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Moving in the wrong direction: A critical history of citizenship education in England from the early twentieth century to the present day

Daryn Egan-Simon, University of Chester, United Kingdom

Email: d.egansimon@chester.ac.uk

Abstract

This article critically explores the development of citizenship education in England from the early twentieth century to the present day. Using Westheimer and Kahne's (2004) citizenship education framework as a lens, it is argued that citizenship education in England, from the early twentieth century to the present day, has failed to move beyond education for personal responsibility and civic participation, towards a more justice-orientated conceptualisation. It is maintained that citizenship education during much of the twentieth century was framed around personal responsibility, deference and patriotism. However, with the election of the New Labour government in 1997 and the introduction of citizenship education as a statutory secondary school subject in 2002, there was a move towards the development of participatory dispositions and the enhancement of political literacy in young people. From 2010, however, there has been a retrograde shift towards citizenship education for personal responsibility and character education (Kisby, 2017; Starkey, 2018; Weinberg and Flinders, 2018), as well as an increased focus on Fundamental British Values. The article concludes by considering the recommendations from the House of Lords' (2018) report on citizenship education and argues that, while they may help reposition citizenship education within a participatory framework, they still fail to move towards a justice-orientated conceptualisation of citizenship education which focuses on the solidarity of the global community and how best to take actions that benefit all of humankind.

Keywords: Citizenship, Education, Historical, Social-Justice, Policy

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Introduction

Social scientists, educationalists, philosophers and historians have long deliberated and debated which notion of citizenship education best serves and enhances democracy (Westheimer and Kahne, 2004; McCowan, 2006; Banks, 2008; Fry and O'Brien, 2017). One of the main difficulties of arriving at an uncontested definition of citizenship is that it reflects complex cultural, moral, ethical and political issues related to the individual's relationship to society and the state. Indeed, as Westheimer and Kahne (2004, p. 239) observe, '...there exists a vast and valuable array of perspectives on the kinds of citizens that democracies require and the kinds of curricula that can help them achieve democratic aims'. For some, citizenship education should be aimed at improving the health of democracy by developing politically literate and well-informed citizens who have the knowledge, skills and dispositions to participate in democratic processes and fulfil their civic duties and responsibilities (Pykett, 2010). Critics, however, argue that citizenship education should go further and aim to develop critical democratic citizens who are committed to social justice and equality (Banks, 2008; DeJaeghere and Tudball, 2007; Hartung, 2017).

Throughout this article, I critically explore the historical roots and development of citizenship education in England from the early twentieth century to the present day. Using Westheimer and Kahne's (2004) framework as a conceptual lens, it is argued that citizenship education has failed to move beyond education for personal responsibility and civic participation and towards a more justice-orientated conceptualisation. Indeed, during much of the twentieth century (notwithstanding initiatives such as the Programme for Political Education PPE in the 1970s) citizenship education has been framed around personal responsibility, deference and patriotism. However, with the election of the New Labour government in 1997 and the introduction of citizenship education as a statutory secondary school subject in 2002, there was a move towards the development of participatory dispositions and the enhancement of political literacy in young people. While this suggested a move in the right direction, since 2010 there has been a retrograde shift towards citizenship education for

personal responsibility and character education (Kisby, 2017; Starkey, 2018; Weinberg and Flinders, 2018). This, coupled with an increased focus on Fundamental British Values (FBV), has resulted in a narrow predisposition for citizenship education which is concerned with shaping dutiful economic subjects rather than critical, politically-minded active agents of change (Kisby, 2017; Weinberg and Flinders, 2018). Towards the end of the article, I consider the recommendations from the House of Lords' (2018) report on citizenship education in England and argue that, while it attempts to reposition citizenship education within a participatory framework, it does little to advance the increasing need for a more justice-orientated conceptualisation. I begin the article by providing a conceptual lens through which to view developments in policy and practice in England from the early twentieth century to the present day.

Personal, participatory and justice-orientated citizenship education

While there are numerous conceptualisations of citizenship education (see, for example, Kerr, 1999; Banks, 2008), it is beyond the scope of this article to provide a detailed discussion on their merits and limitations. Instead, Westheimer and Kahne's (2004) framework for types of citizenship education is used throughout this article as a conceptual lens for analysing citizenship education in England from the early twentieth century to the present day. In their two-year study of civics programmes in the United States (all with the specific goal of advancing democratic purposes of education), Westheimer and Kahne (2004, emphasis included in original) identified three types of citizenship education and the 'good' citizens they sought to create: *the personally responsible citizen*; *the participatory citizen*; and *the justice-oriented citizen*.

According to Westheimer and Kahne (2004, p. 7), '...the personally responsible citizen acts responsibly in his/her community by... picking up litter, giving blood, recycling, volunteering, and staying out of debt'. In times of crises, personally responsible citizens may volunteer to help those deemed less fortunate than themselves and may give time or money to charity. Furthermore, the personally responsible citizen possesses virtuous characteristics such as reliability, honesty, and compassion. Westheimer and Kahne (2004, p. 11) are rightfully critical of the limitations of the personal responsibility notion of citizenship education, arguing that it is '...an inadequate response to the challenges of educating a democratic citizenry'. Indeed, this form of citizenship education is primarily concerned with creating deferential and obedient subjects rather than critical agents of change, especially as there is little

space within these programmes to challenge social injustice and structural inequalities (Westheimer and Kahne, 2004). Instead, it reflects an individualistic, passive conception of citizenship education with a reliance on character education (Fry and O'Brien, 2017). This, as Fry and O'Brien (2017) argue, is a politically motivated programmatic decision as educating primarily towards personal responsibility potentially reinforces a conservative notion of citizenship. As will be argued later, a similar push towards character education in England has gathered pace since 2010 with the election of the coalition and successive Conservative governments.

The participatory citizen, on the other hand, is an active member of local and national civic affairs and works for community enhancement (Westheimer and Kahne, 2004; Torres-Harding, 2018; Fry and O'Brien, 2017). They may, for example, vote during local and national elections and contribute charitably to the community with their time and/ or money. Participatory citizenship education programmes are concerned with teaching students how government works and the importance of being actively involved in the community (Westheimer and Kahne, 2004). While these are not undesirable objectives, participatory citizenship education tends to promote deferential dispositions and lacks a critical dimension. Indeed, participatory citizenship education teaches students to understand and accept the system as it is rather than how it could be.

Finally, '...justice-oriented citizens critically assess social, political, and economic structures and explore collective strategies for change that challenge injustice and, where possible, address root causes of problems' (Westheimer and Kahne, 2004, p. 9). This vision for justice-orientated citizenship education does share some commonalities with participatory models; however, the focus on structural inequalities and a desire to bring about social and political change suggests it has far more transformative ambitions:

Placing social justice at the center of their arguments, other educators and theorists stress that critical analysis and liberatory pedagogy are essential for democratic education. Citizens, according to this view, need not only skills associated with participation but also those required to critically analyze and act on root causes of social problems and inequities (Westheimer and Kahne, 2004, p. 13).

Westheimer and Kahne's (2004) definitions of citizenship are not mutually exclusive, but educators should prioritise the traits associated with participatory and justice-orientated citizenship if they are to truly prepare young people for active and critical democratic citizenry. Westheimer and Kahne's (2004) findings raise important questions for educators and policymakers about the perceived role of citizenship education within schools and its impact on developing the knowledge, skills and dispositions needed for children and young people to become active democratic citizens. Though based upon findings from the United States, Westheimer and Kahne (2004) provide a useful conceptual lens by which to view citizenship education in England. Indeed, citizenship education in England has tended to focus on personal responsibility and participatory dispositions rather than on developing critical agents of change as advocated by more justice-orientated conceptualisations.

Citizenship education in England from the early twentieth century to the present day

Early twentieth century and post-war developments: Citizenship education for personal responsibility and patriotic dispositions

During the early twentieth century debates around citizenship education were primarily concerned with how it should be taught; directly through civics lessons or more indirectly through other subjects such as history and geography (Clarke, 2007; Keating, 2011). Those advocating the latter believed that citizenship education was far too complex and tedious for schoolchildren and would be better taught indirectly through traditional subjects and coupled with patriotic school celebrations such as Empire Day (Clarke, 2007; Freathy, 2008; Keating, 2011). Here, it was proposed that teaching about the lives of great British individuals, would enable children to develop the personally responsible characteristics of good citizenship such as courage, obedience and serviceableness (Keating, 2011). According to Freathy (2008, p. 298), early twentieth century citizenship education was primarily '...based on politically and religiously conservative conceptions of English national identity... defined in terms of Anglo-Saxon origins, the English language, the British Isles and Empire, Whig history, white skin, Christian fellowship and the loyalty and passivity of subjecthood.' Disconcertingly, the Govian reforms to the History National Curriculum (DfE, 2014), appeared to hark back to a similar over-celebratory national narrative that attempted to foster a sense of national character in young people through the promotion of

imperial heroes and British exceptionalism.

Although attempts were made in the early twentieth century to place education for citizenship on the political agenda, there was little success in constructing an organised and coherent conceptualisation for the subject either directly or indirectly (Freathy, 2008; Keating, 2011). This failure can be attributed to three important factors: political, social and pedagogical: political, due to the lack of democracy throughout history in England; social due to the country's class-based system; and pedagogical due to a lack of understanding of citizenship education among teachers (Carr and Hartnett, 1996; Keating, 2011). However, attempts were made during the 1930s for citizenship education to be taught in schools not only as a means for promoting patriotism but also as a tool for developing healthy democratic dispositions in young people (Keating, 2011).

The Association of Education in Citizenship

One of the strongest advocates for citizenship education was the politician and industrialist Ernest Simon who, along with Eva Hubback, founded the Association of Education in Citizenship (AEC) in 1934. The AEC called for a direct form of citizenship education which would teach young people about liberal democracies and civic duties, while also acting as a moral force to stem the tide of totalitarianism that was growing across Europe (Clarke, 2007; McCulloch and Woodin, 2010; Keating, 2011; Hasiao-Yuh, 2018). The AEC contested the indirect teaching of citizenship education suggesting that it would lead to a lack of political awareness and ignorance amongst schoolchildren (Keating, 2011). Instead, the AEC proposed that 'the education system should be more systematic in training pupils for their duties as citizens with a sense of social responsibility and a love of truth and freedom' (McCulloch and Woodin, 2010, p. 189). Here, education for citizenship was viewed more holistically, through a liberal reformist lens, as an education for the whole person, geared towards the enhancement of civic duties (Clarke, 2007; McCulloch and Woodin, 2010) and existing within the confines of the personally responsible domains of citizenship education. Indeed, the overriding aims of the AEC were to develop virtues and attributes associated with 'good citizenship' with deference to the established political orders (Clarke, 2007). Simon did, however, face opposition across the political spectrum, and from some members within the AEC, as his critics argued that his vision for the direct teaching of

education for citizenship could potentially lead to the ideological indoctrination of young people (Clarke, 2007; Keating, 2011; Hasiao-Yuh, 2018).

Post-war developments in citizenship education

During the post-war period, there was some degree of cross-party consensus around citizenship education, largely influenced by Marshall's 1950 seminal work *Citizenship and Social Class* (Faulks, 2006). Marshall's conceptualisation of citizenship focused heavily on rights acquired in the latter part of the nineteenth century such as freedom of speech and political franchise. Faulks (2006, p. 124) suggests that Marshall failed '...to specifically identify political education as a crucial precondition and resource for *active* rather than *passive* citizenship'. As such, there was very little progress regarding tangible policy developments for citizenship education during the 1950s. Moreover, throughout the 1950s and 1960s, the limited citizenship education that was taught in schools tended to focus narrowly on learning about the British Constitution and promoting values such as '...humility, service, restraint and respect' (Davies, 1999, p. 126). Indeed, post-war citizenship education placed greater emphasis on '...the virtues of submissiveness and patriotism and did not seek to develop critical skills amongst citizens' (Faulks, 2006, p. 124). Consequently, citizenship education during this period was driven by a desire to develop reliable law-abiding and personally responsible citizens who respected established political orders and willingly fulfil their civic duties when called upon to do so by the state.

One notable development in citizenship education during the post-war period came in 1974 with the introduction of the Hansard Society and Politics Association's political education initiative: the Programme for Political Education (PPE) (Davies, 1999; Heater, 2001; Kisby, 2012). Funded by the Nuffield Foundation and built on a liberal reformist conception of political education, the central aim of the programme was to enhance political literacy by providing opportunities for young people to learn about politics in various contexts and make them more critically aware so they would hopefully take a more active and participatory role in a democratic society (Davies, 1999; Clarke, 2007). The PPE advocated a curriculum for political education that utilised a combination of direct teaching as well as being infused into traditional subjects such as history and geography to ensure the '...acquisition of practical knowledge and politically relevant skills' (Clarke, 2007, p. 9). Here, the PPE marked a

progression from an emphasis on factual constitutional knowledge towards a more critically literate understanding of society and politics.

It is also worth noting that, similar to the AEC in the 1930s, the PPE was partly borne from a concern regarding the growing support of far-right political organisations such as the National Front who had increasingly been targeting young people in their recruitment campaigns (Clarke, 2007). One of the major publications to emerge from PPE was *Political Education and Political Literacy* (Crick and Porter, 1978) which placed great emphasis on the promotion of political literacy among citizens (Davies, 1999; Kisby, 2012). As outlined later in the article, the editors of this book (Bernard Crick and Alex Porter) would later become members of the Advisory Group on Citizenship (AGC) whose report would lead to the introduction of citizenship education as a compulsory national curriculum subject for secondary school pupils.

The 1980s and 1990s

Davies (1999, p. 125). maintains that there was a shift during the 1980s towards an increasingly issues-based model of ‘...adjectival educations’ such as peace, anti-sexist and anti-racist educations. The increased focus on anti-racism was largely a reaction to wider racial tensions which followed rioting during the early-mid 1980s in Brixton, Birmingham, Leeds, and Liverpool. Consequently, there was an increased demand for teachers to educate school children about race-related issues rather than focus on the wider provision of citizenship education (Heater, 2001). Davies (1999) and Kerr (2000) maintain that citizenship education’s profile tends to grow during times of uncertainty and upheaval as was witnessed during the 1930s, 1970s and 1980s. This was also noted in the House of Lords’ (2018, p. 7) report which highlighted events such as the European Union referendum, Manchester terror attack and the fire at Grenfell Tower leading towards ‘social fragmentation, divided communities, isolated communities, rising levels of anti-political sentiment and falling levels of political trust’. This, the committee contended, was one of the primary reasons why citizenship education in England needed urgent attention and a resurgence.

It should also be noted that towards the end of the 1980s, citizenship education discourse became increasingly framed by a growing neoliberal agenda and the market rights of the individual (Kerr, 2000; Faulks, 2006). For the Thatcher government, the active citizen ‘...was a law-abiding, materially successful individual who was willing

and able to exploit the opportunities created by the promotion of market rights' (Faulks, 2006, p. 125). There were attempts made during the 1980s by the Home Secretary, Douglas Hurd, to introduce a form of 'active citizenship' aimed at improving social cohesion, especially aimed at young people, through community activity such as voluntary work (Kisby, 2012). However, Hurd's attempts to unify free-market economics and active citizenship in the 1980s were unsuccessful as the government's glorification of individualism undermined notions of social and civic cohesion (Kisby, 2012). Notwithstanding, Hurd's initiative did help to keep citizenship and citizenship education on the political agenda. Indeed, against this backdrop, citizenship education eventually appeared as one of the five non-compulsory cross-curricular themes when the National Curriculum was introduced in England in 1990 (Department of Education and Science and Welsh Office, 1988). There was, however, a much greater emphasis on responsibilities rather than rights which heavily slanted the curriculum. Furthermore, the introduction of the Education Act in 1996 prohibited the teaching of partisan views which, Heater (2001) suggests, made schools nervous of embedding citizenship education within the curriculum at the risk of being accused of ideological indoctrination.

While the introduction of citizenship education as a cross-curricular theme did little to elevate the subject's status in schools, there were other developments during the 1990s which helped to keep citizenship education on the political agenda. One such development was the creation of the Speaker's Commission on Citizenship in 1988 which was 'established to consider the encouragement and development of 'Active Citizenship' by first defining it, then reviewing existing initiatives, and finally by considering devices for recognising its application' (Murdoch, 1991, p. 439). According to Kisby (2012), the Commission's main, albeit limited, aim was to promote participatory activities such as voting in elections and voluntary work to enhance the functioning of democracy and society. In addition to the Speaker's Commission, the late 1980s and early 1990s witnessed the creation of various think-tanks and interest groups concerned with citizenship education. Most notably was the Institute for Citizenship which was concerned with developing young people's knowledge, skills and understanding of constitutional matters and the Citizenship Foundation which had been established to promote community engagement through education about the law and legal processes. Although citizenship education remained on the political agenda

throughout the 1990s, Kerr (2000) argues that it was viewed as a corrective to the seemingly pervasive erosion of the political, economic, and moral fabric of society, in the face of significant economic and social change.

New Labour's vision for citizenship education: Citizenship education for participation and enhancement of political literacy

The election of New Labour in 1997 coincided with a resurgence of interest in citizenship education, partly due to the decreasing political participation and increasing disillusionment, alienation and apathy amongst young adults (Kerr, 2000; Heater, 2001; Jerome, 2012; Kisby, 2012; Revell and Bryan, 2018). Faulks (2006, p. 125) argues that the challenge for the New Labour government was to 'find a '...third way' for citizenship education, beyond Thatcherite stress on market rights and the Marshallian emphasis upon state benefits'. Furthermore, citizenship education was viewed by New Labour as a way to enact their political agenda which combined an emphasis on social justice and individual responsibility (Kisby, 2012). Consequently, there were renewed calls for citizenship education to provide young people with the knowledge, skills and understanding for civic engagement (Gifford, 2004; Jerome, 2012; Kisby, 2012; Weinberg and Flinders, 2018).

It was largely due to alleged political apathy and voter cynicism that led to the creation of an Advisory Group on Citizenship (AGC) in 1997 chaired by Bernard Crick. It is also worth noting that Crick had been invited to chair the AGC by the Secretary of State for Education and (his former university student) David Blunkett to make recommendations on how best to introduce citizenship education into the national curriculum in England (Jerome, 2012; Kisby, 2012). According to Kisby (2012), Blunkett gave a strong lead on citizenship education having been disappointed with the lack of progress made by the Speaker's Commission of which he was a member. The AGC's 1998 report *'Education for Citizenship and the Teaching of Democracy in Schools'* (QCA, 1998) outlined the case for citizenship education and proposed a conceptualisation influenced by civic republicanism linking active citizenship with community involvement (Jerome, 2012):

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; to build on and to extend radically to young people the best in existing traditions of community involvement and public service, and to make them individually confident in finding new forms of involvement and action among themselves (Advisory Group on Citizenship, 1998, p. 7).

The AGC report (QCA, 1998, pp. 40 – 41) resulted in citizenship education becoming a National Curriculum subject within its own right, identifying three strands which the report suggested should form the basis of citizenship education in England:

Social and moral responsibility: Children learning from the very beginning self-confidence and socially and morally responsible behaviour both in and beyond the classroom, both towards those in authority and towards each other (this is an essential pre-condition for citizenship).

Community involvement: Children learning about and becoming helpfully involved in the life and concerns of their communities, including learning through community involvement and service to the community.

Political literacy: Children learning about and how to make themselves effective in public life through knowledge, skills, and values.

Following the publication of the report, citizenship education became a statutory secondary school subject in England in 2000, however, it did not come into effect until the beginning of the 2002 academic year in order to give schools time to prepare for its implementation. Advocates of citizenship education saw this as something of a New Dawn for engaging young people in politics. According to Pring (2016, p. 7), the AGC's vision of citizenship '...included participating in community organisations, contributing to local debates and controversies, building relationships within the locality, taking an interest in local as well as national politics and actively engaged in overcoming social problems.' Weinberg and Flinders (2018, p. 3) go further to suggest that as the AGC's conceptualisation of citizenship education was framed as a corrective to the overtly individualistic apathetic liberal approach to democratic engagement and, accordingly, could be presented as a 'model for 'justice-oriented' active citizenship, in which politics would be 'lived' as much as 'learnt' and grounded in political literacy'. However, given

that one of the main aims of the AGC's citizenship education was '...to teach young people to become well informed, responsible citizens engaged in mainstream political and civic activities, such as voting, and undertaking voluntary work' (Kisby, 2017, p. 11), it seems to resemble a model for participatory citizenship education rather than one that is justice-orientated.

While many educationalists welcomed the introduction of citizenship education as a statutory subject it was not without its critics. One of the main issues was the '...manner in which citizenship education was insufficiently embedded within the core curriculum' (Weinberg and Flinders, 2018, p. 3). This implementation gap raised serious concerns about how citizenship education was staffed, taught and monitored (Jerome, 2012; Weinberg and Flinders, 2018). It has been suggested that this was down to a lack of vision, planning, and implementation as many schools thought they could meet the requirements of the citizenship curriculum through school assemblies and a module within their Personal and Social Education programmes (Kerr *et al.*, 2003). Furthermore, there was a lack of clarity in curriculum documents and guidance, a sparsity of resources and a serious deficiency in teacher training (Kerr *et al.*, 2010; Jerome, 2012) The latter point has also been raised by Jerome (2012) and Burton and May (2015) who argue that citizenship education in secondary schools was often taught by non-specialists who had no political background or training in teaching lessons which addressed political issues. Asking non-specialist teachers to teach lessons that focus primarily on institutions and processes is unlikely to ignite their imagination and engulf their enthusiasm for the subject (Kerr *et al.*, 2010; Jerome, 2012). It is of little wonder that provision for citizenship education in England has been criticised for being inadequate, sterile and largely ineffective (Garratt and Piper, 2012).

There were also concerns over the breadth of subject content which meant it was always going to be difficult to implement the curriculum in schools (Jerome, 2012; Pike, 2007). Indeed, attempting to embed citizenship education covering such an array of content and competencies was likely to encounter logistical problems and resistance from schools already struggling to meet the requirements of the wider National Curriculum (Faulks, 2006; Pike, 2007; Jerome, 2012). Furthermore, focussing too narrowly on political institutions and systems thus reduced opportunities for children to develop meaningful inquiries into political concepts, ideas, and issues (Billingham, 2016). As Arthur and Davison (2000, p. 22) contend '...information is not enough. It is

not sufficient to inform pupils about how parliament works'. In hindsight, it might have been more valuable to have focused solely on the third element, political literacy, as this was intended to provide children and young people with 'realistic knowledge of and preparation for conflict resolution and decision making related to the main economic and social problems of the day' (QCA, 1998, p. 12). This could have moved citizenship education towards a more justice-orientated conceptualisation with young people given opportunities to address social issues such as inequality, climate change and poverty.

Finally, while the AGC's report led to the introduction of citizenship education as a statutory subject in its own right, it was also criticised for focusing too much on civic responsibilities and deference rather than rights (Osler and Starkey, 2003). Here, it is suggested that the model was based upon the narrow objective of citizenship education to ensure young people's future roles are understood '...within the constitutional and legal framework of the state in which they live' (Osler and Starkey, 2003, p. 244). Moreover, although there was an acknowledgment of children's rights and responsibilities as they presently affected their lives (Jerome, 2012) the AGC's conceptualisation still positioned children as citizens in waiting rather than citizens in their own right (Osler and Starkey, 2003).

In 2007, following a curriculum review led by Sir Keith Ajegbo, a fourth strand was added to the citizenship education curriculum entitled 'Identity and Diversity: Living Together in the UK' (Ajegbo *et al.*, 2007, p. 95). The authors were very clear in which direction they believed citizenship education should travel:

We believe that if children and young people are to develop a notion of citizenship as inclusive, it is crucial that issues of identity and diversity are addressed explicitly. Inherent in the relationship between the citizen and society is the role that identity, or a sense of belonging plays within this relationship. This is because the motivation for citizens to participate in society is logically predicated on a sense of belonging, or 'identification' with, the context where they are participating. We advocate that an understanding of issues of identity and diversity in the context of citizenship is best approached through a political and historical lens.

The report was much welcomed by New Labour and was in harmony with the government's focus on national identity, patriotism, and communitarianism (Jerome, 2012; Kisby, 2017). Notwithstanding, Weinberg and Flinders (2018, p. 5) argue that the report '...did little more than depoliticise the challenges of multiculturalism and social integration, and in doing so arguably left unchallenged existing social, economic and political inequalities'. It is suggested that the report contributed to a discourse that dwelled on the dangers of social fragmentation and where pluralism was seen as problematic (Revell and Bryan, 2018). Kisby (2017) suggests that the Ajegbo report marked a notable shift of emphasis for citizenship education in England; however, more far-reaching changes would be implemented with the election of the Liberal Democrat and Conservative coalition government in 2010.

From 2010 to the present day; a retrograde shift to citizenship education for personal responsibility

The election of the Liberal Democrat and Conservative coalition government in 2010 marked a significant shift towards character education in England (Kisby, 2017; Weinberg and Flinders (2018). The 2013 National Curriculum for citizenship education (DfE, 2014) moved the emphasis away from political literacy and civic participation (as favoured by the AGC) towards financial literacy, constitutional history and volunteerism (Kisby, 2017; Weinberg and Flinders, 2018). As the content of the key stage 3 National Curriculum (DfE, 2014, p. 2) highlights:

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 how 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.

The emphasis here is on the importance of political and judicial systems, civic responsibilities, volunteering and financial literacy. The latter is particularly disconcerting as citizenship education should not just be about the good of the economy but because it is necessary for a functioning democracy. Moreover, as Starkey (2018, p. 152) notes, the increased ‘...focus on personal finance leaves even less time for the social and political dimensions of citizenship’ which, it could be argued, is the main purpose of citizenship education. It is also worth noting that while citizenship education remains a statutory subject at key stages 3 and 4, academies and free schools are not required to follow the National Curriculum and are, therefore, able to omit it from their curriculum provision.

Weinberg and Flinders (2018) argue that this shift in focus since 2010 moves citizenship education more towards character education. As they observe, ‘the character agenda – focused on personal rather than public ethics – downplays the knowledge and (collective) skills of political literacy, and in doing so undermines citizenship education as learning for democracy’ (Weinberg and Flinders, 2018, p.5). Here, the focus is increasingly on young people as ‘...future workers and consumers in a competitive global economy, rather than ensuring that young people are equipped to play a part in the democratic process so as to address issues of general concern through collective action’ (Kisby, 2017, p. 7). The recent shift to the Right in citizenship education is symptomatic of wider neoliberal educational policies and practices such as academisation and the growth of the competitive educational marketplace. As Reay (2017, p. 50) observes, ‘...we are seeing radical changes in the state educational system in England; changes that are transforming the purposes of education, how it is funded, teaching and learning and, inevitably, relationships between teachers and taught’. These radical changes have been the result of successive governments’ educational policies since the 1980s, driven by a neoliberal ideology with a desire to transform education services into profit-making commodities (Ball, 2016; Benn and Downs, 2016; Reay, 2017).

The model of citizenship education offered by both the coalition and Conservative governments is consistent with Westheimer and Kahne's (2004) personal responsible citizen where the emphasis is on the promotion of good character traits, obedience, and hard work. As Kisby (2017, p. 16) contends, 'the message seems to be: be resilient. Put up with things. Don't be political. Don't try and change the world. Change your attitude, your perspective. Change yourself instead'. This approach does not provide much space for young people to develop a critical awareness of political issues, social injustices, and structural inequalities. Indeed, in recent years the whole notion of collective learning around political and social issues has been vastly reduced, even more so with the introduction of Fundamental British Values (DfE, 2014).

Fundamental British Values

Although Fundamental British Values (FBV) is now widely associated with educational discourse, the term was first used in a definition of extremism devised by the Home Office as part of its counter-terrorism agenda (Richardson and Bolloten, 2014). As such, the origins of FBV are deeply rooted in a security-focused and nationalistic agenda which positions radical Islam as a threat to liberal democracy in the United Kingdom (Richardson and Bolloten, 2014; Lander, 2016; Revell and Bryan, 2018; Starkey, 2018). Since the London bombings of 2005 schools '...have been required to support the security services in the anti-radicalization "Prevent" agenda' (Starkey, 2018, p. 151). As the Government's Prevent strategy (DfE, 2015) states, schools can (and should) build pupils' 'resilience to radicalisation by promoting fundamental British values and enabling them to challenge extremist views'. There was, however, no public or democratic debate about what constitutes British values or if indeed such a thing exists (Elton-Chalcraft *et al.*, 2017).

Since the introduction of the revised standards for Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural (SMSC), all schools must now show that they actively promote, rather than not undermine, '...the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs' (DfE, 2014, p. 6). The introduction of FBV further reduces the scope for children and young people to engage with political issues and ideas through citizenship education. Furthermore, Revell and Bryan (2018) have noted that many of the resources created for the teaching of FBV, across both secondary and primary education, lack any critical

dimension or provide opportunities for young people to question values such as 'tolerance' and 'individual liberty'. This is problematic as a 'static approach to the presentation of fundamental British values not only misrepresents the history of these ideas, it also distorts their meaning as political concepts' (Revell and Bryan, 2018, p. 16). It is also worth noting that Fundamental British Values is included in Ofsted's Education Inspection Framework (Ofsted, 2019) with schools being judged on their provision and promotion of FBV across the curriculum. Recent speeches from the inspectorate body's Chief Inspector, Amanda Spielman, would suggest that she favours British Values as the bedrock of civic education in England (DfE, 2018). FBV was also raised in the House of Lords Select Committee's report which advocated for 'Shared Values of British Citizenship' (House of Lords, 2018, p.124) being incorporated into a new national curriculum for citizenship education.

House of Lords recommendations

In 2018 the House of Lords Select Committee on Citizenship and Civic Engagement published a report which claimed that the Conservative government had allowed citizenship education in schools '...to degrade to a parlous state' (House of Lords, 2018, p. 124). The report concluded that citizenship education should be urgently prioritised in England and made the following recommendations (House of Lords, 2018, p. 124):

- The Government should create a statutory entitlement to citizenship education from primary to the end of secondary education. This should be inspected by Ofsted to ensure the quantity and quality of provision. Ofsted should give consideration to this in deciding whether a school should be rated as Outstanding.
- The Government should establish a target of having enough trained citizenship teachers to have a citizenship specialist in every secondary school.
- The Government should establish citizenship education as a priority subject for teacher training, and provide bursaries for applicants. Urgent action should be taken to step up programmes of Continuing Professional Development for those willing to take on and lead citizenship education in their school.

- The Government should ensure that the National College for Teaching and Leadership allows citizenship teachers to apply to be specialist leaders of education.
- Ofsted should undertake a review of the current provision and quality of citizenship education in schools and highlight best practice. This should be followed up with long-term monitoring of whether citizenship education achieves the set of criteria or goals that the Government sets out for it.
- The Government should work with exam boards to ensure that citizenship qualifications feature active citizenship projects as a substantial part of the qualification.
- The Government should conduct a review of the citizenship curriculum and formulate a new curriculum that includes the Shared Values of British Citizenship, the NCS and active citizenship projects. Piecemeal changes made without reference to the existing curriculum should be avoided.

While the recommendations might help to address some of the systemic issues, such as lack of teachers and Continuous Professional Development, it is unlikely that they will help to move citizenship education in England towards a justice-orientated model. Indeed, with the proposed focus on ‘Shared Values of British Citizenship’ (House of Lords, 2018, p. 124) and volunteerism through active citizenship projects, the recommendations seem to position citizenship education within Westheimer and Kahne’s (2004) participatory conceptualisation. Furthermore, while the report’s recommendations appear to offer a step in the right direction beyond citizenship education for personal responsibility, it still fails to provide a framework for the type of justice-orientated citizenship education that is required for these capricious and challenging times.

Conclusion

Throughout this article, I have critically explored the historical roots and development of citizenship education in England from the early twentieth century up until the present day. Using Westheimer and Kahne’s (2004) framework of citizenship education as a lens, it has been argued that citizenship education in England has failed to move beyond education for personal responsibility and civic participation and towards a

more justice-orientated conceptualisation. Furthermore, since 2010, and the election of the coalition and successive Conservative governments, there has been a retrograde shift from citizenship education for civic participation towards personal responsibility and character education (Kisby, 2017; Starkey, 2018; Weinberg and Flinders, 2018). The increased focus on citizenship education for personal responsibility promotes good character traits and hard work but fails to develop justice-orientated dispositions and help young people become active agents of change. Indeed, we live in a time of huge political, economic and social upheaval. Not only does the Coronavirus pandemic pose a significant threat to global peace and security (Guterres, 2020) but the climate crisis is resulting in inevitable and irreversible damage to the planet (Harvey, 2021). Furthermore, in England at least, there has been a recent rise in extremist views and conspiracy theories among schoolchildren with teachers feeling ill-equipped to support pupils in rejecting these beliefs and ideologies (Taylor *et al.*, 2021). Increasingly there is a growing need for justice-orientated citizenship education which denounces populism and embraces solidarity of the global community and how best to take actions that benefit all of humankind. The focus on citizenship education should be on developing active, critical, democratic global citizens who are not only committed to social justice and human rights but also feel empowered to bring about social change by challenging systems of injustice and inequality to make the world a fairer place (DeJaeghere and Tudball, 2007; Banks, 2008; Hartung, 2017). This is, however, unlikely to be achieved if citizenship education in England continues to focus narrowly and insidiously on individualism, deference and civic obedience.

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