



## *Testing Citizens. What do pupils and teachers think about assessments of citizenship?*

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### **Abstract**

The idea that citizenship education might provide a solution to social problems is nothing new (Greenwood and Robins, 2003; Faulks, 2000; 2006). Citizenship is a part of the National Curriculum in England and, whilst there appears to be no opposition to the idea of this type of education, there are issues that have arisen since its introduction (Kerr et al, 2003).

Only a small amount of literature focuses on the assessment of citizenship education and an assessment 'deficit' within the subject is apparent. Ofsted (2006) have found little effective assessment and Kerr et al (2007) claim that assessment is problematic. The challenge for citizenship educators requires that they construct meaningful assessments relating to the beliefs and values under discussion (Tudor, 2001; Jerome, 2002; Richardson, 2006).

An empirical study of citizenship assessment comprised a questionnaire survey sent to teachers and pupils in secondary schools across England; and interviews conducted with pupils (Years 9-11) and teachers in 18 schools. Results suggest positive attitudes towards citizenship as a subject, but underline an educational ethos

which values only the things that can be measured. Such attitudes towards assessment appear to be affecting the perception of citizenship education.

## *INTRODUCTION*

But you can't test for good Citizenship, it's not fair! What does it mean anyway? (Teacher PB)

The teacher quoted above is the deputy head of comprehensive school in England. He is responsible for the development of the Citizenship curriculum in his school and, as the quotation illustrates, is not happy about assessing the subject. He acknowledges that assessment is an expectation at key stage 3, but admits that no formal assessment of Citizenship takes place in his school because tutors who deliver the subject do not feel able to do it. Whilst this teacher's beliefs are not necessarily indicative of Citizenship teachers across England, his point is an important one and the quotation sums up the tensions inherent in assessing subjects which are perceived as unconventional or "unmeasurable" (Inman *et al*, 1998).

This research was founded in personal experience when the researcher was working at an awarding body. During awarding meetings for an early Citizenship qualification, questions regarding the content and structure of the assessment arose: Is it possible to assess an individual's citizenship values? Can summative modes of assessment adequately address the learning outcomes The idea of assessing Citizenship skills as well as knowledge seemed to be a difficult task for pupils, and examiners felt that teachers were struggling with how best to prepare pupils for GCSEs. A review of the literature available in 2003 revealed little discussion of assessment of Citizenship, ad hoc mentions in Davies *et al* (1999) and obviously, some discussion in the policy documentation (QCA, 1998, QCA, 2100). In 2008 there is *still* very little literature which discusses the efficacy of assessing Citizenship and this research goes some way to filling that gap and considering how we assess subjects which are perceived to be 'difficult' to measure.

Citizenship education in England evolved from the recommendations of the Report of the Advisory Group for Citizenship (Crick Report), an investigation into the efficacy of introducing citizenship into the National Curriculum (QCA, 1998). Since the introduction of Citizenship in 2002, most research has focused upon aspects of curriculum content, for example, discussions about the value of the subject (McLaughlin, 2000; Faulks, 2000; Menter *et al*, 2000) or the delivery of the curriculum (Leighton, 2004; Faulks, 2006; Kerr *et al*, 1999, 2003b, 2004, 2007). However, assessment of the subject has rarely been prominent in the literatures which discuss the development of this new curriculum.

It is reasonable to expect there to be tensions in the assessment of Citizenship education because the development of new assessments is not a straightforward process. However, to a certain extent, successful assessments are dependent upon how teachers translate policy guidelines and then decide to apply them (Jerome, 2002; 2004). Some argue that Citizenship assessments might be perceived as a measure of the person (Heater, 2004), but to conclude that poor grade equals poor citizen not only unmask a rather naïve and misinformed view of assessment which attributes little value to the effort of the pupils (Kerr, 2002a). Some teachers (and policymakers) argue that Citizenship is not suited to assessment, but as Breslin (2001) notes, assessment of Citizenship requires that awarding bodies, teachers and pupils alike be creative in their approach to assessing. If schools are encouraged to be creative with their assessments and pupils can be persuaded that these methods are appropriate for Citizenship, it is likely that the subject will be perceived as having significant value.

This study investigated teachers' and pupils' perceptions and experience of learning about Citizenship and the assessments of their learning. It examined the ways in which teachers plan and deliver assessments and the extent to which their approaches impact upon the implementation of Citizenship within a school's curriculum. The research explores the teachers' and pupils' attitudes towards and perceptions of Citizenship and its assessment. The findings provide recommendations and ideas for teachers, including suggestions for subject delivery and the promotion of improved assessment practice. The research was designed to:

- Develop knowledge and understanding of the assessments used for measuring achievement in citizenship education
- Develop understanding of the general perceptions of these assessments by their primary user groups – teachers & students
- Develop an evidence base for policy in regard to the citizenship curriculum and its assessment.

## *INTRODUCING AN EDUCATION FOR CITIZENSHIP*

Citizenship is continually debated both as concept and as a focus for education. There is a abundance of literature and education for Citizenship is the focus of several longitudinal studies including the National Foundation for Educational Research's review (see, Kerr *et al*, 1999; 2002; 2003 a b c; 2004; 2005; 2007). These reviews of the implementation of Citizenship in English schools are also part of an international civic study (see below) and the results, together with research from the Evidence for Public Policy Practice Coordinating Centre (EPPI) Reviews of Citizenship education (Deakin-Crick, 2004; 2005) provide a wide range of perspectives discussing current provision in England. In addition, policy reviews are continually conducted by OFSTED (2005, 2006) and QCA (2002, 2003, 2007).

The evolution of a national programme of Citizenship education is not unique to England and globally, Citizenship is becoming a part of state-maintained educational systems (Osler and Starkey, 2006). The International Association for Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) Civic Education Study (see, Torney-Purta *et al*, 1999; Kerr *et al*, 2002b; Steiner-Khamsi *et al*, 2002) discusses Citizenship provision in 28 countries and the Eurydice Comparative Study (2005) outlines practice in Europe. These studies reveal common findings, both at national and international levels: Citizenship is a difficult concept to describe and it can be a difficult subject to deliver. It is the contested nature of Citizenship which appears to be having a negative impact upon the way in which the subject is perceived in maintained secondary schools in England.

In the context of schooling in particular, it is vital that pupils are afforded not just the information about *being* a citizen, but also the opportunity to *do*, to demonstrate citizen behaviours. The Crick Report (QCA, 1998) argued for schools to promote active citizenry and, in a break from the former Citizenship education ideologies (Marshall, 1950) proposed that active civic participation should be an explicit and central theme of the curriculum (QCA, 1998; Lawson, 2001, Kerr, 2003a). Many claim that the re-emergence of Citizenship education is fuelled by events that have a national - and often, international – impact (see for example, Low, 1997; House, 2000; Kerr, 2002; Torney-Purta, 2004; Osler and Starkey, 2006). The Crick Report claimed that it was responding to the poor voter turn-out in the general elections of 1992 and 1997 and a growing concern about anti-social behaviour, recognised by the reactions, in London and nationally, to the violent murders of teenager Stephen Lawrence in 1993 and the headmaster Philip Lawrence in 1995 (Menter and Walker, 2000). Consequently, the aims and purpose of a Citizenship curriculum were proposed by Crick as:

To make secure and to increase the knowledge, skills and values relevant to the nature and practices of participative democracy; also to enhance the awareness of rights and duties, and the sense of responsibilities needed for the development of pupils into active citizens; and in doing so to establish the value to individuals, schools and society of involvement in the local and wider community (QCA, 1998:40).

These proposals evolved into the three aims of Citizenship, the National Curriculum subject which claimed that:

The knowledge, skills and understanding in the programmes of study identify

- the aspects of citizenship in which pupils make progress: becoming informed citizens
- developing skills of enquiry and communication
- developing skills of participation and responsible action (DfES/QCA, 1999:6).

The new programme of study for Citizenship was presented as “light touch” (QCA, 2001) and flexible for teachers in order that they might build on existing civic education programmes within their schools. Such an approach to the teaching of Citizenship may appear to be innovative and helpful to schools, but deficiencies in delivery have been noted by OFSTED (2002; 2005) and Kerr *et al* (2004, 2007). *The House of Common Select Committee: Citizenship Review* (2007) found that parity in delivery cannot be assured due to issues such as training, commitment and staffing. Consequently, the status of Citizenship is not high and both teachers and pupils are confused about the curriculum content; the ‘light touch’ delivery means that the subject is not always taken seriously; and assessment practice is problematic. The results of this study also found that assessment is sometimes confounded by inconsistent practice in delivery of lessons, an un-prescriptive framework for assessment and the lack of a substantive, recognised qualification at the end of a course of study.

## ASSESSING CITIZENSHIP

There are guidelines for the assessment of Citizenship (see [www.qca.org.uk/citizenship](http://www.qca.org.uk/citizenship)), but this has taken time to develop. The Crick Report (QCA, 1998) revealed a somewhat reserved approach to assessment so much so that to the casual observer this might suggest that assessment was not really considered to be an important factor in citizenship education (Arthur *et al*, 2000). The impact of this somewhat *laissez faire* attitude is evident in the OFSTED Reports in 2004 and 2006 which claimed that the assessment of Citizenship was weak or ineffective. Results from the NFER’s longitudinal studies concur: Kerr and Cleaver (2004) reported that assessment of Citizenship was “a major concern and an area that needs immediate attention” (2004:27) and in 2007, their next report *still* found a significant deficit in assessment of the subject:

The majority of teachers still feel that assessment recording and reporting progress are some of the main challenges in citizenship education (Kerr *et al*, 2007:83).

Currently, assessment of the Citizenship curriculum is only statutory at the end of key stage 3 and schools usually include Citizenship achievement in the annual reports for parents. Unlike all of the other National Curriculum subjects, Citizenship was introduced with a single level descriptor against which teachers are expected to grade their pupils’ performance. This has caused problems because pupils are judged to be ‘Working Towards’ Working At’ or Working Beyond’ one descriptor, and due to the lack of a numeric grade, Citizenship has failed to be perceived as comparable with other curriculum subjects<sup>1</sup>. Assessment is not required at the end of key stage 4, but it is possible for pupils to take nationally recognised qualifications, for example a GCSE Short Course (and from September 2009 a full course). However, it appears that short courses are seen as a ‘poor relation’ (Johnson, 2007) to the full course GCSEs and whilst such attitudes are

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<sup>1</sup> This policy is changing due to the Secondary Curriculum review (QCA, 2007). From September 2008, an eight-level grading system will be applied at key stage three.

disappointing, they are perhaps unsurprising and reflect a hierarchical approach to assessments and qualifications. Not only are subjects affected by whether or not they *have* an assessment, the *type* of assessment is a further indicator of value (Harland, 2000).

Further evaluation of the need for a reconstructed and embedded programme of Citizenship in schools features in the *Minutes of Evidence from the Select Committee: Citizenship Review (2007)* where delivery of citizenship was found to be lacking in several areas. Some of the reports which fed into the Review provide compelling evidence for subject reconstruction and consideration of how assessment frameworks are affecting the value of the subject. In particular, evidence from the Citizenship Foundation (Breslin *et al*, 2006:11) suggests that teachers do not need to compromise quality and integrity by reducing assessment to a mere “paper exercise and another examination”; it is the responsibility of the Government, via the QCA, to reconsider how Citizenship is best assessed:

At present, the issue of assessing progress in Citizenship is undermined by the lack of support from QCA as a whole into researching the broader relationship between assessment, progression in learning and the development of social, moral and political thinking (Breslin *et al*, 2006:11).

Schools have flexibility in the delivery of assessments for Citizenship (QCA, 2001) and whilst some might argue that this ethos has been inculcated through the National Secondary Strategy (2006), actually getting teachers to use a range of assessment techniques is not always possible. Teachers are used to the assessment frameworks provided for other National Curriculum subjects and so a familiar framework for Citizenship will be of benefit, however, the use of a specification might limit the *methods* of assessment used particularly if students are aiming for a qualification. The QCA guidance (Huddleston and Kerr, 2006) proposes that teachers use a range of assessment methods including some that their students are less familiar with, for example, peer or self assessment. The emphasis is upon creativity in assessment of the subject to ensure that students understand how Citizenship is valuable in a range of contexts. Huddleston and Kerr (2006:142) recommend a dual approach to assessment:

- On-going qualitative feedback: the formative approach of assessment *for* learning
- Occasional checks on performance: via summative assessments *of* learning

However, the reality of a crowded timetable and varied demands upon teachers resulted in all those interviewed for this study explaining that both the teaching and assessment of Citizenship were adversely affected by lack of time and resources. As Tierney (2006) argues, time is carefully allocated in schools and traditional, summative techniques are more time-efficient. Therefore, a plan to make substantive changes to practice needs careful consideration and Tierney considers this a complex process: Changing assessment practice is not simply a matter of increasing teachers’ assessment literacy through professional development workshops, but a more

comprehensive process that requires a conceptual shift for stakeholders (Tierney, 2006:259). This meant that they could not necessarily increase a 'deep' skills base or a comprehensive set of knowledge as required by the policy documentation.

The strength of attachment to summative assessments reflects the contemporary educational culture of measuring by a grade or mark rather than attempting an alternative method of feedback to improve pupils' work.

Assessment is a substantial part of the public domain. There is an expectation that the education community (as one of several public services) is accountable and perceived as providing an acceptable and 'transparent' service. In such a context, it is necessary to set appropriate standards with which to measure the information that results from the process. It would seem sensible that good standard setting consists of a construct that is both appropriate to the assessment and flexible enough to cope with the inevitable changes that will affect assessment policy and practice over time (Desforges, 2006; Wiliam, 1996). The success of Citizenship is dependent upon the development of a strong framework for assessment. This will require a significant change in the way in which schools view assessment and pupils will have to adapt to modes of assessment which differ from those they are used to and are perhaps better suited to the subject. Policy makers agree that new approaches to assessment need to be adopted, but there is little commitment in actually supporting teachers to make these changes.

## *METHOD*

The study comprised two parts:

- A questionnaire survey
- Interviews with pupils and teachers

### *Participants*

A random sample was constructed for the questionnaire survey using the DfES database ([www.edubase.gov.uk](http://www.edubase.gov.uk)) and schools for the interviews were drawn from contacts and through cold calling suitable schools to request participation.

## SURVEY

Teachers responsible for citizenship in 400 schools across England were sent self-completion questionnaires. Forty-five teachers from the main sample were also sent questionnaires to administer to pupils in Years 9, 10 or

11. A total of 117 teachers responded to the questionnaire (a response rate of 29.3%). Eleven schools (24.4%) returned 218 completed questionnaires from pupils (a response rate of 32.3%).

Basic frequency tables of responses for each question were created. Further analysis to investigate relationships between pupils' year groups and gender were conducted using linear regression.

## INTERVIEWS

Nineteen teachers and 58 pupils from 18 schools took part in the interviews. Teachers were interviewed alone and the pupils participated in paired interviews (by year group); interviews were audio-recorded by the researcher. A semi-structured interview approach was used with a schedule to guide the interviews. Results were analysed using Successive Approximation (Neuman, 2003) which compared within-school teacher/student responses to the same questions and student/student responses to questions. A further analysis of between-school responses was also conducted in order to compare the perceptions of teachers in their implementation of Citizenship assessments.

## RESULTS

### *Respondents*

The majority of teachers had been involved in the introduction of the new curriculum for Citizenship in 2002. Staff responsible for Citizenship are usually subject specialists in humanities (a similar trend was found by Warwick *et al*, 2004) with the majority of both survey and interview respondents being experts in PSHE, History or Religious Education. There are still relatively few teachers trained in Citizenship – only 800 in total in July 2006 (Leighton, 2006:82).

### *Delivering Citizenship*

A significant aspect of subject delivery related to the ability of teachers to teach Citizenship and the ways in which this impacted upon pupils' perceptions of the subject. Over a quarter of the survey respondents admitted that they had received no training in Citizenship and claimed that this made it difficult for them to feel confident about delivering the subject and they suspected that pupils knew they lacked experience. These assumptions appeared to be founded because pupils commented on this issue in both the questionnaires and the interviews:

I don't understand why we get a qualified teacher in every other subject but not in Citizenship. Some people take it as a joke. I think that it's taught in the wrong way; I think you should get proper teachers and I think it [Citizenship] should be taught more often (Pupil D/10).

Schools can choose to deliver it as a discrete subject or in a cross-curricular format. A combination of the two methods was commonly used in all of the schools in this research; only about one quarter of respondents offered Citizenship as a discrete subject and about twenty percent taught it in a cross-curricular way. The delivery is inextricably linked with the assessment and there are specific problems which were high-lighted in both the survey and the interviews:

- There is not always time in the timetable to deliver Citizenship in a discrete slot.
- The quality of cross-curricular delivery cannot be assured because other staff members cannot always be relied upon to ensure that pupils know when they are learning about Citizenship.
- Staffing: pupils complained that staff in Citizenship seemed to change regularly.

The delivery and perception of the subject did appear to have an impact upon processes and attitudes towards assessment in the interview schools and those that responded to the questionnaires. Therefore, acknowledging the impact of curriculum delivery is crucial to understanding how assessment is conducted.

#### *Dealing with assessment*

The ways in which assessment was approached were varied and appeared to be affected by curriculum delivery. Assessment guidelines (see for example, Huddleston and Kerr, 2006) recommend the use of both formative and summative assessments, but the reality in schools is rather different. Teachers expressed concern about the appropriateness of their approaches to assessment:

Assessment is a nightmare. The balance between skills assessment and knowledge and understanding is unclear (Teacher 138).

I think the fundamental problem is how to assess? If it was knowledge-based then that would be different, but to be honest the ones who excel in Citizenship are the ones with the lowest amounts of knowledge (Teacher QA).

The questionnaire survey and the interviews revealed most popular form of evidence for assessment was a portfolio; this is used most commonly during key stage 3 together with class or group presentations on particular topics. However, the emphasis on evidence changes in key stage 4 when more summative modes of assessment such as written tests and examinations are used.

Teachers found assessment to be one of the most difficult parts of the curriculum delivery and they struggled with developing assessments which they felt were appropriate for the subject and for their pupils. When Citizenship is delivered across the curriculum the assessment becomes problematical:

I think the most challenging thing is giving the pupils levels and assessing it because it's taught in a cross-curricular way. Pupils aren't necessarily going to be aware that they are learning it and unless you say "Right, now we are doing Citizenship", but that's not natural in a lesson and also then how do you assess it? That has been a difficult one (Teacher M).

In schools where a GCSE was offered teachers explained that this helped pupils to prepare for the examinations, however in the majority of schools, where no GCSE was on offer the increase in summative tests was explained as a way of helping to maintain the status of the subject.

To ensure that pupils buy-in to the subject; it is important that work is externally validated and gives pupils a sense of self-worth (Teacher 54).

The pupils are more able to identify what Citizenship is if they are studying for an exam (Teacher 57).

However, it should be noted that the majority of teachers in this study (65%) did not offer students the opportunity to study for a qualification and their reasons for this were complex, ranging from timing: "We only have one hour per fortnight, so can't fit it all in" (Teacher 102), to concern about the pressure of too many exams:

Pupils are already entered for too many qualifications (Teacher 112).

We don't offer a GCSE to lessen the pressure on pupils in KS4 and to aid overall development; to avoid frequent measurement of success (Teacher 58).

There is also a continual challenge regarding the efficacy of testing Citizenship:

The Citizenship coordinator is against testing, if you fail, are you a bad citizen? (Teacher 33)

You're a grade a citizen, or a grade d citizen – but what does it mean? (Teacher N)

Pupils are used to being graded and marked for work; they were not keen on receiving formative comments, therefore a grade is a better way of helping them to stay focused on Citizenship. The subject's status is often further compromised during key stage 4 because pupils are so focused on their GCSEs that they resent having to study for a subject that does not have a qualification at the end of the course of study. It was common for pupils to complain about this and to ask why they couldn't use the Citizenship lessons for "revision for more important subjects" (Pupil F/10).

### *Pupils' thoughts on assessment of Citizenship*

Policy makers seem to lack confidence in recommending challenging assessments of Citizenship, but it is apparent from the research that pupils do *not*. Pupils questioned the appropriateness of written methods as a dominant means of assessing Citizenship and were able to suggest a range of other methods which they deem

appropriate. They believe that a film of a debate could be a part of the evidence submitted for assessment and they claim that this allows all pupils an equal chance to excel in Citizenship. The following conversation with two year 10 pupils illustrates such opinions:

- B I think it should be an oral exam, not a written exam because then it will show what people understand and it won't be noting down the facts and stuff and people just trying to pass.
- G In the end it's your opinion which counts and not what you know really.
- B If it was oral, it would be quite hard to mark.
- G I don't think it's something that you can mark. I think it's just something like that you can just tell that this person's on the right track; you can tell what they are thinking (Pupils D/10).

Teachers often expressed frustration that their 'best' pupils in Citizenship did not achieve well on paper, but shone when taking part in a debate. Subjects such as Drama or Expressive Arts all include practical elements which are graded and moderated by examiners. Citizenship could accommodate these kinds of assessment.

#### *The value of assessments of Citizenship*

The general perception of the value of Citizenship as a subject was found to be positive. All of the teachers in the interview study believed this to be true except one; he did not actually say he was against Citizenship *per se*; rather the National Curriculum model of Citizenship did not fit in with the results-led focus of his school. Some teachers wanted the scope of the subject to extend well beyond the confines of the school and were keen to emphasise societal impact and reinforcement of applicable Citizenship skills for their pupils. In contrast, the pupils are fuelled by their understanding of how school makes them players in a market economy and therefore the subjects that they choose to study for a qualification have to be useful to them in the job market.

Pupils felt that learning about their rights would be of use should they ever 'get in trouble' or need to get to legal help. However, whilst legal rights were deemed important they were definitely not as significant as the value of assessments; it is external currency which pupils wanted to see in their assessments (Harland, 2000; Weeden, 2005). Pupils are hard task masters, they ask questions such as: "Will it get me a job?", "Will it help me when I apply to university or college?" or "Is it useful for certain careers?" Such questions reflect contemporary attitudes to the aims of education which have evolved from the major changes in education witnessed from the 1980s onwards which claimed that education should be responding to market forces (Chitty, 2004). The pupils' questions regarding the currency of citizenship are ones which policy makers need to address because it is the pupils' attitudes that will either 'make or break' the success of citizenship.

## *DISCUSSION*

The empirical section of this research focused on the responses from pupils and teachers in schools, but there is the wider, contextual picture which now needs examining in order to see where the results of the study fit within the framework of educational theory and policy. Citizenship is now compulsory for all pupils in state-maintained secondary schools, yet some teachers still struggle to clarify what the subject really means and others are uncertain about how best to deliver it. In addition, we have a national system of assessment which is heavily reliant upon summative testing (Broadfoot, 2007) and has created a culture of values based upon the extent to which a subject can reliably be measured and graded (Richardson, 2006).

This study demonstrates that the teachers' perceptions of Citizenship are guided, and sometimes confounded, by a surprising number of issues. When they have to select and deliver assessments, the process is often made difficult by their prevailing beliefs. The majority of the teachers' opinions differed from one another not only in their conceptions of Citizenship (the subject), but also in the ways in which it should be assessed. The development of assessment for Citizenship was a prolonged process and research by Davies *et al* (1999) had already predicted that teachers would not necessarily be keen to be assessors of Citizenship. Teachers' attitudes in this regard will be affected by the individual's perspective in respect of their position as a teacher of Citizenship, with or without responsibility for its co-ordination, and their competence to deliver the subject.

Brett (2004) contends that policy makers proffer a range of recommendations for assessment, but it is not necessarily the case that teachers can, or indeed do, put these ideas into practice. This is not to say that teachers reject such proposals, but more often are constrained by factors which prevent them from doing so. Issues such as time, resources and perceived competence prevented some teachers from assessing Citizenship in the recommended ways. This underlines how practice in schools can be very different from recommended policies.

Policy guidance (see QCA, 2001; Huddleston and Kerr, 2006) recommends mixing formative and summative methods of assessment, using a GCSE qualification and reporting progress to parents. Effective structuring of assessment in schools requires the application of a range of assessment techniques appropriate for both pupils and the subject (Broadfoot, 1996; Black and Wiliam, 1998; Weeden and Winter, 1999; Wilmot, 2005). The results of tests, essays, and other methods of assessment should reflect achievements across a range of Citizenship activities. As advised in the Secondary National Strategy (2005), the involvement of pupils in the process of assessment helps them to take further responsibility for their learning. The Strategies state that Assessment *for* Learning (AfL) should be used to "raise students' achievements" and to empower them to "take action to improve their own performance" (The Standards Site, 2008). There was evidence of schools using self

and peer assessment techniques, but these were often not considered as 'serious' forms of assessment because pupils tend to feel that their grades or opinions are not as valuable as those of the teacher. However, the application of AfL techniques is something which needs both time and investment in training for staff; a pedagogical shift on the part of teachers is required (Graham, 2005) and pupils too, need time to accommodate a means of assessment which is not 'grade-led' (Black and Wiliam, 1998; Assessment Reform Group, 2002; Black *et al*, 2005).

This study found that schools used a relatively small range of assessment techniques with portfolios being the most popular mode for pupils in years 9 and 10 and then summative tests or examinations being more commonly used in year 11. The focus upon 'graded' assessments was usually because teachers believed that pupils preferred these methods and because they were easier to prepare and administer. Some teachers admitted that they felt unconfident about experimenting with assessments and if they did, found pupils to be negative about the value of formative methods. Any lack of confidence expressed by teachers should be viewed as a significant concern because reluctance to apply different techniques can result in what Tudor (2001) describes as pedestrian and uninspiring approaches to assessment which are likely to have an adverse affect upon pupils' responses to the subject.

The overall focus on Citizenship assessments in schools appears to be upon 'Knowledge and Understanding' criteria; these are relatively straightforward to measure because tests can be constructed which rely less upon formative evaluations. There were however, pockets of inventive and experimental practice for example, School S had graded pupils who participated in a mock trial and this had counted towards coursework for a GCSE qualification. The use of GCSE qualifications for Citizenship is still limited in schools and the majority of respondents felt that a report to parents was sufficient evidence of achievement for pupils in years 10 and 11. What is particularly striking about the approaches to assessment of Citizenship is the variety and lack of parity between schools. In School D, pupils were taking written tests and conducting self-assessments on a regular basis, in School B, all pupils had to take a GCSE qualification and in School N there was no assessment at all. This reveals what can be aptly described as a 'free for all' approach to assessment of Citizenship and it is perhaps unsurprising that teachers admitted that assessment caused them the most problems when planning teaching and learning for Citizenship.

The modes of assessment used by schools taking part in this study were varied. The questionnaire survey revealed that portfolios/diaries and presentations are popular in all schools, but written tests are more commonly used at key stage 4. Schools which chose to offer a GCSE explained that it helped to elevate the status of the subject and motivated pupils to take Citizenship seriously. Such findings are well-supported by the

literature (see for example, Harland, 2000; Newton, 2002) whose research studies conclude that nationally recognised qualifications linked to a subject increase its status in the eyes of pupils and parents. The use of assessments which result in a recognised qualification are of high priority because school achievements (in the form of qualifications) have a profound effect upon pupils' life chances (MacDonald and Brooker, 1999). The status of subjects based upon the 'usefulness' of a GCSE is significant. Weeden's (2005) study found that pupils consider subject choice at GCSE against a rapidly diversifying world of employment; they select according to 'value'. If they cannot see an obvious connection with a subject and their expected employment, pupils will discount that subject immediately. Citizenship is particularly vulnerable because there is confusion about what the subject is, and therefore how it can be applied to the world beyond school.

A minority of pupils admitted that they were unclear about whether they had ever been assessed in Citizenship. However, most pupils were able to describe experience of tests or other forms of assessment. They explained the value of assessments in helping them to see how well they were progressing in subjects, but in schools where a framework for assessment was unclear, pupils were critical and claimed that they did not really take the subject seriously because it did not result in a grade or qualification. Interviews with pupils frequently ended up focusing on the use of a Citizenship qualification outside of the school setting; these proved fruitful discussions because some, more able pupils were keen to suggest ways in which assessment might be improved. Their ideas and suggestions concur with claims that the process of assessment can be enhanced with pupil involvement (Lambert, 2005) and that pupil motivation improves when they participate in their learning experiences to this degree (Gipps, 1994).

Teachers also believed that assessments were important and they wanted pupils to understand how they were progressing in Citizenship so that they would be motivated by the subject. However, they conceded that more could be done to make assessment more straightforward and comparable with other National Curriculum subjects. It was evident that more has to be done to increase the status of Citizenship and this, teachers believe, can be achieved if some reform of assessment occurs. Whilst some teachers discussed the on-going development of assessments and provided examples of these, others did not; either because they lack appropriate training or their Senior Management Team was not encouraging them to develop assessment. There is the need for further, extended training in assessment techniques and practice for Citizenship teachers. Only three teachers mentioned having training in assessment once they had begun teaching Citizenship and this appears to be a significant gap in the provision. As Brett (2004) claims, the assessment goals for Citizenship are still unclear and consequently teachers, pupils and parents are uncertain about what achievement in Citizenship really means. It is difficult to conclude that assessment methods have a blanket impact upon subject delivery in Citizenship, but there are results from the study which suggest that, in some circumstances, the assessment

could, or did, affect the ways in which the subject was taught. This is a relatively small study and consequently, the results should be treated cautiously.

The Citizenship curriculum can be directed and strengthened through the use of a GCSE specification. The use of an external specification is helpful for teachers as it provides a clear and prescribed framework for teaching. In schools which offered a GCSE pupils liked the fact that they would 'get something out of the course' and teachers admitted that following a specification was, in most instances, easier and pupils preferred it. However, it should be noted that using a prescribed form of assessment such as a GCSE can also place limitations upon curriculum content. Teachers should be cautious about placing the 'assessment cart before the curriculum horse' and some research (see for example, Barnes *et al*, 2000) suggests that reliance upon achievement through a nationally recognised assessment will result in the inevitable dilution of subject content. Arguably, the most successful programmes of Citizenship seen during this study were those where the teachers were ensuring that pupils were involved in their learning at every level. Once pupils were given some responsibility for their assessment, this seemed to make them take the subject more seriously.

The results offer some insights into how assessment practice can be developed and more closely directed to ensure that pupils get the most from their experiences. Assessment of citizenship is still evolving and it requires careful direction so that appropriate methods are employed which result in useful measures of achievement. These issues have been acknowledged by policy makers, particularly in the findings of the *House of Commons Select Committee* (2007) and it will be interesting to see how the quality of assessment is affected in the future.

Standards can be raised by changes that are put into effect by teachers and by pupils, but they have to be afforded the opportunity to make such changes. The results of this research are positive in relation to the value of learning about citizenship, but still reflect an educational culture which tends to value only the things that can be measured and graded. If this attitude towards assessment is one which continues to prevail, then it seems that citizenship needs a more uniform framework to enable it to build and evolve in order to secure the status it deserves as a significant part of the National Curriculum.

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