of a free press, and the media's role in society, including the internet, in providing information and affecting opinion
 - h the rights and responsibilities of consumers, employers and employees
 - i the United Kingdom's relations in Europe, including the European Union, and relations with the Commonwealth and the United Nations
 - j the wider issues and challenges of global interdependence and responsibility, including sustainable development and Local Agenda 21.

Developing skills of enquiry and communication

- 2 Students should be taught to:
 - a research a topical political, spiritual, moral, social or cultural issue, problem or event by analysing information from different sources, including ICT-based sources, showing an awareness of the use and abuse of statistics
 - b express, justify and defend orally and in writing a personal opinion about such issues, problems or events
 - c contribute to group and exploratory class discussions, and take part in formal debates.

Developing skills of participation and responsible action

- 3 Students should be taught to:
 - a use their imagination to consider other people's experiences and be able to think about, express, explain and critically evaluate views that are not their own
 - b negotiate, decide and take part responsibly in school and community-based activities
 - c reflect on the process of participating.

The Department for Education and Skills (DfES) agreed that the QCA, the body with responsibility for the school curriculum, should develop necessary support for the new subject by producing some initial guidance to help schools understand what the new requirements meant and how to approach planning and teaching citizenship. Key questions the DfES and the QCA were interested in examining, about how well the subject was implemented included: How prescriptive or light touch was the new programme of study for citizenship? How much discrete provision or teaching time would be required? What links could be made with other subjects, and how would this affect teaching?

It was difficult to determine how well schools and teachers could answer these questions, and indeed they remain pertinent to the teaching of citizenship education in schools in England today. In particular a debate began about what light touch meant and whether the flexibility schools were given and encouraged to take was creating sufficient and rigorous teaching for pupils to make progress in their citizenship learning. The tension was highlighted in the House of Commons Select Committee Inquiry into citizenship education conducted in 2006–2007. The following extract makes clear the focus of the light touch approach:

From the outset, the DfES has deliberately adopted a “light touch” approach to citizenship education, allowing schools a very high degree of freedom in terms of delivery, avoiding prescriptive models. For example, when the curriculum was launched, guidance stressed that citizenship could be delivered as discrete units, during special “citizenship days” where the regular timetable was suspended, in an embedded form through other subjects such as history, geography or even maths, or any combination of these methods. Additionally, provision could take the form of organised activities which encouraged active participation; for example, working with local community organisations to achieve an identified goal, such as the improvement of local play facilities or other community services. (House of Commons, Select Committee Enquiry 2006–2007)

However, Ofsted expressed concern about this in evidence given to the House of Commons Inquiry, questioning whether “light touch” had been interpreted by some schools as “soft touch.”

Early evidence from Ofsted subject monitoring of the quality and impact of citizenship as a national curriculum subject was published in *Toward Consensus?* (2006). The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority whose brief “to keep the curriculum under review” (QCA 2004) highlighted some of the issues in establishing and implementing the subject. Perhaps the most critical were how the subject was being included in a school’s curriculum provision and the quality of teaching. QCA’s annual monitoring of the curriculum found two thirds of schools surveyed had given no additional teaching time to accommodate the new curriculum requirements for citizenship and a significant number of teachers (17%) reported they were not confident in teaching key aspects of the new subject (QCA 2004). Ofsted reported that schools had responded in very different ways, “a minority have embraced it with enthusiasm and worked hard to establish it as a significant part of their curriculum. Others, also a minority have done very little.” In others, “school mistakenly believe they are doing it already.” They also concluded most teachers of citizenship are non-specialists and “far from their normal

comfort zone” (Ofsted 2006). The issues of specialist teaching and curriculum space and time remain key to the quality of provision in schools today. The Department for Education and Skills commissioned a longitudinal study of citizenship by the National Foundation for Educational Research that highlighted the key indicators needed for successful citizenship including: the importance of a school’s senior leadership team supporting the subject; a nominated subject leader to coordinate subject teaching; specialist trained citizenship teachers; and sufficient and regular teaching time on the school curriculum (NFER 2010).

The Department for Education and Skills (DFES) had made some efforts to address these early concerns, by commissioning the QCA to develop detailed guidance and schemes of work for citizenship showing how it could be organized and taught in primary and secondary schools and by introducing citizenship teacher training courses in the form of PGCE citizenship. The main aspects of the guidance are still available on the Standards website. See QCA (2002a) <https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20080804145057/http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/schemes3/>.

The Second National Curriculum for Citizenship

In 2005 the government asked the QCA to review the national curriculum in order to “increase flexibility” and “improve coherence to ensure effective progression from primary to secondary education” (QCA 2007, p. 3). The review led to a revised national curriculum being published in 2007 and shortly after the House of Commons Select Committee Inquiry reported into the impact of citizenship education. A second version of the national curriculum program of study for citizenship was developed and published. The subject remained true to the principles of the Crick report but also took account of the work of Sir Keith Ajegbo, a head teacher of some 21 years at a London school, who was asked by ministers in 2006 to review how the school curriculum addressed diversity and citizenship (DfES 2007).

The context within which the Ajegbo review had taken place was very different to 1998, and two developments were particularly significant. The first was the Victoria Climbié Inquiry in Hackney, London, which evidenced the failure of various services (including medical and social services) to prevent her torture and murder and which in turn influenced the “Every Child Matters” education policy. (Every Child Matters was a flagship government policy which sought greater interdisciplinary working and commitment to protect and support children’s health, well-being, safety, and participation.) The second were the terrorist attacks of 9/11 and 7/7. In England, the latter had resulted in a series of policy responses, including those affecting schools, with proposed changes to the citizenship curriculum to pay greater attention to cultural diversity and a new duty on schools to promote community cohesion (Moore 2015). Additionally, in 2008 the government introduced a delivery strategy for the prevention of violent extremism. Although the strategy did not make any particular reference to the role of national citizenship education in schools, it did focus on the idea of extending citizenship education to young Muslims, particularly those attending madrassas and being educated by Imans (Maer 2008).

The revised national curriculum 2008 encouraged schools to take an “aims-led” approach to building their curriculum and to consider the needs of the whole child alongside the needs of communities and preparing children for the opportunities and challenges of adult life. The 2008 curriculum aims stated that all learners should develop as: *responsible citizens* who make a positive contribution to society

The requirements of the 1999 Citizenship Programme of Study were replaced with a format common to all national curriculum subjects that set out teaching requirements as key concepts and processes, range and content, and curriculum opportunities. An importance statement set out the essence of the subject, including how citizenship contributed to the overarching aims of the curriculum. The concepts of citizenship education took a cue from the those laid out in the Crick report in 1998, but also the direct influence of the Ajegbo report (2007) that introduced a new focus on identities and diversity in the curriculum. Criticality and taking action remained central within the skills and processes that pupils need to learn, as did the focus on using contemporary issues, problems, and events to learn about the key concepts, institutions, and processes and to bring the subject to life.

National Curriculum Key Stage 3 Programme of Study for Citizenship 2008

Citizenship equips pupils with the knowledge and skills needed for effective and democratic participation. It helps pupils to become informed, critical, active citizens who have the confidence and conviction to work collaboratively, take action and try to make a difference in their communities and the wider world.

1 Key concepts

There are a number of key concepts that underpin the study of citizenship. Pupils need to understand these concepts in order to deepen and broaden their knowledge, skills and understanding.

1.1 Democracy and justice

- a Participating actively in different kinds of decision-making and voting in order to influence public life.
- b Weighing up what is fair and unfair in different situations, understanding that justice is fundamental to a democratic society and exploring the role of law in maintaining order and resolving conflict.
- c Considering how democracy, justice, diversity, toleration, respect and freedom are valued by people with different beliefs, backgrounds and traditions within a changing democratic society.
- d Understanding and exploring the roles of citizens and parliament in holding government and those in power to account.

EXPLANATORY NOTES

Democracy and justice: This focuses on the role that citizens can take within the political and justice systems in the UK. It includes: freedom as part of democracy; fairness and the rule of law as part of justice; power and authority; and accountability. Pupils should understand that accountability happens at many levels, ranging from a responsible opposition in parliament challenging, testing and scrutinising what government is doing, to citizens in local communities challenging decisions that affect them.

Pupils should learn about the need to balance competing and conflicting demands, and understand that in a democracy not everyone gets what they want. Linking teaching about democracy, elections and voting with the student council provides a way for pupils to apply their learning to real decision-making situations. Active participation provides opportunities to learn about the important role of negotiation and persuasion within a democracy.

1.2 Rights and responsibilities

- a Exploring different kinds of rights and obligations and how these affect both individuals and communities.
- b Understanding that individuals, organisations and governments have responsibilities to ensure that rights are balanced, supported and protected.
- c Investigating ways in which rights can compete and conflict, and understanding that hard decisions have to be made to try to balance these.

1.3 Identities and diversity: living together in the UK

- a Appreciating that identities are complex, can change over time and are informed by different understandings of what it means to be a citizen in the UK.
- b Exploring the diverse national, regional, ethnic and religious cultures, groups and communities in the UK and the connections between them.
- c Considering the interconnections between the UK and the rest of Europe and the wider world.
- d Exploring **community cohesion** and the different forces that bring about change in communities over time.

EXPLANATORY NOTES

Rights and responsibilities: There are different kinds of rights, obligations and responsibilities – political, legal, human, social, civic and moral. Pupils should explore contested areas surrounding rights and responsibilities, for example the checks and balances needed in relation to freedom of speech in the context of threats from extremism and terrorism.

Identities and diversity: living together in the UK: This includes the multiple identities that may be held by groups and communities in a diverse society, and the ways in which these identities are affected by changes in society. For example, pupils could learn about: how migration has shaped communities; common or shared identity and what unifies groups and communities; and how living together in the UK has been shaped by, and continues to be shaped by, political, social, economic and cultural changes. The historical context for such changes should be considered where appropriate.

All pupils, regardless of their legal or residential status, should explore and develop their understanding of what it means to be a citizen in the UK today.

Community cohesion: Citizenship offers opportunities for schools to address their statutory duty to promote community cohesion.

2 Key processes

These are the essential skills and processes in citizenship that pupils need to learn to make progress.

2.1 Critical thinking and enquiry

Pupils should be able to:

- a engage with and reflect on different ideas, opinions, beliefs and values when exploring **topical and controversial issues and problems**
- b research, plan and undertake enquiries into issues and problems using a range of information and sources
- c analyse and evaluate sources used, questioning different values, ideas and viewpoints and recognising bias.

2.2 Advocacy and representation

Pupils should be able to:

- a express and explain their own opinions to others through discussions, formal debates and **voting**
- b communicate an argument, taking account of different viewpoints and drawing on what they have learnt through research, action and debate
- c justify their argument, giving reasons to try to persuade others to think again, change or support them
- d represent the views of others, with which they may or may not agree.

EXPLANATORY NOTES

Critical thinking and enquiry: Using real case studies to explore issues and problems can help to develop skills of critical thinking, enquiry, debate and advocacy. Pupils should learn how to make judgements on the basis of evidence, exploring ideas, opinions and values that are different from their own.

Topical and controversial issues and problems: Political, social and ethical issues and problems can be controversial and sensitive, and can lead to disagreement. They should not be avoided, but need to be handled so that pupils develop skills in discussing and debating citizenship issues and considering points of view that are not necessarily their own. Setting ground rules and using distancing techniques can help to manage the discussion of such issues.

Analyse and evaluate: This includes pupils evaluating and assessing different opinions and challenging what they see, hear and read through research and investigation, considering scenarios and case studies.

Advocacy and representation: Developing skills of advocacy and representation provides opportunities for pupils to build on the skills of speaking and listening, reading and writing from the English programme of study. In the context of citizenship, they learn to take account of different points of view and the various ways in which people express themselves. They practise communicating with different audiences, including those in positions of power, to try to influence and persuade them about ways of making a difference to political and social issues.

Voting: This includes knowing about and participating in different kinds of voting, for example a show of hands, a secret ballot and simulating division. Voting can be part of activities, for example to decide on a motion within a debate or to agree a new policy for the student council.

2.3 Taking informed and responsible action

Pupils should be able to:

- a explore creative approaches to taking action on problems and issues to achieve intended purposes
- b work individually and with others to negotiate, plan and take action on citizenship issues to try to influence others, bring about change or resist unwanted change, using time and resources appropriately
- c analyse the impact of their actions on communities and the wider world, now and in the future
- d reflect on the progress they have made, evaluating what they have learnt, what went well, the difficulties encountered and what they would do differently.

It helps pupils to become informed, critical, active citizens

3 Range and content

This section outlines the breadth of the subject on which teachers should draw when teaching the key concepts and key processes. Citizenship focuses on the political and social dimensions of living together in the UK and recognises the influence of the historical context. Citizenship also helps pupils make sense of the world today and equips them for the challenges and changes facing communities in the future.

The study of citizenship should include:

- a political, legal and human rights, and responsibilities of citizens
- b the roles of the law and the justice system and how they relate to young people
- c key features of parliamentary democracy and government in the constituent parts of the UK and at local level, including voting and elections
- d freedom of speech and diversity of views, and the role of the media in informing and influencing public opinion and holding those in power to account
- e actions that individuals, groups and organisations can take to influence decisions affecting communities and the environment
- f strategies for handling local and national disagreements and conflicts
- g the needs of the local community and how these are met through public services and the voluntary sector
- h how economic decisions are made, including where public money comes from and who decides how it is spent

EXPLANATORY NOTES

Take action: Action should be informed by research and investigation into a political, social or ethical issue or problem. This includes developing and using skills, while applying citizenship knowledge and understanding. Actions could include: presenting a case to others about a concern; conducting a consultation, vote or election; organising a meeting, event or forum to raise awareness and debate issues; representing the views of others at a meeting or event; creating, reviewing or revisiting an organisational policy; contributing to local community policies; lobbying and communicating views publicly via a website, campaign or display; setting up an action group or network; training others in democratic skills such as advocacy or campaigning.

EXPLANATORY NOTES

Political rights: This includes the development of universal suffrage and equal opportunities, which can be linked with the study of the development of democracy in history.

Human rights: Human rights and the rights of the child can be revisited in many different contexts. Linking teaching to topical issues provides a way of engaging pupils in learning about the values and principles underpinning human rights, including exploring decisions that need to be made to balance conflicting rights and the extent to which conventions and declarations have been enshrined in national law.

Law and the justice system: This includes the criminal justice system. Some topical areas of law, such as antisocial behaviour legislation, can provide a focus for exploring the difference between criminal and civil justice.

Key features of parliamentary democracy and government: This includes an understanding of the role of political parties, the 'first past the post' system of elections, the role of government and opposition, and cabinet decision-making.

The constituent parts of the UK: This includes how democracy has changed in recent times with the devolution of power to the Scottish Parliament and the assemblies in Northern Ireland and Wales. This can be linked with the study of the origins of the UK in history.

Environment: This provides opportunities to evaluate individual and collective actions that contribute to sustainable practices. Pupils could consider the different ethical implications of actions, policies and behaviour. This work can be linked with work in science and geography.

- i the changing nature of UK society, including the diversity of ideas, beliefs, cultures, identities, traditions, perspectives and values that are shared
- j migration to, from and within the UK and the reasons for this
- k the UK's relations with the European Union and the rest of Europe, the Commonwealth, the United Nations and the world as a global community.



4 Curriculum opportunities

During the key stage pupils should be offered the following opportunities that are integral to their learning and enhance their engagement with the concepts, processes and content of the subject.

The curriculum should provide opportunities for pupils to:

- a debate, in groups and whole-class discussions, topical and controversial issues, including those of concern to young people
- b develop citizenship knowledge and understanding while using and applying citizenship skills
- c work individually and in groups, taking on different roles and responsibilities
- d participate in both school-based and community-based citizenship activities
- e participate in different forms of individual and collective action, including decision-making and campaigning
- f work with a range of community partners, where possible
- g take into account legal, moral, economic, environmental, historical and social dimensions of different political problems and issues
- h take into account a range of contexts, such as school, local, regional, national, European, international and global, as relevant to different topics
- i use and interpret different media and ICT, both as sources of information and as a means of communicating ideas
- j make links between citizenship and work in other subjects and areas of the curriculum.

EXPLANATORY NOTES

Changing nature of UK society: Change is a constant feature of UK society and pupils should understand some reasons why change occurs (eg migration, economic factors, globalisation) and how communities change as a consequence (eg shops, food, schools, languages).

Diversity: Diversity includes our different and shared needs, abilities and membership of groups and communities such as gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, physical and sensory ability, belief, religion and class. Learning about diversity involves recognising that culture, including the language, ideas, customs and traditions practised by people within a group, also forms part of identity. Pupils should explore the diversity of groups and communities and examine the changes that occur. They should also explore things that unify us, including the shared values that UK society is committed to, and what groups and communities have in common as we live together in society.

Europe: A European dimension can be incorporated when exploring many topical issues, including human rights, the environment, immigration, trade and economic issues, diversity and identities.

The Commonwealth: This includes the development, membership and purpose of the Commonwealth. It can be linked with the study of the British Empire in history.

The United Nations: This includes exploring the role of the United Nations in the context of topical events such as conflict situations affecting the international and/or global community.

EXPLANATORY NOTES

Community-based citizenship activities: These encourage pupils to work with people beyond the school community to address real issues and decisions. They can involve inviting people into schools to work with pupils on issues and/or pupils working with others beyond the school site.

Campaigning: This can help pupils learn how to influence those in power, take part in decision-making and participate positively in public life in ways that are safe, responsible and within the law.

Community partners: These could include voluntary organizations and public and private bodies. For example, the police, magistrates and the courts could support work relating to the law and justice system. Local councillors, MPs and MEPs could support work relating to parliament, democracy and government.

Historical: This includes considering relevant historical contexts in order to inform citizenship issues and problems. For example, pupils could consider the movement and settlement of peoples within the British Isles over time and the impact of migration on diversity in communities living together in the UK today.

Media and ICT: This includes: using different media and ICT to communicate ideas, raise awareness, lobby or campaign on issues; using and interpreting a wide range of sources of information during the course of enquiries and research; and learning how different media inform and shape opinion. Pupils need to evaluate the extent to which a balanced or partial view of events and issues is presented.

Make links: This includes: making links with work on the media in English and ICT; work on diversity and inclusion in history and RE; and work on the environment and sustainability in geography and science.

There is some evidence to suggest that, at this time, the status of citizenship was developing in schools. The Ofsted subject monitoring report “Citizenship established?” (2010) highlighted a number of improvements including that the quality of provision had been good or outstanding in more than half of schools inspected and the number deemed inadequate had reduced from 25% to 10%. This period also saw significant growth in the uptake of the GCSE Citizenship Studies – peaking at 94,000 candidates who achieved the qualification in 2009 – and citizenship teachers were beginning to share their practice and ideas for teaching the subject through regional groups established to support the revised curriculum. One such teacher, teaching at Sir Keith Ajegbo’s own school in London, developed an approach to describing citizenship in the *curriculum*, *culture*, and *community* of the school – also known as the three Cs of citizenship (Moorse 2015). The approach drew on thinking developed in QCA schemes of work (2001, 2002b) and was designed to encourage teachers and schools to see citizenship as a subject but also as more than a subject. The three Cs are still used as a way of framing a model of effective citizenship provision by the official subject association in England – the Association for Citizenship Teaching – and are included in the latest strategic plan (Association for Citizenship Teaching 2018).

The Third National Curriculum for Citizenship

A further review of the national curriculum was announced in 2010 following the election of the Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition Government, when Michael Gove took up the role of Secretary of State for Education. Early indicators suggested that the review would slim down the national curriculum further and might even remove certain subjects from the national curriculum, including citizenship. The Government White Paper for Schools 2010 “The Importance of Teaching” described the aims of the curriculum review as:

reducing prescription and allowing schools to decide how to teach while refocusing on the core subject knowledge that every child and young person should attain at each stage of their education. (DFE 2010)

In the absence of a non-governmental body to conduct the review (the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency and its predecessor body QCA had previously handled such work but was being disbanded and closed in 2011 as part of a policy to reduce the number of agencies and centralize policymaking), the government established an Expert Panel to advise on the review. The possibility of citizenship being removed from the national curriculum became a real one, when the Panel, Chaired by Tim Oates, published a report with recommendations that included:

Citizenship is of enormous importance in a contemporary and future-oriented education. However, we are not persuaded that study of the issues and topics included in citizenship

education constitutes a distinct 'subject' as such. We therefore recommend that it be reclassified as part of the Basic Curriculum. (Department for Education 2011)

However, the reformed national curriculum was put out to public consultation with proposals for citizenship as a subject in the secondary education at key stages 3 and 4. Following a coordinated campaign known as *Democratic Life*, by the citizenship subject community supported by many politicians, academics, parents, and young people as well as teachers and 40 organizations, citizenship was retained in the revised national curriculum published in 2013 (Democratic Life 2011a; Moorse 2014).

The revised national curriculum for citizenship began first teaching in schools from September 2014. However, contrary to the previous versions of the curriculum outlined above, this time there was no national support program to help teachers and schools adjust to the changed curriculum.

This said, some aspects of previous versions of citizenship were still in place including democracy, parliament and the political system, and law and the justice system and at key stage 4 human rights and international law, local, regional, and international governance and the UK's relations with the rest of Europe, the Commonwealth, and the wider world, alongside content on the ways citizens contribute to community and influence decision including through voting. However, some new elements had been introduced. For example, for the first time, there was an explicit requirement to teach about the UK's constitution and the role of political parties in the political system of the UK. Personal aspects of finance education were also included more explicitly than before. In addition, some key content that had appeared in previous versions of the national curriculum for citizenship were not explicit, for example, teaching about the economy, consumer, employer and employee rights and responsibilities, sustainable development, public debate, policy formation, pressure and interest groups, and diversity and change in society. References to pupils taking action or active citizenship, although implied, were made in relation to "participation in volunteering" and "other forms for responsible activity." Although in citizenship there remains a requirement to teach critical thinking, research and enquiry, debate, evaluation of evidence, reasoned argument, and taking informed action, there was a significant shift away from specifying subject skills to be developed. This was not just in citizenship but across the national curriculum as a whole (ACT 2014; Moorse 2014).

Overall, the 2014 version of the national curriculum for citizenship – still in effect at the time of writing – is shorter with less detail and arguably contains less clarity. Teachers have to work hard to interpret the requirements and translate them into meaningful schemes of work and lessons. This coupled with a limited communication strategy by the DFE about the curriculum reforms and what changed for each subject has left many schools in the dark about what was expected and some who still do not realize citizenship is still part of the national curriculum in secondary education. Furthermore, while there were no changes to the non-statutory framework for citizenship in primary education, many schools and teachers thought it had gone and simply stopped teaching the subject (Association for Citizenship Teaching 2017).

National Curriculum Programmes of Study for Citizenship 2014

Citizenship – key stages 3 and 4

Subject content

Key stage 3

Teaching should develop pupils' understanding of democracy, government and the rights and responsibilities of citizens. Pupils should use and apply their knowledge and understanding whilst developing skills to research and interrogate evidence, debate and evaluate viewpoints, present reasoned arguments and take informed action.

Pupils should be taught about:

- the development of the political system of democratic government in the United Kingdom, including the roles of citizens, Parliament and the monarch
- the operation of Parliament, including voting and elections, and the role of political parties
- the precious liberties enjoyed by the citizens of the United Kingdom
- the nature of rules and laws and the justice system, including the role of the police and the operation of courts and tribunals
- the roles played by public institutions and voluntary groups in society, and the ways in which citizens work together to improve their communities, including opportunities to participate in school-based activities
- the functions and uses of money, the importance and practice of budgeting, and managing risk.

Key stage 4

Teaching should build on the key stage 3 programme of study to deepen pupils' understanding of democracy, government and the rights and responsibilities of citizens. Pupils should develop their skills to be able to use a range of research strategies, weigh up evidence, make persuasive arguments and substantiate their conclusions. They should experience and evaluate different ways that citizens can act together to solve problems and contribute to society.

Pupils should be taught about:

- parliamentary democracy and the key elements of the constitution of the United Kingdom, including the power of government, the role of citizens and Parliament in holding those in power to account, and the different roles of the executive, legislature and judiciary and a free press
- the different electoral systems used in and beyond the United Kingdom and actions citizens can take in democratic and electoral processes to influence decisions locally, nationally and beyond
- other systems and forms of government, both democratic and non-democratic, beyond the United Kingdom

Citizenship – key stages 3 and 4

- local, regional and international governance and the United Kingdom's relations with the rest of Europe, the Commonwealth, the United Nations and the wider world
- human rights and international law
- the legal system in the UK, different sources of law and how the law helps society deal with complex problems
- diverse national, regional, religious and ethnic identities in the United Kingdom and the need for mutual respect and understanding
- the different ways in which a citizen can contribute to the improvement of his or her community, to include the opportunity to participate actively in community volunteering, as well as other forms of responsible activity
- income and expenditure, credit and debt, insurance, savings and pensions, financial products and services, and how public money is raised and spent.

Recent Policy Initiatives and the Impact on Citizenship and “Active Citizenship” in the Curriculum

A central purpose of citizenship education is to develop the knowledge, understanding, and skills that pupils need to become politically literate, active citizens. Over the three iterations of the national curriculum for citizenship, the ways in which teaching requirements have interpreted this aim have changed. Jerome and Moorse (2016) identify two key reasons for this: first, differences in the approach and methods used to construct and develop the content of the national curriculum teaching requirements and second a shift in the ideologies influencing education priorities and the subject.

The Process of Designing National Curriculum Policy

Since the policy push for the “academization” of schools, the national curriculum carries less weight and status than when it was established in the late 1980s and was statutory in every state school. Academies are state schools which receive their funding directly from central government and, as such, are independent of local authority control. Some academies have been compelled to enter such status on the basis of a schools “underperformance,” while others have converted to academy status by choice and on the basis of their “outstanding” or “good” performance. Free schools are legally academies but are schools which are new to the schooling system (rather than having replaced or been converted from an existing school). Both academies and free schools are granted particular flexibilities to

increase their autonomy, including what they teach within the national curriculum, employment practices, and the structuring of the school calendar. Yet often the national curriculum is one of the first things that a new Education Secretary seeks to reform. The processes used to review and reconstruct the curriculum and how much participation citizens have is therefore an important consideration in its final shape.

In summary the three iterations of the citizenship national curriculum involved three different processes:

- The 2002 version involved a short and closely controlled process managed inside the then Department For Education and Employment and a public statutory consultation managed by the QCA (a non-governmental body whose remit included keeping the curriculum under review).
- The 2008 version involved a longer and more developmental approach organized by the QCA that was more open and involved many planned face-to-face interactions with stakeholders both in education and from the wider public involving committees, conferences, and seminars across the country, followed by formal consultation involving both online and face-to-face stakeholder activities (QCA 2007, p. 5).
- The 2014 revisions were made after the abolition of QCDA. This time the DFE managed the consultation process and the development of new programmes of study for each national curriculum subject internally. There was much more minimal contact with stakeholders and short public, online consultation.

It is noticeable that the more extended and inclusive development process in 2008 coincided with a more confident and well-established citizenship subject community and a fuller curriculum specification of what should be taught in the subject. At this point the subject was also being embedded within schools. There was a network of more than 20 universities training citizenship specialist teachers as well as a wider range of NGOs involved in supporting aspects of the subject or the subject as a whole with resources, conferences, and training for existing teachers (Hayward and Jerome 2010). The subject association – Association for Citizenship Teaching – also reached its peak membership at this point, and shortly afterwards the uptake of GCSE Citizenship Studies also peaked (Joint Council of Qualifications 2009).

During 2013 it was to the surprise of many that government rejected their own Expert Panels' view and Michael Gove confirmed citizenship would remain a national curriculum subject in secondary education. This was in no small part the result of extensive lobbying of many in the subject community who organized a campaigning group, "Democratic Life," supported by leading politicians including the former Education Secretary who established citizenship as a subject, Lord Blunkett. However, while the lobbying was successful in ensuring citizenship continued as a national curriculum subject, there has been a narrowing of subject content and a focus on the softer "voluntary" action rather than political and democratic action and change making of earlier iterations.

Ideology and Citizenship

As noted earlier, discussions about citizenship education have been influenced by governments' ideologies about what the good society looks like and what roles citizens might take in such a society – as law-abiding and compliant citizens who do their duty and vote and/or as critical and active citizens who take a more prominent part in democratic and political decision-making and policy shaping. While there remains a broad consensus that citizenship education is needed if democracy is to survive and thrive, the form, content, and teaching approaches required remain subject to much debate.

One of the main areas where important shifts in meaning are evident in curriculum policy is in relation to active citizenship (see Table 2).

In 1998, the Advisory Group for citizenship stated that “Active citizenship is our aim throughout” although they then chose the term “community involvement” to describe this – perhaps fearing a negative association with the more politically loaded term, “activism.” The drive for active citizenship was based on concerns about the democratic deficit, political apathy, concerns about the moral health of the young, and the goal of building greater involvement of young people in their neighborhoods and communities. The first national curriculum published in 1999 required pupils to be taught skills of “participation and responsible action” alongside “knowledge and understanding about becoming an informed citizen.” By 2008, the purpose of the subject included “to become informed, critical, active citizens who have the confidence and conviction to work collaboratively, take action, and try to make a difference in their communities and the wider world.” Citizenship knowledge and understanding were accompanied by skills of “advocacy and representation” and “taking informed and responsible action” The list of guidance notes for teachers referred to actions including presenting a case to others about a concern; conducting a consultation, vote, or election; organizing a meeting, event, or forum to raise awareness and debate issues; contributing to local community policies; setting up an action group; and training others in democratic skills such as lobbying and campaigning. Both the 2002 and the 2008 programmes of study included active citizenship built on the premise that students should develop the ability to work together with others within the school and wider community to achieve real change and contribute to public life.

In the 2014 Citizenship National Curriculum, there are some noticeable absences of key subject terms and concepts and in particular in relation to “active citizenship.” The curriculum now talks of “volunteering and responsible activity” although teaching requirements do make references to learning about the actions citizens can take in democracy. The shift in language can most obviously be attributed to the interests and motivations of the minister responsible for decision-making about the national curriculum at the time the reforms took place – Michael Gove. This resulted in a content-led “traditional knowledge-rich” curriculum and a return to more “direct instruction.” In a speech given in 2013 by Michael Gove cited a number of academics and writers who supported this view. Notably Daniel Willingham who

Table 2 Changing descriptions of “active citizenship”

Source	Description
1998 Crick report Community involvement	“learning about and becoming helpfully involved in the life and concerns of their communities, including learning through community involvement and service to the community”
2002 National Curriculum for Citizenship Participation and responsible action	Key stage 3 teaching requirements “use their imagination to consider other people’s experiences and be able to think about, express and explain views that are not their own” “negotiate, decide and take part responsibly in both school and community- based activity” “reflect on the process of participating”
2008 National Curriculum for Citizenship Taking informed and responsible action	Key stage 3 teaching requirements “Pupils should be able to: explore creative approaches to taking action on problems and issues to achieve intended purposes work individually and with others to negotiate, plan and take action on citizenship issues to try to influence others, bring about change or resist unwanted change, using time and resources appropriately analyse the impact of their actions on communities and the wider world, now and in the future reflect on the progress they have made, evaluating what they have learnt, what went well, the difficulties encountered and what they would do differently”
2014 National Curriculum for Citizenship Volunteering and responsible activity	From subject aims – “develop an interest in, and commitment to, participation in volunteering as well as other forms of responsible activity, that they will take with them into adulthood” Key stage 3 teaching requirements “the ways in which citizens work together to improve their communities, including opportunities to participate in school-based activities” Key stage 4 from preamble to teaching requirements “They should experience and evaluate different ways that citizens can act together to solve problems and contribute to society” Key stage 4 teaching requirements “actions citizens can take in democratic and electoral processes to influence decisions locally, nationally and beyond” “the different ways in which a citizen can contribute to the improvement of his or her community, to include the opportunity to participate actively in community volunteering, as well as other forms of responsible activity”
2015 DFE GCSE Citizenship Studies Subject Content Taking citizenship action	“Citizenship action may be defined as a planned course of informed action to address a citizenship issue or question of concern and aimed at delivering a benefit or change for a particular community or wider society. Taking citizenship action in a real out-of-classroom context allows students to apply citizenship knowledge, understanding and skills, and

(continued)

Table 2 (continued)

Source	Description
	to gain different citizenship insights and appreciate different perspectives on how we live together and make decisions in society. It requires them to practise a range of citizenship skills including: research and enquiry, interpretation of evidence, including primary and secondary sources, planning, collaboration, problem solving, advocacy, campaigning and evaluation”

says “the more knowledge students acquire, the smarter they become” and ED Hirsch, who Gove claimed “proved this phenomenon beyond any doubt. . .”.

In a context in which the Secretary of State for Education makes such comments, it is not surprising that the concept, process, and pedagogy of “active citizenship” based on the idea that children need to learn citizenship through doing politics, participating in democracy and democratic decision-making and experiencing the process of taking informed action with others including campaigning, are not made explicit in the revised national curriculum citizenship programs of study.

Some years on from the 2014 curriculum, the phrase “active citizenship” has reappeared in national education policy alongside “social action” but this time in a new context. The DFE’s statutory guidance on Relationships and Sex and Health Education published in 2019 advises that schools link taking action with the well-being of citizens, service to others, and the development of personal attributes:

As in primary, secondary relationships education can be underpinned by a wider, deliberate cultivation and practice of resilience and character in the individual. These should include character traits such as belief in achieving goals and persevering with tasks, as well as personal attributes such as honesty, integrity, courage, humility, kindness, generosity, trustworthiness, and a sense of justice, underpinned by an understanding of the importance of self-respect and self-worth. There are many ways in which secondary schools should support the development of these attributes, for example, by providing planned opportunities for young people to undertake social action, active citizenship, and voluntary service to others locally or more widely (Paragraph 74).

The new rationale seems to be that students should be an active and good citizen because of the benefits for the individual, rather than for democratic society and collective democratic well-being.

This narrow and individualized approach has been recognized elsewhere. In 2018, the House of Lords Select Committee report, “The Ties that Bind: Citizenship and Civic Engagement in the 21st Century,” highlighted the “Citizenship challenge” as how to create an environment in which everyone feels they belong and have a stake in society. The report also discussed active citizenship:

What became increasingly clear through the course of this inquiry is that the United Kingdom’s approach to citizenship has in many policy areas become synonymous with an arguably over-narrow and individualised emphasis. Active citizenship is too often defined purely in terms of volunteering, social action or learning facts, and too rarely in terms of

learning about and practising democracy in the sense of political engagement and democratic participation. (Para 13, House of Lords 2018)

The report called for the citizenship curriculum to be reformed and “re-prioritized, creating a statutory entitlement to citizenship education from primary to the end of secondary education and set a target which will allow every secondary schools to have at least one trained citizenship teacher.”

The government response rejected this suggestion on the basis that they had committed not to reform the national curriculum during the current parliament, stating that “We want all pupils to understand democracy, government and how laws are made and to understand the different ways that citizens can work together to improve their communities and society. We want children and young people to use this understanding to become constructive, active citizens” (HM Government 2018).

Conclusion

In examining citizenship education policy and curriculum in England, this chapter has argued that a number of key factors have shaped and influenced the content of the national curriculum subject of citizenship. Notably key moments that both led to the subject being introduced and included in the school curriculum in England and its subsequent development have directly reflected the views and values of those in power, political will, and policy windows of opportunity as well as the process used in the formation and construction of subject content and the levels of engagement with politicians, stakeholders, and the wider public. The most recent curriculum reforms in 2014 led to a narrowing of the subject and even greater need for teachers to interpret and plan their teaching to meet the requirements and provide a meaningful citizenship curriculum for students.

At the time of writing, it is notable that there is a renewed interest in the curriculum and what is taught in schools in England, including citizenship. This has emerged from the School Inspectorate Ofsted, and the curriculum subject has been included explicitly in new inspection framework which was introduced in the autumn of 2019 (Ofsted 2019). The subject of citizenship will be inspected as national curriculum subject under the new Quality of Education measure. Ofsted are clear all schools must provide a broad and balanced curriculum based on the national curriculum or a curriculum of equivalent rigor and breadth. Citizenship is also one of two subjects identified as contributing to personal development, another new measure which schools will be evaluated against. It remains to be seen what impact this might have on the quality of citizenship education, the status of curriculum provision for the subject, and the place of active citizenship in schools. In today’s somewhat temporary and ever-changing political context, where ministers and policymakers and shapers come and go, the debate about the role, purpose, content, and teaching of the citizenship curriculum in England looks set to continue.

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Further Reading

Association for Citizenship Teaching website has copies of the National Curriculum programmes of study 2002 and 2008 available at <https://www.teachingcitizenship.org.uk/resource/national-curriculum-programmes-study-citizenship>