The History of Citizenship Education in England

Introduction

Heater (2015) describes the history of citizenship itself in Britain as ‘thin’; it seems this was until recently which we can presume is what encouraged the implementation of citizenship education into England’s national curriculum. This paper aims to analyse the development of citizenship education since 2002 and how it became a statutory subject, focussing on the work of Bernard Crick’s Report (QCA, 1998) which can be seen as the firelighter of citizenship education.

This essay will also review the more recent implementation of Fundamental Values (FBV) in schools with how it has affected citizenship education, and whether this new policy has been ineffective. This paper will look at reviews from David Kerr, Avril Keating, Ajegbo and others to summarise and reflect upon the current citizenship programme of study.

A Citizenship Timeline

From the timeline above, you will see citizenship education was first discussed in the White Paper - ‘Excellence in Schools’ (DfEE, 1997). This paper stated there would be “better programmes of work-related learning, citizenship, and parenting” to enable pupils to “become citizens of a successful democratic society” and continued to explain how by 2002, more in-depth programmes would be visible within a school’s curriculum.

The Crick Report

A year after the white paper was published, literature was released advising educationalists on effective teaching of citizenship in schools, better known today as ‘The Crick Report (QCA, 1998)’. The Crick Report sparked the beginning of citizenship education’s début in England when a majority of it’s content was adopted by the Government who made the subject compulsory in secondary schools in 2002 (Select Committee on Education and Skills, 2007), fulfilling the aims of the 1997 ‘Excellence in Schools’ White Paper.

Heater (1999) suggests the report is a blend of civc republican perspective and the liberal concern for autonomy, diversity and democracy; this is reflected in the report’s three strands, social and moral responsibility; community involvement; and political literacy which are mirrored by the report’s suggested learning outcomes:

- Active citizenship
- Discussing topical issues
- Taking part in informal debates
- Having ideas about politic parties
- Understanding legal rights
- Understanding the criminal justice system

Updates in the Curriculum

The first change to the curriculum took place in 2003, when Paul Boateng released the ‘Every Child Matters’ Green Paper (DfES, 2003). This paper discussed two points; firstly, the assistance for young offenders whereby schools should ensure their citizenship curriculum helps children “develop good relationships, learn about conflict resolution, encourage them to take responsibility for their own actions and to support their fellow pupils” (p. 37). Secondly, this paper asks that one of their core principles ‘making a positive contribution’ is implemented through citizenship education (p. 14)

2011 saw citizenship lose its core subject title after a vote during the National Curriculum Review (DfE, 2011) believed the curriculum needed to ‘slimmed down’. It became part of the basic curriculum; though schools would have been expected to cover citizenship in the curriculum, how they covered it would have been optional (O'Sullivan, 2014, p. 47).

The Introduction of Fundamental Values

Since the latest guidance of the citizenship curriculum was published in 2013, there have been no more changes made to curriculum. However two years later came the release of the Prevent Duty Guidance (Home Office, 2015) which stated schools had “an explicit requirement to promote fundamental values (FBV) as part of broader requirements relating to the quality of education”. These values included democracy; individual liberty; the rule of law and mutual respect and tolerance for others (Ofsted, 2019, p. 58).

The political literacy element of the citizenship programme of study meant for many schools, this is where the responsibility of promoting FBV stood (Starkey, 2017). Though the implementation of FBV was trying to create a safer environment for others, there has been much literature suggesting the vocabulary of ‘Fundamental Values’ is not appropriate and should be reviewed. (Vincent, 2019) suggests these values are not specifically ‘british’; the language has negative connotations; and are not effectively implemented in school policy, rather just a display of ticking boxes; ultimately are “doing but not believing”.

Reviews of Citizenship Education

There have always been mixed reviews on citizenship education’s place within the curriculum. Since its launch in 2002, there have been several assessments of the subject and its effectiveness, some are briefly outlined below.

- 2000 - David Kerr was very much involved in the reviews of citizenship education. Prior to its introduction, Kerr (2000) suggested if successful, citizenship will have come a long way for our diverse country.
- 2004 – The National Foundation for Educational Research’s (Kerr, et al., 2004) investigation into the impact of young people’s experiences of citizenship education (Citizenship Education Longtitudinal Study) found there were “clear generic benefits for students and institutions” (p. 117).
- 2007 - Three years on from this, the Curriculum Review into Diversity and Citizenship (Skills Department for Education and Employment, 2007) found there were still “issues with identity and diversity”, and they were “more often than not neglected in Citizenship

education”

- 2010 – In the final report from the Citizenship Education Longtitudinal Study, Kerr and others concluded there is clear evidence to show citizenship education makes a positive impact on pupils (Keating, et al., 2010).
- 2018 – ‘The Ties That Bind’ literature believes there should be a statutory entitlement to citizenship education from primary to the end of secondary education and enough citizenship teachers to cover this (House of Lords, 2018).

Summary

Over the past 18 years, with assistance from academic professionals’ reviews, citizenship education has become a well-structured subject in schools and is thought to now be filled with imperative subject knowledge for future life. Schools are now judged on their ability to deliver opportunities to learn about responsibility, respectfulness and how to positively contribute to society – all delivered through the citizenship curriculum (Ofsted, 2019).

The current ‘Citizenship Programme of Study’ sets out numerous ways in which you can become a respectable citizen including knowledge of the political system; a clear education of human rights; knowledge of the justice system; an understanding of voluntary groups and public institutions; and an understanding of the functions and uses of money (Department for Education, 2013). Citizenship education today promotes achievement for learners, integrating a contemporary, diverse, nation (Moorse, 2015).

The citizenship curriculum has faced many critiques, including its imbalance of equality and promotion of equal opportunities. It seems this arose again during the 2015 introduction of Fundamental Values (FBV) which was seen as ‘the perfect racism’ (Yildiz, 2019). This, in particularly, has caused me to question: does promoting ‘Fundamental Values’ disregard other cultured values in the classroom?

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