

# Putting Participation into Practice: re-evaluating the implementation of the *Citizenship* curriculum in England

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## Introduction

Increasing civic engagement has been a recurring theme in political and public debates in England over the past 20 years.<sup>i</sup> This continued concern has led to a wide range of public enquiries and policy initiatives, many of them targeted at young people and schools (see HM Government 2010). Of these, perhaps the most ambitious was the effort to introduce citizenship education into the curriculum as a formal subject for the first time. In 2002, *Citizenship* became a statutory part of the National Curriculum and it became obligatory for secondary schools to provide education about citizenship to all students aged 11 to 16.<sup>ii</sup> Prior to this, it was left to schools to decide when and how to teach citizenship (or not), and there was no official national policy to guide teaching and learning in this area. As Kerr (1999: 204) put it:

“The history of citizenship education in England [was] a mixture of noble intentions which [were] then turned into general pronouncements, which, in turn, [became] minimal guidance for schools. The avoidance of any overt official government direction to schools concerning political socialisation and citizenship education can almost be seen as a national trait”.

In this context, therefore, the introduction of *Citizenship* into school curricula was a radical and ambitious departure. A similarly ambitious intent underpinned the policy framework itself. The introduction of *Citizenship* was preceded by a consultation process and a review of the aims, roles, and effectiveness of citizenship education (QCA 1998). This review was conducted by the Citizenship Advisory Group (CAG), which declared that:

“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” (QCA/ Crick Report 1998: 7-8).

For the CAG, the ultimate goal of this policy reform was to increase political literacy and active, responsible participation, both in the political and in the civic spheres, and at community, national, European and global levels. The CAG felt that recent policy discussions had been “strangely silent” on these issues, and that political literacy and participation needed

to be at the heart of any new policy developments (Kerr 2003: 4).

The resultant CAG report (known as the Crick Report, after its Chair, Professor (Sir) Bernard Crick) and its recommendations initially received support from across the political spectrum and the policy field (McLaughlin 2000). However, in this chapter, we examine how this ambitious policy framework has fared over time, and reflect upon the impact on and implications for youth participation in England. A review of this nature is apposite and timely as the first cohort to receive statutory citizenship education completed their secondary education in 2009 and became eligible for voting in general and local elections in 2010. In the course of this review we will show that, over a decade on, youth participation continues to give cause for concern, and that while the policy was ambitious, whether the implementation can be called a success is more ambiguous.

To support this argument, we will draw on the extensive dataset that has been gathered throughout the *Citizenship Education Longitudinal Study* (CELS). The study began in 2001, after the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) was commissioned by the Department for Education (DfE) to conduct an independent and longitudinal evaluation of the implementation and impact of *Citizenship* on schools, teachers, and young people. The resultant study included four research strands and gathered both quantitative and qualitative data. The *qualitative* research strands involved collecting relevant research and policy documents (for literature reviews and policy analysis) and conducting longitudinal studies of 12 case study schools, in which the selected schools were visited every two years, and interviews were conducted with senior leaders, citizenship teachers, and students.

The *quantitative* data was gathered via both longitudinal and cross-sectional surveys. The *longitudinal survey strand* was designed to collect data from a complete cohort of young people from a sample of schools in England, along with data from their teachers and their schools. The questionnaire included questions about young people's behaviours, attitudes, norms, and intentions, as well as about the school environment, teacher experience, and the format and content of any education about citizenship the school was providing (formal and informal). The cohort of young people were surveyed following their entry to Year 7 (in 2002-3), and again when they were in Year 9 (in 2005), in Year 11 (in 2007), in Year 13 or equivalent (in 2009), and most recently, in 2011, when the cohort were aged 19-20, and had completed their secondary education.<sup>iii</sup> The latest and fifth wave of the survey was funded by the ESRC, as part of a follow-up study, *Citizens in Transition - Civic Engagement and Political Participation among Young People 2001-2011*.

The *cross-sectional survey strand* was designed to triangulate the longitudinal data, and surveys were administered every two years. Each time the survey was run, a new sample of 300 schools and colleges was drawn, and one tutor group (about 25 students) from each school took part in the survey. As a result, questionnaires were completed by approximately 2,500 students in each of Years 8, 10 and 12. From this vast quantitative dataset, this chapter focuses on the longitudinal survey of young people, and in particular on the findings from the latest data (collected in 2011). Reference is also made to data from the most recent survey of

teachers and schools, which was conducted in 2008 as part of the cross-sectional strand of the study (n = 754). Descriptive statistics and data trends are the focus of this chapter<sup>iv</sup>, as the next section illustrates.

### **Youth participation in England: 2001 - 2011**

The introduction of citizenship education into the National Curriculum in England was prompted by concerns about the social, political, and citizenship effects of:

“... rapidly changing relationships between the individual and government; the decline in traditional forms of civic cohesion; the new political context of Britain in Europe; and rapid social, economic and technological change in a global context” (Citizenship 2000 group, quoted in QCA 1998: 14).

The parallel decline in youth voting and political engagement was considered to be of particular concern. For example, in 2001 (the year before citizenship education became mandatory in English schools), it was estimated that only 39% of young people aged 18-24 voted in the UK General Election. This was a large decline from the turnout in the two previous elections (estimated at 68% in 1992 and 51% in 1997), and the even lower turnout in 2005 (37%) indicated that young people were only half as likely to vote as older age groups (Electoral Commission 2005: 23-24). Meanwhile, the fact that turnout has been declining since 1992 has led to concern that low turnout among younger generations is “not just a “phase” that young people pass through – it is a habit set to last” (Keaney and Rogers 2006 11). Other indicators of youth civic engagement showed equally worrying signs. The Home Office Citizenship Survey in 2001 showed that, along with respondents over 75, young people aged 16 - 24 were the least likely age group to participate in political activities such as signing a petition, contacting an MP or other elected official, or attending a public meeting or demonstration (Attwood, Singh, Prime, and Creasy 2003: 77, 81). The apparent disengagement of young people was further underlined by findings from the 2003 British Social Attitudes Survey, which indicated that only 41% of young adults (aged 18-24) described themselves as having ‘a great deal’, ‘quite a lot’ or even ‘some’ interest in politics (Parks 2004: 4).

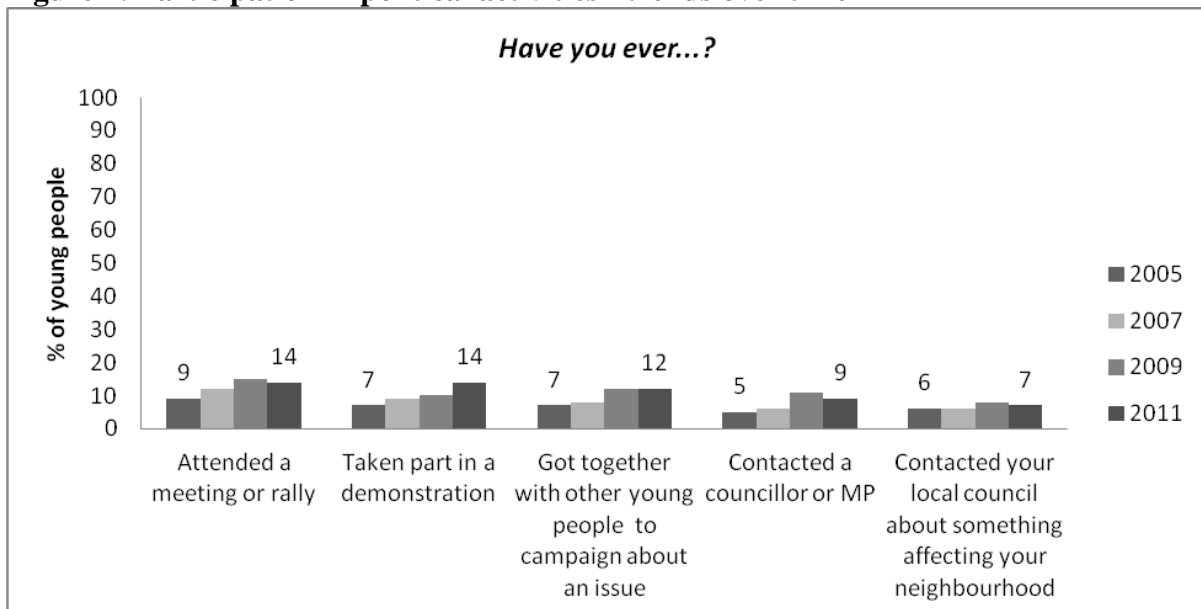
As noted above, it was hoped that statutory citizenship education would create an active citizenry and help to arrest this decline. How, then, do the participation rates of the current cohort of young people compare to their older counterparts who did not have statutory citizenship education? A strict statistical comparison between the cohorts is not possible, as CELS did not include a survey of young people who were aged 18-24 in 2001 who could then be compared to the participants of the 2011 CELS survey. Nonetheless, we can use the CELS (and other) data to examine current behaviours among young adults aged 19-20 (the age of the CELS cohort when the last survey was conducted in 2011) and from this draw some broad comparisons.

On this basis, the latest data on youth civic engagement in England provide a mixed picture. On the one hand, figures from the 2010 general election suggest that at 44%, the electoral participation of 18-24 year olds has increased since 2001 (Electoral Commission 2010).<sup>v</sup> Indeed, 59.1% of the 19-20 year olds in the CELS cohort reported that they had voted in this

election. However, while this constitutes an increase on electoral participation rates, a turnout of 44% is still lower than youth turnout in the 1990s and it is thus still a cause for concern. At almost 60%, the figures from the 2011 CELS survey are potentially more encouraging, but these figures may not be reliable as the time-lag between the general election and the survey (over a year) may have resulted in some mis-remembering and over-reporting.

The 2011 CELS survey also suggested that participation rates in other types of political activity are far lower than rates of electoral turnout. For example, only a small proportion of the cohort indicated that they had participated in political activities such as contacting an official, or attending a public meeting or demonstration (see Figure 1). It is also notable that the rates of participation in some of these activities have changed very little over time.

**Figure 1: Participation in political activities - trends over time**

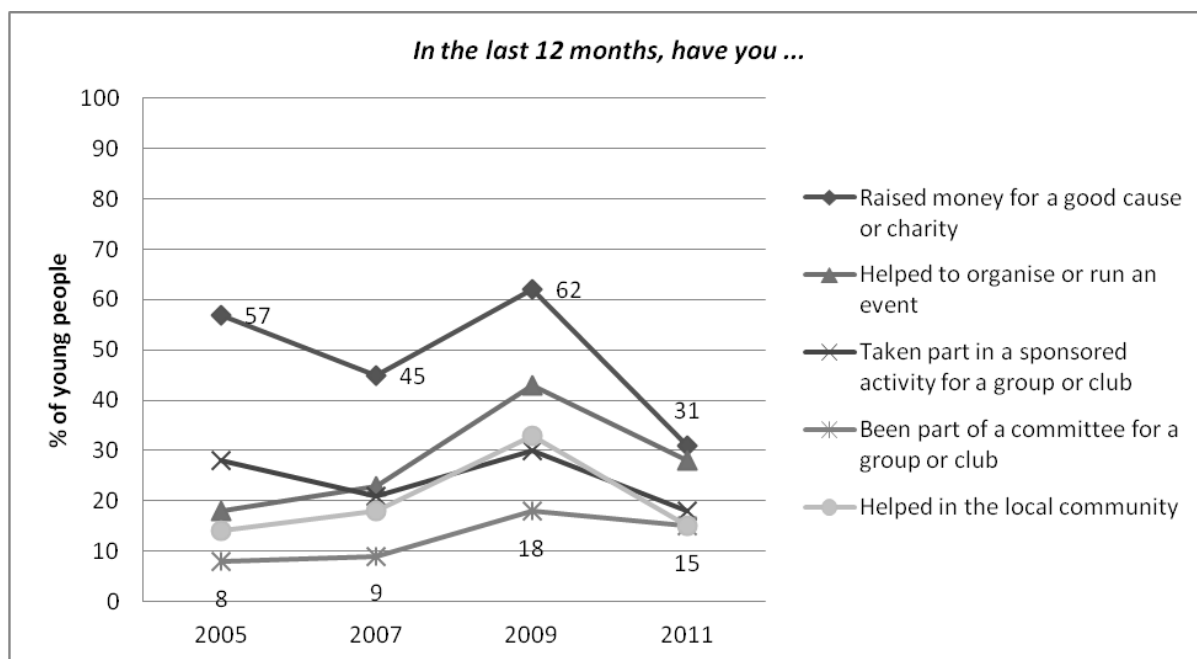


Source: CELS-CIVT 2011

Base: All students surveyed. 2005, N = 13,643; 2007, N = 11,103; 2009, N=1,325; 2011, N=1510

Rates of participation in civic activities in 2011 (such as raising money or helping in the community) were typically higher, but as Figure 2 highlights, less than a third of respondents indicated that they had undertaken one of these activities in the previous 12 months, and there has been a noticeable decline in participation since the 2009 CELS survey (when respondents were aged 17-18 and were typically in their final year of secondary school/college). For example, the proportion of the cohort who reported raising money for a good cause halved between 2009 and 2011 (dropping from 62% to 31%). A similar drop was evident in the proportions reporting helping in their community (which declined from 33% in 2009 to 15% in the 2011 survey).

**Figure 2: Participation in civic activities in the past year – trends over time**

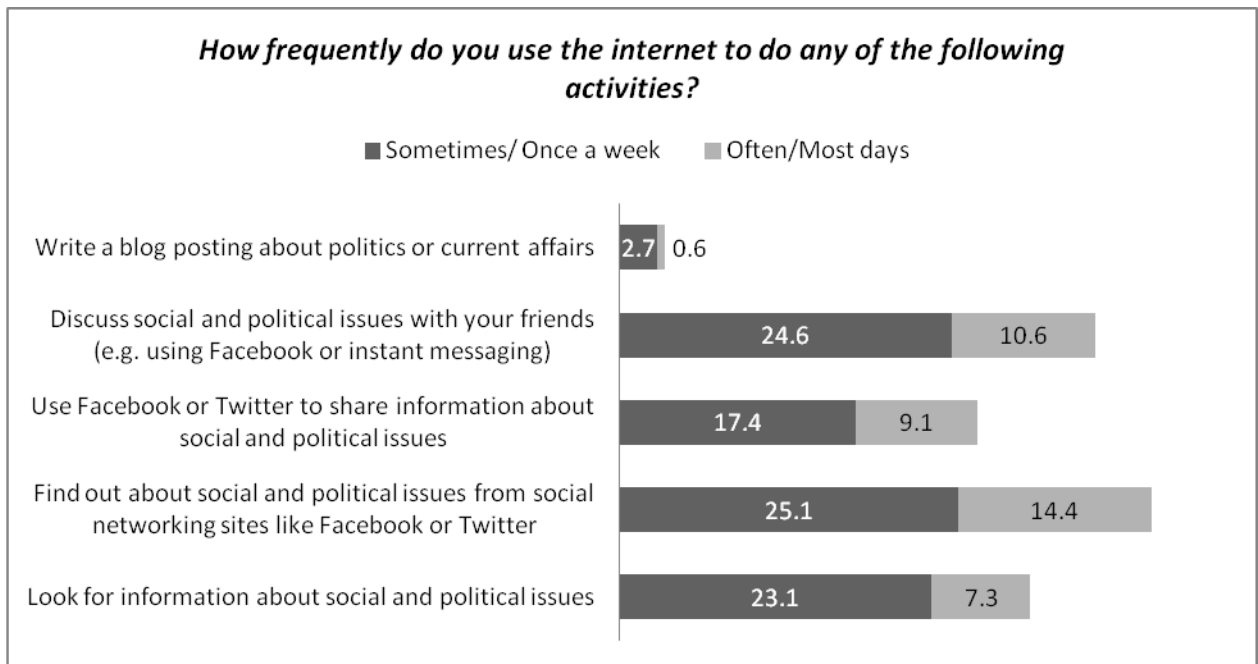


Source: CELS-CIVT 2011

Base: All students surveyed. 2005, N = 13,643; 2007, N = 11,103; 2009, N=1,325; 2011, N=1510

One of the explanations that have been posited for these downwards trends is that youth civic engagement has moved away from traditional sites of action and into online activities and forums (Kahne, Lee, and Feezell 2011). On this point, the 2011 CELS data again provides ambiguous results. While 41% of the 2011 respondents indicated that they had at some point joined a Facebook group about a political or social issue, only 3.6% reported ever having *started* a Facebook group for this purpose, and only 0.8% reported starting a Twitter campaign with this in mind. Similarly, a sizeable proportion of the cohort reported that they use social media sometimes/once a week to find, distribute, and or discuss social and political issues (see Figure 3), but only a small proportion reported doing this often/on most days. This could indicate that only a small proportion of the cohort is seeking to adopt an activist or leadership role when they are participating via online fora, and that those who use social media for these purposes “sometimes” are engaging in a more passive way and are more likely to be interested observers than active(ist) citizens.

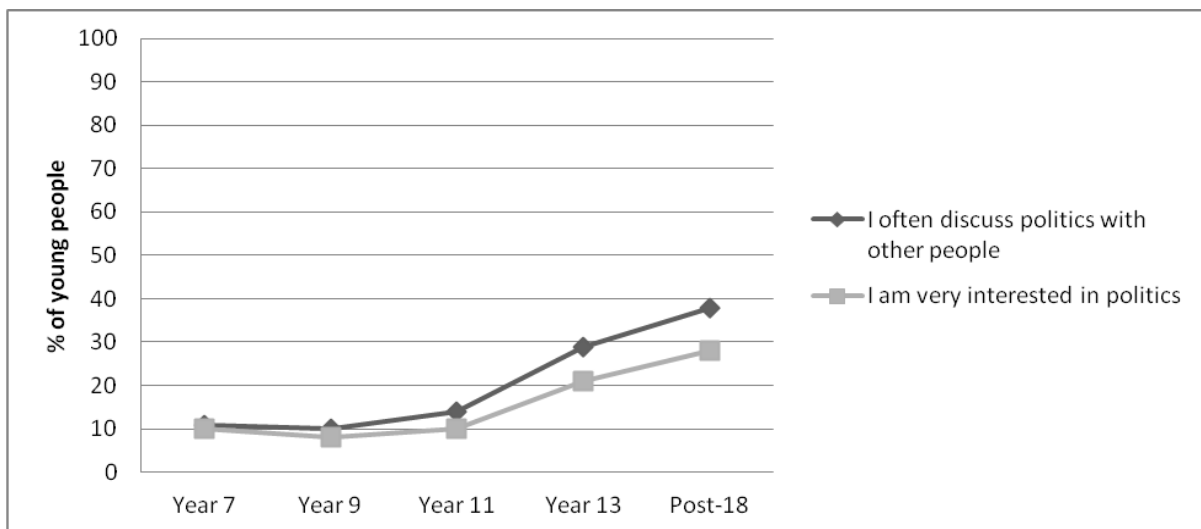
**Figure 3: Participation in online activities**



Source: CELS-CIVT 2011 n=1510

These levels of engagement are echoed in the cohort's responses to more general questions about their interest in and discussions about politics; in the 2011 survey, 28% of respondents reported that they are 'very interested' in politics, while 38% indicated that they 'often discuss politics with other people'. In both cases, the cohort's interest has increased steadily over time (see Figure 4). The respondents' increasing age and life-stage may account for this apparent rise; that is, that young people may become more interested in these issues as they acquire full adult citizenship rights and responsibilities and the issues become more salient and useable in their lives.

**Figure 4: Interest in politics among the CELS cohort - trends over time**

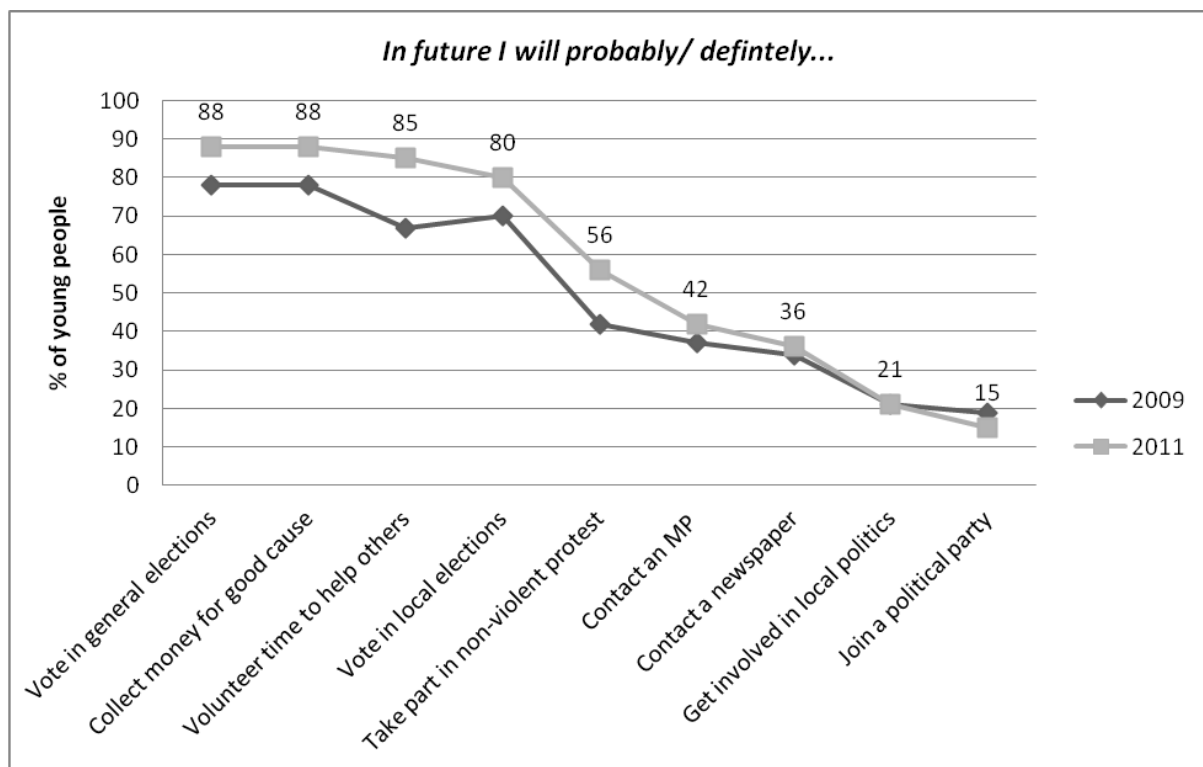


Source: CELS-CIVT 2011

Base: All students surveyed. 2005, N = 13,643; 2007, N = 11,103; 2009, N=1,325; 2011, N=1510

Finally, a very high proportion of the cohort indicated that they will probably or definitely take part in local and general elections in the future and/or volunteer time to help other people or collect money for a good cause (see Figure 5). Figure 5 also shows that the cohort was notably more likely to give a positive response to these questions in 2011, when the respondents had achieved ‘full’ citizenship and were eligible, for example, to vote in elections. Yet there is also some evidence to suggest that a far smaller proportion is willing to take an active political role in the future. Few indicated that they would be interested in joining a political party in the future, or, for that matter, interested in getting involved in local politics. Between 2009 and 2011, there was also little change in the cohort’s responses to questions about these latter items.

**Figure 5: Percentage of the 2011 CELS respondents who will probably or definitely take part in one of these activities in the future**



Source: CELS-CIVT 2011

Base: All students surveyed in 2009 and 2011. In 2009, N=1,325; in 2011, N=1510

In short, what these data suggest is that despite the increase in young people voting in general elections, actual participation (as opposed to interest or future intentions) in political and civic activities remains low (see Figures 1 and 2). In fact, in some cases, rates of participation have remained unchanged or even declined since the cohort left school. At the same time, a sizeable proportion of the cohort appears to be interested in and engaging with political and social issues, and they intend to participate in many ways in the future. Does this mean that this generation of citizens will ultimately become the active and engaged participants that were envisaged by the Citizenship Advisory Group back in 1998? Even now, over 10 years

later, it is perhaps too early to give a conclusive answer to this question. There are lifecycle issues at play which are likely to be influencing the cohort's behaviour (and making them less likely to participate) (Henn et al. 2002; Quintelier 2007); only by tracing their behaviour as they get older will we be able to truly know the impact of this educational intervention. What we can say at this point, however, is that it appears that there is still some way to go to achieve these aims. In the following sections, we argue that there are three reasons why citizenship education has not had the effect that it was hoped it would have, at least not yet. These include: flaws in the original policy design; the inherent problems associated with the policy implementation; and changes in the policy context. We tackle the latter reason first.

### Changing political and policy priorities

Both the content of and context for citizenship education (and indeed education more broadly) has evolved considerably since the Crick Report was published in 1998 and the *Citizenship* curriculum was introduced into schools in 2002. While many of these developments have been positive as a whole, we believe that they have ultimately shifted the focus away from *Citizenship* as a curriculum intervention and, in particular, served to weaken the political literacy strand of the original curriculum.

Promoting *political literacy* was one of the original three aims of citizenship education as envisaged by the Citizenship Advisory Group (CAG), along with developing a sense of *social and moral responsibility*, and encouraging *community involvement* (QCA 1998). The term *political literacy* was used to indicate that citizenship education was not just to impart knowledge about political institutions and public life, but to allow young people to learn the skills and values that would enable them to “make themselves effective in public life” (ibid:13) (see also Toots, this volume).

Over the past decade, the policy debate has evolved and new policy innovations and reforms have resulted in new aims and foci. One of the most notable developments has been the introduction of community cohesion and integration as core goals of the *Citizenship* curriculum. This new emphasis emerged in part as a response to the eruption of racial tensions (and riots) in Northern England in 2001 and the terrorist attack in London by so-called “home-grown” bombers in 2005. These events highlighted the ways in which some communities in the UK were segregated along racial, ethnic, and religious lines, and prompted a raft of policies aimed to promote integration and community cohesion, as well as a review of the place of diversity in the curriculum (namely the *Diversity and Citizenship Curriculum Review*; Ajegbo, Kiwan, and Sharma 2007). Following the Review's recommendations, the new National Curriculum in 2008 revised and updated the *Citizenship* curriculum to add a fourth aim in the guise of a new thematic strand entitled *Identity and Diversity: Living Together in the UK* (QCA 2007). In addition, a series of additional school policies were also introduced, such as the *Duty to Promote Community Cohesion* which, as its name suggests, placed a legal obligation on schools to promote cohesion (DCSF 2007). The importance of community cohesion and dealing with diversity often dominated discussions in



this area, and the place of political socialisation and participation in the *Citizenship* curriculum appears to have waned in importance in policy debates.

This is not to say that encouraging youth participation did not remain on the policy agenda. Indeed, between 2002 and 2010, a host of additional initiatives and policies were introduced to encourage student participation and ‘pupil voice’ in decision making in schools and in local government (see HM Government 2010). For example, schools were strongly encouraged to establish student councils (see Wisby and Whitty 2006) and local government agencies were increasingly obliged to consult young people on local policies that affect them (DCSF 2008). Many schools have, in turn, done a great deal to implement these changes and to increase the number of opportunities for students to participate in school decision making processes and extra-curricular activities. For instance, the CELS survey of school leaders showed that by 2008 almost all schools had introduced a school council for their students (Keating, Kerr, Lopes, Featherstone, and Benton 2009: 52). At the same time, there has also been an increased emphasis on encouraging young people to get involved in their local community and to undertake voluntary work (see also Zimenkova, this volume). This trend has been maintained by the current government through their ‘Big Society’ policy programme and the National Citizen Service for young people (see Cabinet Office 2010).

Innovations such as these have potential to complement curriculum interventions and strengthen citizenship learning in the school context, but the implementation has not been without problems, and in the policy arena, these policy developments have often served to distract (and ultimately detract) from the *Citizenship* curriculum itself. Indeed, the status of *Citizenship* has been so weakened that its place as a compulsory part of the National Curriculum for secondary schools is now at risk. Following their election in 2010, the new Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government launched a review of the National Curriculum and announced its intention to reduce the number of compulsory subjects so that schools can focus on ‘core’ subjects. It is expected that these changes will result in the statutory entitlement to citizenship education during second-level education being removed. Instead, citizenship education is likely to become part of a non-statutory curriculum framework, with schools being given even more freedom to decide how to teach citizenship to their students. Based on the experience of CELS, we believe that this may lead to unequal access for young people and uneven provision within and across schools. Schools who place a high value on imparting citizenship learning will, of course, continue to provide good teaching and learning, but those who struggled to find or provide a place for *Citizenship* when it was a compulsory subject could easily downgrade it in the curriculum altogether, perhaps, in some instances to such an extent that they leave their students without education in this area.

### **The policy implementation gap**

Translating policy aims to policy practice is challenging, and in most contexts there are often substantial gaps between the *intended* curriculum (that is set out in national policy), the *planned* curriculum (that is found in schemes of work and syllabi), the curriculum that is

*delivered* by teachers in classrooms, and the curriculum or learning that is *received* by students (Middlewood 2005: 19; see also Abs and Werth, this volume). The implementation of *Citizenship* in England was no different; indeed, it perhaps faced additional risks. For one, although schools were given two years (from 2000-2002) to prepare for and phase-in the new *Citizenship* curriculum, in 2002 many still viewed *Citizenship* as essentially a new subject, which they would be teaching in the curriculum for the first time that year. In addition, as the next section will illustrate, schools were given minimal guidance on how to implement this subject, as it was felt that schools should decide the format, content, teaching qualifications, and resources that would be required for teaching *Citizenship* to their students. It is perhaps no surprise then that over the course of the project, CELS identified some key areas where there was a sizeable gap between the policy aims, as set out by the CAG, and the policy practices adopted in schools.

For one, although encouraging political literacy was a core aim of the new curriculum, in practice many teachers struggled to teach themes related to politics, economics, and the global community. Some of the reasons for this appeared to be: a lack of training and confidence among teachers of *Citizenship*, a dearth of appropriate teaching materials, and low levels of interest from students. For example, in 2008, the CELS survey of *Citizenship* teachers found that over one fifth of teachers were still reporting that they were “*not at all confident*” teaching about the EU, parliament and government, or the global community, and almost 20% felt similarly about teaching about voting and rights. By contrast, comparative figures for teaching about the environment or the media were 5% and 7% respectively; the respondents were clearly more confident teaching young people about these topics. Two factors are likely to have contributed to this. First, *Citizenship* is not necessarily taught by teachers with a specialist training in citizenship education, the social sciences, or a cognate subject such as history. Indeed, the 2008 teachers survey revealed that around 50% of the *Citizenship* teachers who completed the survey had not received any training in citizenship education, and almost two thirds felt that they needed more training (Keating et al. 2009: 39-41). Second, qualitative case studies of schools suggested that, for *Citizenship*, teaching duties were often allocated on an ad hoc basis, more related to convenience and teacher availability, rather than experience of the subject or teacher enthusiasm. We also found that this ad hoc approach to staffing can undermine the continuity and status of the subject, and prohibit the development of a corpus of experienced, confident teaching staff.

The lack of training and experience may also explain in part why schools have also struggled to implement the active and experiential teaching methods that the Crick Report called for, particularly in relation to the use of discussion and debate of controversial and sensitive issues. The CELS data indicate that many schools use active methods such as group work and debates, traditional and passive teaching methods (such as listening to the teacher and working from the textbook) are still more common and more dominant. Indeed, one of the CELS case study schools admitted that it preferred to use didactic teaching methods with its students and that its teachers used little or no active methods at all when teaching *Citizenship*.

It was also expected that schools would teach citizenship not just through formal learning in

the classroom, but also through the culture and practices of the school, and through students' interaction with the local community and the wider world (Huddleston and Kerr 2006). Underpinning this was the belief that citizenship could be more than just a curriculum subject, or rather that it could be Trojan horse in the curriculum that would exceed the narrow confines of the curriculum and permeate into the whole school and wider community beyond. However, many schools have reported that they have found it difficult to forge links with outside communities and put this 'learning in the community' aim into practice. Furthermore, even when learning does take place through the school and local community, the case studies showed that schools were not necessarily making explicit links between these activities and the *Citizenship* curriculum, and that citizenship learning offered by these activities was not necessary clear to the students, and sometimes even to the teachers (see also Zimenkova, this volume and Toots, this volume).

If it is hard to change school institutions and processes, it is even harder to change the culture in schools, and it was clear that some schools struggled with the notion of viewing schools as democratic spaces and young people as active citizens with rights. Although almost all schools had developed some processes for involving students in school decision making, in some schools, the new structures were merely paying lip service to the notion of student participation in school governance. That is, some schools have not engaged with the concept of active participation in a meaningful way and students (and sometimes even staff) have not had a chance to affect real change. As one teacher in the CELS case studies succinctly put it:

“The students are consulted about almost everything and then the Head and Senior Management do what they wanted in the first place”.

Several reasons for this were cited in the case study visits. For some, the reticence appeared to stem from a lack of trust in students' ability to exercise their rights and responsibilities. This perspective was summarised by one teacher as follows:

“[Students] don't always make informed choices. There is some tangible evidence of them having their opinions taken on board [at this school] but only sensible ones. I don't believe in complete democracy with children”.

For others, it was concerns about student discipline that inhibited teachers; one teacher told us that some teachers “fear that if they give any autonomy or responsibility to the kids they will fail, and they will get the blame”. In cases such as these, student participation initiatives often became “just a case of ticking boxes”, rather than sincere efforts to include students in school decision making processes. This may be one of the reasons why schools have found it difficult to get students to participate in these structures. Regardless, it is clear that the failure to subscribe to the democratic aims of school governance structures sends ambiguous messages to students about the nature of democratic processes and their capacity to effect change.

That there are gaps between the policy aims and policy implementation is unsurprising, and perhaps even unavoidable (see Sack, this volume). However, as the next section illustrates, it is arguable that some of these gaps were not inevitable, but were instead the unforeseen

consequences of the policy design.

## Policy design issues

Over time, the CELS project identified a number of policy design decisions that have ultimately served to weaken the status and practice of citizenship education in England. The first relates to the decision to limit to the mandatory element of *Citizenship* to compulsory second-level education (age 11-16), against the advice of the CAG, which had recommended students should have a statutory entitlement to citizenship education throughout secondary school (QCA 1998: 28). While it was hoped that schools would continue to educate their students about citizenship at all stages of their educational career, the CELS surveys found that, in practice, there was a notable drop off in education about citizenship (and especially about political literacy) once students progressed beyond compulsory second-level education (that is, after the age of 16). This, one might think, might not be a major design flaw; after all, students receive some levels of citizenship education between the ages of 11 and 16 and perhaps this is sufficient. However, statistical modelling of the CELS data suggested that if citizenship education is not sustained throughout schooling, the potential benefits and learning dissipate quickly (see Keating, Kerr, Benton, Mundy, and Lopes 2010). Furthermore, it could also be argued that limiting citizenship education to compulsory citizenship education helps to undermine its status as a ‘serious’ subject.

The second issue relates to the decision to adopt a ‘light touch’ approach to the *Citizenship* curriculum, and the unintended consequences that stemmed from this. This ‘light touch’ approach meant that rather than devising a detailed syllabus and programme of study, the curriculum development agency (then known as the QCA) instead published a minimal curriculum framework that merely included: a brief guidance document which identified the key concepts of *Citizenship*; a list of some of the relevant (but broad) topics to be covered; and a description of the learning outcomes that the students were to achieve by the end of each phase of compulsory schooling (i.e. Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4) (QCA 2007). As an illustration of the brevity of this curriculum guidance, it is worth noting that the list of the main concepts and learning outcomes came to just three sides of A4 paper. This approach was unlike that used in other statutory National Curriculum subjects, which had detailed curriculum programmes of study and existing, stand-alone space in the curriculum and the timetable.

The CAG also proposed that rather than telling schools that they had to find a certain amount of discrete curriculum time for the new subject, schools should be encouraged to find curriculum approaches to *Citizenship* that worked for their particular circumstances. As the CAG report noted:

“This [curriculum approach] offers flexibility to schools in relation to local conditions and opportunities, and allows the possibility of different approaches to citizenship education, involving differing subject combinations and aspects of the curriculum based on existing good practice in each school” (1998: 22).

The CAG adopted this approach for philosophical and pragmatic reasons. Philosophically, it

was seen as a means of reducing the risk of political interference in the subject content (McLaughlin 2000: 546) and of recognising teachers' professional skills and allowing them to engage learners by localising and personalising the learning content and format(s) (Halliday 1999: 52). Practically, it also addressed the concerns among schools, and other National Curriculum subject communities, that there was insufficient curriculum time to fit a new subject into the already crowded National Curriculum. Instead, the CAG advised schools to use no more than 5% of curriculum time which should be a mixture of existing curriculum approaches and some new curriculum time.

In effect, this meant that schools were given the freedom to develop their own teaching resources and priorities, and to decide not only the particular curriculum approaches, format and content of citizenship education, but also who taught citizenship education and how its students were assessed. Qualitative and quantitative evidence from CELS revealed that some schools responded positively to this challenge, and have developed and sustained strong policies for teaching and learning *Citizenship* at their schools (see Keating et al. 2009). Yet the data often revealed just as many instances of weak and/or inconsistent implementation, and we found that many schools struggled to develop a clear vision of what *Citizenship* is, or how to teach citizenship to their students. Interviews with teachers and school officials indicated that some of the reasons for this included: curriculum and timetable overload; a lack of teacher training, and perhaps most significantly, a lack of interest in citizenship education among students, staff and senior leaders (ibid.). However, it could also be argued that the 'light touch' curriculum framework has been another important contributing factor. While this approach may have empowered some schools, it has arguably enabled others to adopt a minimalist or 'Citizenship-light' approach to citizenship education, wherein citizenship learning is squeezed into the cracks in the timetable, there is no coherent policy for monitoring or assessing student progress, and/or 'pupil voice' initiatives are a 'tick-the-box' exercise rather than a sincere effort to engage students in school decision making. These concerns were echoed by Ajegbo et al. (2007) in their review of the role that the National Curriculum (and citizenship education in particular) could play in educating young people for diversity. They found that although diversity and conflict resolution were part of the *Citizenship* curriculum, "the light touch approach means that coverage of these issues is patchy and dependent on the will, confidence and interest of the individual teacher" (ibid: 89).

In short, the 'light touch' approach to curriculum planning has resulted in uneven *Citizenship* practice and provision among schools. In order to assist schools, and in particular those schools that continue to struggle with citizenship education, it may therefore be necessary to provide a more prescriptive and structured curriculum framework, and to specify more clearly what citizenship education should entail. Of course, replacing the 'light touch' framework with more prescriptive guidance on the format, structure and content of citizenship learning would not solve all of these issues; indeed, this would have to be coupled with additional teacher education, and access to better subject resources. Nor are we recommending a return to a prescriptive 'civic' education model, which tended to be textbook-led and knowledge-based (Kerr 1999). However, the absence of sufficient guidance

has contributed considerably to a situation in which CE practices are highly variable and the teaching about core aspects of citizenship (such as political literacy) is patchy. Until these issues are addressed, these disparities mean not only that young people in England will continue to receive different levels and types of citizenship education, but also that they will have differential access to the education they require for citizenship in the contemporary world.

## Conclusions

When *Citizenship* became a compulsory part of the National Curriculum in England in 2002, there was great hope that it could help to arrest the decline in youth civic engagement and political participation. Over ten years on, it appears that the cultural change that the Citizenship Advisory Group hoped for has not taken place – or at least not yet. Despite apparent increases in young people’s interest and intentions, the proportion of active citizens remains small, and the rates of participation in political and civic activities remains relatively low. In this chapter, we have argued that three factors have contributed to limiting the potential of the *Citizenship* curriculum: changes in the political and policy environment; policy implementation problems; and policy design flaws. In their own ways, each of these factors helped to weaken the intended status of *Citizenship*, and by extension, its potential to transform the political culture of schools and students.

While we have focused our attention on the behaviours of young people who were the first to have had a statutory entitlement to citizenship education, these results cannot be solely attributed to the presence or absence of citizenship education; as we note elsewhere in this chapter, there are lifecycle events at this stage which are likely to contribute to these low participation rates. Likewise, one could also point to the way in which other social, civil, and political institutions play their role in perpetuating these patterns. Citizenship practices are created and enacted not just in schools, but also through young people’s daily interactions at home, in communities, with the media, and with social, civil, and political institutions. Responsibility for ‘fixing’ youth participation cannot just be left to schools; changes in other social, civil, and political institutions also need to take place (see Sack, this volume).

Yet we do not wish to argue that citizenship education is not relevant, or that *Citizenship* should be removed as a compulsory subject from the National Curriculum in England. We argue rather the reverse, that citizenship education remains highly relevant to the lives of children and young people in modern, democratic societies, and should be a curriculum entitlement for all students. For as we have shown elsewhere, citizenship education can make a small but important difference to young people’s attitudes and behaviours towards civic and political participation – if, that is, it is supported by effective policy and practices. Indeed, the CELS report of 2010 showed that citizenship education is most effective for young people over time: where they encounter it regularly in the curriculum (starting in primary schools); where that curriculum time for *Citizenship* is planned and taught by trained specialist *Citizenship* teachers; where there are quality teaching and learning materials; where there is clear assessment of students' learning; and, finally, where *Citizenship* has status in a school,

and the active support of school leaders (see Keating et al. 2010). Ensuring that these conditions are being met has proved challenging in England, as this chapter has illustrated. As a result, *Citizenship* remains a work in progress in England, with the ongoing key challenge being that of how to translate ambitious policies into ambitious *practices*.

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i

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ii

At the same time, Citizenship also became part of a non-statutory framework (alongside Personal Social Health Education (PSHE)) in primary schools for pupils aged 5 to 11 (key stages 1 and 2).

iii

In England, students in Year 7 are typically aged 11-12, while students in Year 9 are typically aged 13-14. In Year 11, students are usually aged 15-16, rising to age 17-18 in Year 13.

iv

Advanced statistically modelling has also been conducted to examine some of the conditions for, and consequences of, citizenship education. For details about the method and results of this analysis, see Keating et al. (2010) and Benton et al. (2008).

v

Precise turnout rates are not available, as the demographic details of voters are not collected in the



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electoral register. Instead, Ipsos-Mori (a polling agency) use voting intentions surveys to estimate the level of participation by different groups (Electoral Commission 2010: 47; see also <http://www.ipsos-mori.com/researchpublications/researcharchive/poll.aspx?oItemId=2613>).