CitizED is an international network of academics focusing on many aspects of citizenship education with particular emphasis on research and scholarship about and for teacher education and school-based learning and teaching. An international journal published by Intellect (Citizenship Teaching and Learning) was launched by CitizED in July 2005 and allows for the publication of academic empirical and philosophical articles that are professionally relevant. It is the journal of the Children’s Identity and Citizenship European Association (http://www.cicea.eu/) Since 2005 an annual citizED conference has taken place bringing together academics and professionals from around the world. Since 2010 our conferences have taken place at St. Andrews University, UK (2010); USA (2011); York, UK (2012); Japan (2013); Birmingham, UK (2014); Singapore (2015); Birmingham (2016); Seoul (2017). CitizED works in partnership with a wide variety of individuals and organisations (e.g., recent work has taken place at a character education and citizenship education seminar involving many of the key NGOs and professional bodies for citizenship education in England, hosted by the Jubilee Centre, University of Birmingham and citizED at St. George’s House, Windsor in June 2017; the Children’s Identity and Citizenship Education Association at their international conference in Bruges in June 2017; and also with very many national bodies through our international conferences). Further details can be found on the CitizED web site (www.citized.info). This statement is submitted following discussion and endorsement at the editorial committee of Citizenship Teaching and Learning.

1. Background to citizenship education

Although there were some exceptions, explicit and professional forms of citizenship education have developed only since the 1970s.

There are several factors that justify the need for citizenship education. Research shows that children and young people have the ability and interest to understand societal issues, need to know about the world around them and require support in order to understand and develop the skills to take part. Evidence of weak understandings and low engagement needs to be continually addressed.

The educational response to societal challenges has been mixed. Various forms of social studies education have been prominent at different points. This in part has been helpful insofar as it indicates dynamism and a willingness to innovate. It also indicates the risk of instability where there are shifting characterisations in the face of current political preferences without the achievement of an academically coherent, professionally established and broadly accepted body of knowledge. The 1970s saw the rise of political education and political literacy that focused on issues, procedural values and developing a proclivity to action; the 1980s witnessed the rise of adjectival or so-called new educations (global education, development education, peace, anti-sexist, anti-racist and others) which was seen by some as fragmented, and politically motivated (or engaged) and, in some cases, closely connected with the affective; the early 1990s saw a form of citizenship education that emphasised the so-called “4th dimension” of volunteering. Crick’s characterisation of citizenship education as social and moral responsibility, community involvement and political literacy was a refreshingly high status, well considered commitment. The version of the national curriculum for citizenship up to 2013 was informed by much research and professional reflection highlighting key concepts (rights and responsibility; democracy and justice; identities and diversity); key processes (critical
thinking and enquiry; advocacy and representation; participation and taking informed and responsible action); and content (local, national and international). Until approximately 2013 citizenship education was researched and evaluated principally by the National Foundation for Educational Research (see https://www.nfer.ac.uk/research/projects/cels/) and Ofsted (see https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/citizenship-consolidated-a-survey-of-citizenship-in-schools) and many other organisations and individuals (e.g. see Professor Paul Whiteley’s ‘Does Citizenship Education Work? https://academic.oup.com/pa/article/67/3/513/1457180/Does-Citizenship-Education-Work-Evidence-from-a). Citizenship education has been retained as a National Curriculum subject since 2014.

2. Key issues

- Extensive research and evaluation (see above) shows citizenship education - up to 2013 - to be successful in helping young people to understand and develop the skills to take part. There has been only limited wide-ranging research or evaluation in England since 2013. The current characterisation of citizenship in the National Curriculum for England (UK government; UK law and justice system; volunteering; thinking critically about political questions and managing money on a day-to-day basis) is not based on research, not evaluated and low status.
- Since approximately 2008 and very noticeably since 2010 there has been an obvious decline in official support for citizenship education. This is in part due to a more precisely focused approach on other school subjects; significant changes in teacher training with less input by higher education where expertise is to be more easily found than in schools; and a more centrally directed and locally devolved approach to school governance in which attention is less likely to be focused on lower status subjects such as citizenship.
- The above policy changes have led to operational difficulties for citizenship education. There is regional imbalance in the availability of expertise; it is particularly difficult to develop work in the primary phase where subject expertise can be under-developed; the links between initial teacher education and professional development for serving teachers are weak.
- Challenges remain in relation to many areas in citizenship education e.g., assessment of young people’s understanding and skills of engagement; learning and teaching methods to support learning about and for and through diversity; learning how to use social media as new forms of democratic engagement; European and global matters; exploring connections with personal dimensions of public life through character education.

3. Recommendations

3.1 Strategic development

We believe there should be an explicit five-year strategy on citizenship education to develop work in this area. The strategy would cover issues related to initial teacher education and continuing professional development and ways of developing collaboration between key networks and groups within and beyond higher education, government departments and agencies and NGOs. This should apply to all phases of education from early years through to compulsory and post compulsory contexts. In our international network we are alert to the significant and possibly increasing challenges to education for democracy in many countries. It seems to us obvious that we need now perhaps more than ever before to improve citizenship education and there are clear opportunities for the UK to (again) take a leadership position in this important work.
3.2 Necessary investigations and initiatives

(a) Explore and clarify the nature of subject knowledge for teaching citizenship. This will help the process of selection and recruitment to programmes of teacher education as well as ensuring that tutors can assist the development of trainees’ and teachers’ understandings and practices with more skill than sometimes occurs currently.
(b) Develop understanding of assessment.
(c) Develop teachers’ roles in promoting democratic understanding and practice appropriate for a diverse society.
(d) Emphasise international dimensions. This should be done to ensure an appropriate status for citizenship education and thus assist with the process of implementation. It will also ensure that we will develop citizenship that is appropriate within a nation state and elsewhere. (Recent work in Australia where a National Curriculum is being developed for the first time is of particular immediate interest and potential benefit to our thinking and practice). Notions of global citizenship are important within and beyond England.

4. Statement on citizenship education

We wish to draw to the attention of the Committee to a Statement on citizenship education which has been an indication of our core views for many years.

Citizens in a democratic society have a fundamental responsibility to engage in public life. Teachers and students have an obligation to promote equality, justice, respect for others and democratic participation. These ideals should be integral to cultures of educational institutions and embedded within and beyond the curriculum beginning with the youngest age group and continuing throughout, and after, compulsory phases. Education for democratic citizenship is therefore a core purpose of teaching and learning within and beyond schools.

Citizenship education has a strong conceptual core. Subject knowledge for teaching is increasingly defined and distinctive and includes rights and responsibilities, government and democracy, identities and communities at local, national and global levels.

A curriculum for citizenship will be enquiry based, with students making connections between their own and others’ experiences, learning to think critically about society and take action for social justice.

Educational institutions where this is achieved embody learning for citizenship in their organisational leadership and in their self-evaluation. Citizenship education enhances the professional values and practices of teachers and others.

Citizenship education requires students to consider public and individual issues of an ethical and political nature. These issues will be topical and often controversial. Effective education for citizenship includes the integration of conceptual understanding and the skills for civic engagement.

Citizenship education requires an integrated approach to assessment which incorporates evidence about knowledge, skills and understanding, values, dispositions and social action. The overall assessment must integrate learners’ self-evaluations and reflections which take account of others’ observations and the teachers’ evaluations of pupils.
Citizenship education is drawn from a shared values framework and informs a wider educational strategy and ethos.

Specialist citizenship teachers thus possess distinctive knowledge, skills and dispositions. They have a strong sense of the specific potential of their work and through purposeful teaching, learning and assessment engage and empower young people.

7 September 2017