

20 years on: In celebration of the citizenship teacher educator

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Marcus was involved in citizenship initial teacher education from 2002 as a mentor and then on part-time secondment for three years to Institute of Education. He went on to lead London Metropolitan University's Citizenship PGCE from 2007-2013. He is Head of School of Education at Kingston University and launched a brand new Citizenship and Social Sciences PGCE in 2017.

In this article Marcus Bhargava draws on the experiences of a range of teacher educators to reflect on the challenges, and lessons learned, from starting up a subject specialism almost from scratch. This captures some of the exciting opportunities afforded by the introduction of Citizenship to the national curriculum, and illustrates some of the wider impact of the subject. Amit Puni's article in this edition focuses on the careers of some of the students who passed through the courses described here, and the two articles together focus on some of the positive stories to emerge over the past two decades.

Introduction

This article is a celebration of Citizenship initial teacher educators who have led ITE courses over the last seventeen years. It's my belief that without the vanguard of the Citizenship teacher educators, the subject would have found it almost impossible to make the gains of the last twenty years even if these seem rather modest now. Why? Because they've enabled student teachers to interpret and successfully teach, lead and innovate in a new subject with transformative intentions but in contexts that haven't always been conducive to making those a reality.

In this article I explore the experiences of seven Citizenship teacher educators including my own, based upon interviews and correspondence. Some specific areas include our role in defining the subject and shaping its pedagogy, the distinctiveness of Citizenship student teachers and their partnerships with schools and other colleagues. I also asked them to reflect on their own developing subject identities. What emerges are interesting similarities in experience and also a strong sense that our professional practice has been enriched by our collaborations to drive the subject forward, despite (or perhaps because of) the considerable challenges we've faced.

Citizenship initial teacher education

Interestingly, The Crick Report did not call for discrete citizenship ITE courses, instead recommending that 'due regard [be paid] to the importance of Citizenship in defining expectations' in the QTS standards so trainees would have the knowledge, understanding and skills to teach the subject. DfEE was asked to consider increasing places on other ITE courses,

for instance in social sciences, to 'add to the numbers of teacher most appropriately qualified to teach Citizenship' (QCA/DfEE, 1998).

This reflected some of the group's unease with adding another subject to the curriculum and a desire to let schools interpret Citizenship locally. Nevertheless, the first Citizenship ITE courses were launched in 2001 providing a few trained Citizenship teachers for the subject's launch in 2002. Citizenship rapidly became an oversubscribed ITE course and remained so until 2010 when the impact of uncertainty about the subject's survival, the removal of bursaries and the increase in fees to £9000 all had a major negative impact on applications and recruitment.

Defining the subject

Citizenship was to be a subject guided by bold aims to change the political culture of the nation, but the curriculum was designed to be flexibly interpreted by schools. It didn't have a disciplinary tradition like other subjects such as history which teacher educators could latch onto. So this gave Citizenship teacher educators plenty of scope to shape and define how the subject could be taught. Ralph Leighton (Canterbury Christ Church University, 2002-present) saw it as "a privilege to be in 'on the ground floor' and make a contribution to shaping the subject".

Some course leaders decided to have a particular flavour to their programmes, for instance rooting them in civic republicanism or communitarian models. Jeremy Hayward (Institute of Education 2001-present) rejected this approach because he wanted his course to be a place where "the nature of the subject and its aims could be hotly discussed and where pedagogies for teaching could evolve over time" He loosely framed his course, believing it was for his students to shape the subject. "We didn't need to teach traditional subject recognition rules" Jeremy explained "because it was more than just a subject. I wanted my students to be avant garde!"

Gavin Baldwin (Middlesex University, 2002-17) enjoyed helping students and other teachers find ways to make the curriculum orders a reality in schools, seeing it as the most interesting aspect of his work early on. He also welcomed the "interdisciplinary possibilities that Citizenship offered and the possibility for student centred learning" because of his own primary background.

We've also been keen to promote alternative pedagogical practices. Lee Jerome (Anglia Ruskin University, 2003-7) was excited by Crick's antipathy towards text books. Jerome explains, "Crick feared that focusing on text books would kill the subject and whilst I recognise he was sometimes overly optimistic, on this I was pleased to promote the message". Supporting new teachers to teach through topical and controversial issues has also required teacher educators to develop techniques to model this. For instance, Hayward developed a 'silent debate' technique to overcome difficulties his students were having with traditional classroom debates. Jerome moved from promoting a value-neutral position to one in which teachers could be more upfront and robust about defending the values of democracy.

The launch of the second national curriculum programme of study for Citizenship coincided with my arrival at London Met. There was much optimism in the air; the subject was growing strongly with high quality applicants for training, the GCSE short course helped encourage school managers to take the subject seriously and the new curricular requirements better reflected Crick's vision. Mark 2 Citizenship also meant spending longer unpacking the more explicitly defined concepts and processes in the subject. James Wright (London Met, 2013-15; Harris ITE 2017-present) trained in 2007-8 and appreciated the focus on conceptual knowledge that his training gave him, explaining "the current curriculum is 'knowledge rich' on the surface but it was that 2008 curriculum which had the depth. It gave me a stronger knowledge base and gave me confidence to recognise good Citizenship". Conversely, our teacher educators feel the latest curriculum has been a major step backwards and has made it harder to deliver the subject envisioned by Crick.

Uniqueness of the Citizenship student teacher

The Crick Report recommended ITE providers 'give greater emphasis in their selection procedures to applicants' experience and understanding of citizenship activities, particularly those relating to community involvement'. Citizenship ITE has managed to attract a diverse set of applicants, including many from degree backgrounds that wouldn't have enabled them to join other courses; for Jerome this is an "important legacy of the subject". It's been quite common to find a mixture of students from subjects as different as politics, law, psychology and community studies on the same programme. Many have brought with them experience of engagement in youth work and community action which has enriched their teaching especially in active citizenship.

Baldwin has fond memories of recruiting students in the early days "with great imagination and passion". As a mentor in school, I was impressed with the refreshing way that the students approached teaching, being far more experimental. They brought the subject alive, challenging me to re-think my own teaching. It was easy to make the case for a specialist department because senior management were impressed with what they saw. However, not all student teachers had positive experiences. In the early days Hayward explained how it was all too common for students to be asked to "write all the schemes of work for the department, or to photocopy all their lessons and pass them on to other teachers". Kerr (IOE 2001-2; Bristol 2013-16) suggests that Citizenship student teachers have always had to be "armed with amazing resilience in the face of snobbish attitudes, ignorance about the subject and often contempt". This resilience has often enabled his former students to take up the fight for Citizenship and because they've managed to win in their schools, "they've gained incredible respect".

Citizenship student teachers nearly always teach other subjects and this gives them a flexibility that schools seem to appreciate when offering first jobs. At Bristol, Kerr had his student teachers list all the areas they'd taught and supported with over the year so they could compare, contrast and offer advice and support to their peers for their future jobs. These days all too few get to

teach their subject as a major part (or even any part) of their teaching although for Leighton he doesn't have a problem with students seeing Citizenship as stepping stone to social science teaching at KS5. Jerome's History with Citizenship PGCE attracted those who were mainly interested in their major subject and this meant that "some felt compelled to keep up the impression of a dual interest". However, he found that many of those did end up with responsibility for Citizenship later on and so he came to see his course as "setting up sleeper cells of Citizenship expertise, ready to emerge from deep cover when the opportunity arose". For Wright, the loss of Citizenship trained teachers to other social science areas need not be a problem providing the link to the subject community can be maintained because these teachers can find other ways to develop a citizenship culture in their schools.

Working with schools

Another common experience has been the challenge of finding Citizenship placements. Kerr highlights the particular challenge in 2001-2, before the subject was statutory, where students "were dropped in wherever there was a space from Luton to Shoreham-on-Sea". Once placements were found, Leighton suggests the challenge then was "persuading schools that what they thought was Citizenship had little to do with the National Curriculum or Crick". Baldwin concurs, arguing this has been an ongoing challenge although "that in itself has been exciting". In those early days, I enjoyed working with non-subject mentors to help them understand the subject and its pedagogy and it was always gratifying when they began to apply these to their own subject areas.

Pride is a word used to describe the feeling of working with former students as they moved into mentoring and leadership roles. For me, the enhanced dialogue with subject specialist mentors meant we were able to stretch student teachers far more by encouraging them to take greater risks. It also revealed the extent to which our alumni were developing in their own teaching or in some cases developing a vision for their own new departments. A highlight for Kerr was when a former student from his Bristol course became a mentor, then head of department and then staffed his entire department with former students from the Bristol course.

We've often provided training for whole departments, helping non-specialists to understand knowledge and pedagogy and this often permeated other subject areas too. Hayward argues that Citizenship was an "early adopter" of assessment for learning strategies such as peer and self-assessment. "We were a breath of fresh air, we could adopt Freirean pedagogy" claims Hayward and the fact that Citizenship student teachers were thinking more deeply about learning was being positively recognised by schools.

Many exciting 'drop-down days' have been planned by our student teachers and these have often been a favourite part of the job. My students planned and delivered whole days on crime, democracy, diversity and children's rights at a number of schools. Hayward's student teachers planned a whole day at one school on whether there should be a salary cap. For Leighton, these

days helped to show colleagues in schools “how creative citizenship education can be, and how talented their own pupils were when presented with appropriate content and context”.

Collaborating with others

Citizenship teacher educators have relished the opportunity to collaborate with others to offer unique experiences for our new teachers and, in turn, this has enriched our practice. For instance, Baldwin was inspired by working with Jan Pimblett at London Metropolitan Archives and Pippa Couch at the National Portrait Gallery. He also enjoyed the annual Diversity conference for PGCE students at Middlesex, Institute of Education and London Met which ran for many years. Others cited the fantastic learning offered by Parliamentary Education Service, CND and other museums, libraries and galleries which have opened student teachers’ minds to the impact of learning outside the classroom.

We have also enhanced the wider teacher education in our institutions. For instance it’s been common for Citizenship student teachers to deliver professional studies sessions to other subject areas and this has moved from educating peers about what Citizenship is, to other areas such as fundamental British values and Prevent. At London Met, we became a Rights Respecting ITE Provider in 2008 and this meant rights had to be embedded across our courses. This meant that our professional dialogue with students shifted, because every issue of professional practice had to be explored through a rights lens. It also led to some unique collaborations, for instance between Citizenship and languages student teachers delivering Citizenship drop-down days in schools around rights issues.

Leighton continues to work with colleagues to embed Citizenship in all subject areas and his research and collaboration with colleagues in Europe has given him a much wider perspective about the subject. However, not all experiences of working with others outside the community have been positive. Hayward still feels scarred by the time when he introduced himself at an INSET for a different subject association and got booed simply because he was a Citizenship educationalist!

Reflecting on the journey and the future

So how have our views and subject identities changed over time? Hayward says that he now believes in the vital importance of ‘epistemic virtue’. “We aren’t there to make better opinions”, he explains, “we are there to develop criticality and to develop an understanding of the virtue of being open-minded and changing your mind”. Leighton still sees himself as a “grumpy old(er) renegade but one who identifies with Citizenship rather than sociology”. Baldwin’s believes he now has a sense of ‘citizenship as a spiritual activity’ because of the connections he’s made between active citizenship, arts and the humanities. For me, I’ve moved from seeing political education as in itself liberating to believing that Citizenship must play a bigger role in re-engaging communities with schools.

Inevitably, there's been a long winter for Citizenship teacher educators. The removal of the bursary, uncertainty about the subject's survival and the fall in schools offering the subject have all had a profound impact. We've gone from nationally training around 250 students per year in 2010 across 13 providers with heavily oversubscribed courses to fewer than 50 being trained in the five remaining providers in 2016/17. Leighton doubts Citizenship ITE can survive unless the government offers bursaries in the subject again. However, Hayward suggests that everything could easily change very quickly, because Citizenship is so affected by wider government policy. He feels the growing support for 'votes at 16' could re-focus attention again on the subject, in a similar way to fundamental British values. Similarly, Jerome feels that because the subject is "an important place where valuable aspects of educational thinking continue to be developed (project based learning; active community engagement; experiential learning etc.)", when Citizenship's time comes around again "we'll have a lot more of value to share with others". Let's hope the few providers left can hang on that long.