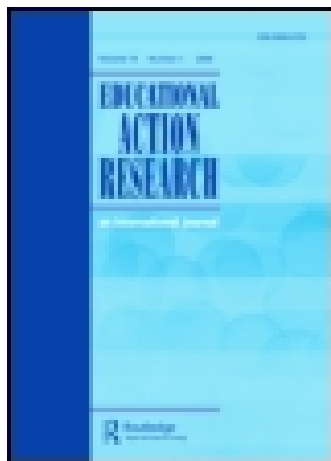


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Paul Warwick ^a

^a School of Education , University of Leicester , UK

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The development of apt citizenship education through listening to young people's voices

Paul Warwick*

School of Education, University of Leicester, UK

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Citizenship Education (CE) and the young people's voice agenda are both enjoying increasing popularity within England at the present time. Clear connections exist between the two, with CE placing an emphasis upon participation and responsible action and the young people's voice agenda advocating democratic procedures for involving young people in the formation of social policy. This paper explores these connections by presenting key findings from a citizenship consultation exercise conducted with 415 young people. It reveals the potential benefits of educators adopting a consultative approach to the implementation of CE. Through listening to the voices of their students, educators are better informed for creating apt, vibrant and engaging learning opportunities within CE. The findings from the consultations also indicate that CE is a necessary educational reform in order to respond to young people's high levels of concern over a wide variety of public life issues, and their interest in making a positive contribution within their communities.

Keywords: citizenship education; student voice; action research

Introduction

Citizenship is a contested and complex notion and consequently Citizenship Education (CE) remains a site of debate and controversy (Osler and Starkey 2003). Despite this, CE is still being increasingly recognised worldwide as an essential element in the education of children and young people (Huddleston and Kerr 2006). Within England, Citizenship Education became a statutory foundation subject at secondary school level in September 2002. Non-statutory guidelines were also produced for CE to be developed at a post-16 level. The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) provides the following definition for CE:

Citizenship education equips young people with the knowledge, skills and understanding to play an active, effective part in society as informed, critical citizens who are socially and morally responsible. It aims to give them the confidence and conviction that they can act with others, have influence and make a difference in their communities (locally, nationally globally). (QCA 2004, p. 6)

Upon its introduction at the secondary school level a tripartite notion of CE was presented, where teaching should ensure that:

*Email: paul.warwick@le.ac.uk

- (1) Knowledge and understanding about becoming informed citizens is acquired and applied when
- (2) Developing skills of enquiry and communication and
- (3) Developing skills of participation and responsible action. (QCA 2000, 14)

As outlined by the House of Commons Education and Skills Committee (2007), CE is about more than knowledge, it is also about skills and attitudes that can be developed and applied through the active participation of young people.

A democratic and participatory mandate

There is a clear need for congruence between what CE is attempting to teach and how CE is taught. As Alexander (2001) argues, the practice of CE must be active, negotiated and increasingly self determined by students or it will be a course in hypocrisy. The implementation of CE demands a pedagogical approach that enables education *as* citizenship rather than a didactic provision of education *about* citizenship. From this perspective the implementation of CE needs to engage students in key democratic and participative processes such as consultation and collaboration. Consequently clear links can be identified between CE and the young people's voice agenda.

At present there is a growing interest in democratic processes for consulting young people in the formation of social policy. This is demonstrated for example by the Every Child Matters agenda (DfES 2004a) which places a significant weight on hearing the perspectives of children and young people when devising services to meet their needs. In the same year the DfES (2004b) also produced a guidance document for local education authorities, governing bodies and schools on the principles and practice to support work on personalising learning through consultation with pupils when taking decisions which affect them. This rise in prominence is similarly reflected within the scholarly field as demonstrated for example by the special issue on young people's voices within this *Educational Action Research* journal in 2007. In this special issue, Fielding (2007), in his reflection upon the invaluable contribution Jean Rudduck has made to the field of student voice, draws attention to the transformative potential of schools learning from the standpoints and insights of their young people. Discovering ways for students to influence the teacher, curriculum and campus requires a shift towards young people being viewed as possessing 'a much greater maturity and creative capacity to be active partners in the processes of education and schooling' (Fielding 2007, 334).

Whilst there is growing support for young people participating in the formation of social policy, a variety of different approaches to achieving this exist. The range of approaches within an educational context is usefully framed by Thomson and Gunter (2006). They not only identify three approaches to pupil voice: consulting pupils, pupils engaged in self evaluation and pupils as researchers, but also identify two distinct discourses; the standards and improvement discourse and the rights discourse.

Their framework helps to highlight the range of activities and the scope for them being genuinely transformative educational experiences. So on the one hand seeking to gain young people's perspectives within school could be an empowering exercise, increasing students' sense of engagement and influence within emerging democratic structures. But on the other hand seeking to gain young people's perspectives could also merely be a tokenistic gesture, used to co-opt young people into the existing structures of the school; maintaining the status quo (Hart 1997).

This paper presents a consultation exercise conducted as part of the Citizenship Education provision in seven secondary and post-16 educational institutions. The objective of this consultation was to be critically aware of the challenges in democratically gaining the perspectives of young people and to provide an empowering experience for participants where their voices influenced future school provision. Conducted as part of a wider action research approach, the hope was that through a consultation exercise that drew out from young people their pre-existing perspectives on public life, teachers would be in a better position to create apt and vibrant CE opportunities.

The design of an effective citizenship consultation activity

As part of the Spheres of Concern research project, a group-based citizenship consultation activity (as shown in Figure 1) was devised to discover young people's views on: firstly their local and global issues of concern; secondly their sources of information; and thirdly their sources of hope in the light of their public life issues of concern. I devised and ran these consultations in partnership with participating school teachers. Its principles and procedures were greatly influenced by the work of researchers such as Fielding (2001), Rudduck and Flutter (2000) and also partly inspired by the work of youth personal development charities such as Changemakers (Garner and Turner 1999) and the Weston Spirit (2006). The Spheres

The citizenship consultation methodology that was applied in this study consisted of the following six stages:

1. Introduction – hooking young people's engagement

Stating the aim to be young people having the chance to share their perspectives with regard to local and global issues and in so doing influence future CE activities.

2. Setting up a participatory and dialogic climate

2a) Championing the atmosphere of trust

A practical trust exercise is used to illustrate the condition of respect that is required within the consultation.

2b) Setting the boundaries

In order to facilitate young people taking the risk of sharing their own points of view a number of ground rules are established, and the dialogue principles underpinning participation in this consultation are introduced. An active listening exercise can also be used to highlight relevant communication skills.

3. Consultation Activity 1: Issues of Concern

3a) Young people's written response to the question 'What are your issues of concern'?

Participants are each given their own colour pen and asked as a group to write down their global and local issues of concern on two large sheets of paper. They are instructed that they are individually free to write as many or as few concerns as they wish and if they find a concern that they share with a peer to underline it with their own colour pen in order to provide a visual indication of those concerns most commonly shared.

3b) Focus Group – gaining a deeper understanding of the perspectives behind young people's public issues of concern.

From the above activity, participants will have produced written 'signposts' to a variety of local and global issues of concern. A focus group setting is then used to discover what is behind some of the most common concerns, in order to understand more fully the young people's different perspectives; the knowledge, values and attitudes that their concerns are based upon.

4. Consultation Activity 2: Young people's identification and prioritisation of their sources of information on public life

Participants are asked as a group to identify the different sources from which they are getting their information on public life. These are listed in a column on a large sheet of paper. Through a voting process where each young person is given three votes to cast (sticky spots), they then prioritise these different sources identifying those that they rely upon the most by sticking their spots next to the specific sources they wish to prioritise.

5. Consultation Activity 3: Participants sharing their sources of hope when faced with public issues of concern

This consultation activity involves participants writing in their own individual space on a graffiti wall drawn onto large sheets of paper what their different sources of hope are with regard to their public issues of concern. Each young person is free to record as many or as few different sources as they wish.

6. Closing the space

The participants are invited to share any final remarks and thanked for their participation.

The educators then review the data from the consultation and identify possible action responses to explore with the class further.

Figure 1. The citizenship consultation.

of Concern research project consulted over 500 children and young people in primary, secondary, and post-16 settings across a variety of locations across England. The findings from the primary school strand have been reported elsewhere (Warwick 2007); this paper specifically focuses upon the findings from the consultations with secondary and post-16 students.

In total 27 citizenship consultations were conducted with 415 young people aged between 12 and 18 years old in the East Midlands and North West of England. The majority of the consultations, 25 in total, were conducted within four secondary schools and two further education colleges. Two consultations were conducted within a specialised out-of-school education service for vulnerable young people.

Two main criteria were used for selecting the participating institutions. Firstly, the commitment by staff within the institutions that having gained the perspectives of young people, action responses within Citizenship Education provision would follow as a direct result. Secondly the consultation settings were chosen in order to access young people from a range of different socio-economic classes and educational backgrounds.

Developing good practice in consulting with young people

Through the course of implementing 27 separate consultations and responding to the critical feedback of participating teachers and students, five key principles have been identified as being vital for effectively consulting with young people. These principles are in line with the recommendations of Rudduck (2003) with regard to consulting students within CE and were developed in direct response to Roberts (2003) who raises the issue that in order to take on such an active participation young people require appropriate induction, support and training. The five principles are:

- Opportunities need to be given for establishing a trusting atmosphere between the young people participating in the consultation exercise.
- Developmental activities sometimes need to be provided within the consultation for young people to practice effective communication skills such as active listening.
- The empathic and respectful principles of dialogue need to be made explicit in order to facilitate young people taking the risk of sharing their sincerely held points of view.
- The educator needs to demonstrate a genuine interest in hearing what each and every student has to say.
- Purposeful participation needs to be established where young people know that their points of view will be taken into consideration and influence subsequent activities.

Falling short of the mark

Fielding (2004) raises concern over too much contemporary student voice work inviting either failure or disillusion through ill-conceived methodologies or non-conducive contextual circumstances. My intention for each of the citizenship consultations in this study was to work in partnership with the class teacher and jointly facilitate all three of the data collection activities over a 90-minute period. However, due to institutional constraints this proved problematic in a number of instances. In only 21 of the school/college-based consultations did it prove possible to secure the presence of the class teacher due to institutional factors such as the teacher being asked at the last minute to cover a colleague's lesson. Timetable limitations meant it was also not possible in six consultations to conduct all three data collection activities. Furthermore, in one consultation the question of appropriate physical

space for conducting a consultation within schools was raised. On this particular occasion the school instigated a room change and the consultation was conducted within a science lab with desks bolted to the floor in rows. This placed severe restrictions upon participants' movement and ability to be able to maintain eye contact when talking and as a consequence the facilitation of this consultation proved extremely problematic.

Referring back to the discursive framing of student voice by Thomson and Gunter (2006) it is also interesting to reflect upon tensions within the initiation process for the consultations being implemented within schools. I held the view of the consultation being an apt educational venture based upon the rights discourse, seeing students to have the right to be involved in determining school activities with or even beyond the national CE policy context. However, it was discovered during the initiation process that some teachers' willingness to contribute was framed more within the standards and improvement discourse. From this position they saw the consultation exercise as a means to solve the problem of how to formulate a local interpretation of the national CE policy. Consequently challenges were encountered with regard to the possibilities for transformative and student-led change through the introduction of a consultation exercise being sometimes viewed from very different perspectives.

Finally it was also observed that resistance was encountered from teachers with regard to their very participation in such a consultation. As identified by Bragg (2007), it is important to acknowledge teachers' differing reactions to the demands a consultative approach to students places upon them. In a couple of incidents teachers clearly resisted the change in the professional relationships with their students that their involvement in this action research project would have required.

So this action research project was not without its limitations and shortcomings. A likely consequence of this is that in some cases the methodological and institutional failures resulted in a lessening of the teacher's capacity to respond in future lessons to what their students took the risk of sharing. Disappointingly this could have resulted in an unintended tokenistic consultation experience for some young people who participated in this study.

Discovering young people's manifold interest in public life

The 415 young people consulted expressed a total of 2766 local and global issues of concern. In all of the 27 consultations conducted, with the exception of one or two individuals, young people presented as being animated about and interested in a broad range of issues concerned with public life.

The participants' most common issues of concern have been categorised into the topic areas summarised in Table 1 and are listed in descending order of frequency.

It is important to state at the outset that an overriding impression from this research project has been the manifold nature of young people's perspectives on public life. Variations in interest and concern were noticeable across individuals, time and place. A popular issue of concern one month with one group of students barely got a mention the next month with a group of students from the same year group. Similarly an issue of concern within one locality was found to have distinctly different nuances at another school just a few miles down the road. The group-based methodology applied and its provision for participants' anonymity means it is not possible from the data gathered to categorise these differences according to gender, ethnicity or socio-economic background. But the data do serve to highlight the point that our student groups are uniquely individual, and that their issues of concern occupy a specific context at a particular time. This is why it is vitally important that citizenship educators develop methods for regularly consulting with their own students, to know them as a

Table 1. Summary of young people's main topics of concern (n=415).

Concerns at a Local Level	Concerns at a Global Level
Crime and violence	War and terrorism
Community relations	Environmental problems
Lack of amenities	Hunger and poverty
Environmental problems	Social problems
Health risks	Crime and violence
Transport problems	Diseases
Poverty	Animal cruelty
Threat of terrorism	Government/Democracy
Education	North/South relations
Other	Other

group, and as individuals. Having said this, the following points of interest can be drawn out of the consultation findings as a whole.

Local issues of concern

The dataset of young people's expressions of concern at a local level indicates that as a group they hold a broad range of interests in their neighbourhoods. The most frequent topic of local concern, however, was crime and violence. This accounted for 30% of participants' comments at this level. A common perspective behind this concern was a sense of fear over safety and security where they lived. Within one consultation in a deprived urban area in Manchester, a group discussed at length the restrictions this fear over safety was placing upon their own capacity to play and socialise. One 13-year-old boy explained that it had got to the level where his parents would no longer let him play with his siblings out in the back garden unsupervised for fear over their personal safety. In response to being afforded this insight, the class teacher commented upon the value of a consultative exercise that reminded her of the contexts within which her students were growing up. Similarly Marquez-Zenkov et al. (2007) speak of the importance of teachers recognising urban youths' realities and finding ways to encounter and appreciate the conditions within which their students are living.

Rather than being apathetic about their local community, young people expressed considerable concern over the preservation of a community spirit in their neighbourhoods. For instance, in one consultation a group of post-16 students expressed care over the break-down in local relations between the young and elderly generations. They spoke about the need for young people to help elderly people more, though they saw the root of the problem to be the lack of understanding both ways. They felt that sometimes the minority of young people did not help matters, for instance by not giving up their seats on buses, but they complained of few genuine opportunities for the young and old to actually get to know each other. In common with the majority of consultations, what the class teacher perceived here was not only a level of care in their students but also an interest in being helped to do something about it; to engage in social action.

Concern about other community relation issues such as bullying and the treatment of asylum seekers also featured prominently across the different institutional settings. Interestingly, within one school the issue of bullying was commonly referred to as being a problem within the institution itself. Whilst just a few miles away at a neighbouring school

the issue was raised by the young people again but the problem was more commonly referred to as being located within the local neighbourhood and not something that occurred within the school. The respective school teachers involved in these consultations realised that their responses within CE and PSHE classes to the underlying problems with bullying needed to be distinctly different.

Global issues of concern

As with the local level dataset, young people expressed concern over a wide range of concerns at the global level. A common finding was their pre-occupation with the topics of war/terrorism. In 20 of the 27 consultations war and terrorism was the most popular topic of concern and within the focus group element this topic often dominated participants' discussions. The study found that for a significant minority of young people an element of their care about this topic was based upon 'cosmopolitan' foundations. For example, one group of students in Manchester shared that they were concerned about the ongoing military action in Iraq because they had friends and family living there. So although they cared about the British people taking part in the military action, and had a sense of belonging to this country, they also felt a sense of identity with, and allegiance to, the Iraqi people whom this military action they felt placed in danger. This raises the issue that in an increasingly globalised world of migration and mobility, our students can possess multiple loyalties and identities (Osler and Starkey 2003) and this diversity is something teachers need opportunities to be able to identify and acknowledge.

A high number of young people made reference to concerns about environmental problems including global warming, pollution, flooding, drought, earthquakes, and deforestation. With regard to many of these environmental concerns, participants regularly brought the problem back to the issue of our modern lifestyles and the need for change. Though they perceived the necessary changes to be possible, their evaluation was that on the whole these changes were presently not being made by policy makers. In certain situations participants felt that the solutions to the problems were too radical to be ever implemented. For example Key Stage 3 pupils in a consultation in Altrincham gave one solution to global warming as being restrictions on private car use, but they knew this would never be made policy. A common perspective of the young people was that by and large they perceived adults as not doing enough about tackling the environmental problems in public life that adults themselves had created and that the younger generations were going to inherit.

Who young people listen to

Having identified the manifold issues of concern that young people held with regard to public life, the next point of interest became where they are getting their information from. In total the young people consulted identified 27 different sources of information on public life. From participants indicating which sources of information they relied upon the most, it is possible to identify the 10 most prioritised sources of information on public life as shown in Table 2.

The information source young people indicated they relied upon the most was television, this receiving the highest number of prioritisation votes in 19 of the 22 consultations in which this activity was completed. The prominence of the mass media of television is also highlighted by it receiving nearly three times as many prioritisation votes as any other source. Within this category young people predominantly referred to news programmes. However, from focus group discussions with participants in five of the consultations, it

Table 2. Young people's prioritisation of their sources of information on public life issues (n=334).

Most relied upon sources of information	Percentage of prioritisation votes
1. TV/News	34
2. Family	12
3. Friends/Gossip	11
4. Newspapers	9
5. Radio	9
6. Internet/Computer	7
7. Teachers/School	3
8. Phones (WAP)	2
9. Books/Magazines	2
10. Eye witness accounts	1
Others	10

became apparent that whilst TV/news was many young people's main source of information, their levels of interaction with this output varied across a range of levels. For instance, in a school in Manchester 50% of the young people in one consultation indicated that they watched the news every day whereas in a consultation with a second group of students from the same year group, 33% of the pupils indicated that they did not watch the news as regularly as once a week. Similarly, although as a group young people identified newspapers as being the fourth highest source of information on public issues, again their frequency of reading varied greatly.

Within three consultations, it was interesting to note young people using the opportunity to express frustration over a lack of information from adults, the Government, and the media with regard to key public life issues. These participants spoke of feeling in the dark as to what was actually going on and underpinning many local and global issues. For example, students in one consultation voiced their frustration at information sources not providing 'good news' about public life issues. Similarly in another consultation participants questioned whether or not they hear the whole story. One student explained that the TV news and newspapers 'leave out the good parts so that we often just hear a bleak picture'. Participating teachers agreed that in the light of these comments it was important that within CE greater attention needs to be given to young people being helped to access information on not only the problems and causes but possible solutions and agents of change to the public life issues that they are expressing concern over.

A key learning point for teachers who participated in this consultation exercise was for them to be reminded by their students that they are but one influence in a myriad of other information sources that impact upon young people. This did not negate their sense of the important role citizenship teachers can have for their students, but highlighted the context within which the introduction of CE into formal educational institutions is occurring and the limitations this places upon its transformative potential.

A sense of hope: points of relief and agents of change

In the light of a multitude of local and global issues of concern, young people were encountered as being both resourceful and creative, drawing hope from a variety of sources. The 15 most frequently referred to are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Most commonly referred to sources of hope when considering local and global issues (n=296).

Source of hope	
1. Family	9. Government/Politicians
2. Friends	10. Myself
3. Music	11. School/Teachers
4. Faith/Religion	12. Other people who care
5. Television	13. Festive occasions
6. Sport/Leisure activities	14. Food
7. Charities/Campaigns	15. Other
8. Pets/Animals	

By far the two most commonly referred to sources of hope were family and friends, with 64% of the participants citing family and 58% citing friends. Within the grouping of family, the specific individual that young people referred to the most was mothers. With regard to why family was such a source of hope, participants provided reasons such as parents being a point of understanding and encouragement.

Music was the third most frequently referred to source of hope, being cited by 19% of the young people. Within one consultation in Lancaster a participant elaborated that music was not simply an escape from her concerns but something that put into words some of the things that mattered to her. To illustrate this, a number of participants cited specific songs, a common example being ‘Where is the Love?’ by the group Black Eye Peas. This song includes lyrics such as:

I feel the weight of the world on my shoulder. As I’m getting older, y’all people gets colder. Most of us only care about money makin’ selfishness got us following our wrong direction. Wrong information always shown by the media, negative images is the main criteria ... Whatever happened to the values of humanity whatever happened to the fairness in equality. Instead of spreading love we’re spreading animosity. Lack of understanding leading lives away from unity.

One possible interpretation of the sources of hope that the young people identified is that they fall into two main categories: predominantly points of relief; and to a far lesser extent, agents of change. Points of relief provide young people with an escape or distraction from their concerns such as playing computer games with a friend. Or points of relief offer comfort to help individual young people cope with having a specific concern such as talking to a caring adult about it. In contrast, agents of change are where either the issues behind the concern are directly being tackled or inspiration for personal action is being gained. Examples of this type of hope that some young people mentioned include: charities campaigning over issues such as fair trade, or providing shelter for homeless people; and scientists working to tackle climate change. In a few cases individual young people referred to themselves as being a source of hope saying that they can be an agent of change. One example from a 15-year-old student in Manchester was that in response to the problem of bullying she had created her own website to help victims know that they were not alone and where they could get help from.

This dominance of young people’s references to points of relief rather than agents of change in every consultation conducted raised for participating teachers the possibility that their students’ creative capacity for active citizenship was being hampered by their relative lack of contact with, and awareness of, agents of change in their community.

Educators' action responses to hearing their students

The action research approach adopted within this study resulted in the consultation exercise helping teachers to respond to their students' voices by recognising problems and generating fresh ideas for change in their practice. This resulted in a number of action responses by the participating educational institutions some of which are briefly outlined below.

Space for dialogue on citizenship issues

Through the 27 consultations it has been possible to witness young people's enjoyment of the educational opportunity to simply share their concerns over public life with each other and their teacher. An indication of this enthusiasm was that in the majority of cases the hardest element of the consultation facilitation process was getting the young people to close their discussion on issues of concern and move on to the next activity. Participants' feedback in one consultation identified reasons for enjoying it to include:

I got to have my voice heard.

We don't normally get the chance to talk like this with each other.

Citizenship Education has the potential for engaging young people by providing similar dialogic spaces where they can express and explore their points of view on life and community issues. A number of individual teachers who took part in this study have subsequently adapted the citizenship consultation methodology for regular use in their CE classes as one way of ensuring that their students' viewpoints and issues are regularly heard and have a bearing on subsequent CE class activity.

A general finding of this study is that although young people are commonly aware of the wider world and concerned about a wide range of global and local issues, they seem less clear about the limitations and bias of their perspectives, the gaps or inconsistencies in their knowledge or the basis for alternative viewpoints being held. One apt CE response to this is for young people to be given the opportunity to encounter different perspectives on contemporary issues and the space to question, critically consider and reflect upon these perspectives as well as their own.

An example of this is provided by two FE colleges in Leicester that have engaged some of their students in the innovative Global Citizenship methodology 'Open Space for Dialogue and Enquiry' (OSDE 2006). OSDE involves young people being presented with stimulus material that offers different perspectives on contemporary issues and then the space to dialogue and question based upon the following four core principles:

- (1) Including everyone: The knowledge each person brings deserves to be heard.
- (2) Lifelong Learning: Everyone sees the world from different points of view that can change and develop. This means no one has got all the answers.
- (3) Recognising diversity: All knowledge is related to who you are and where you come from.
- (4) Critical Engagement: All knowledge can and should be questioned through dialogue. (Andreotti and Warwick 2007)

Participation in this programme has enabled the students to further explore local and global issues of interest such as waste and recycling, poverty and racism, and to encounter perspectives on these issues that are different to their own.

Another response to their students' interest in specific issues has been for teachers to devise further learning opportunities either with the help of their students or in partnership with external sources of expertise. A participating school in Lancaster, for example, invited staff from a local development education centre to help run a lesson where their students explored more fully the issue of asylum seekers. This involved students having the opportunity to meet with an asylum seeker and hear first hand why he had sought refuge within the UK. A participating school in Manchester took a slightly different direction and responded to their consultation findings by organising a suspended timetable citizenship day. In this day a whole year group was able to participate in a United Nations earth summit simulation activity where they researched and represented different interest groups and considered the issue of how trade could be made fairer.

Young people as leaders of change

A key pedagogical issue that this study has raised is with regard to how such student consultations can serve as a trigger for CE being taken beyond the classroom and into the realm of community action. Or viewed from a student voice perspective, how CE can be taken beyond students merely being consulted towards being actively engaged through a students-as-researchers approach. This is where students have the opportunity to be involved in researching an issue, making recommendations and then also being involved in their implementation (Fielding 2001). One secondary school in Lancaster took up this challenge and in response to the citizenship consultation activity agreed to run for their Year 12 students a community action CE programme. This involved groups of students voluntarily taking part in a service learning programme where they were supported through the following leadership process:

- (1) Students identify a common citizenship issue that they care passionately about.
- (2) Students research and investigate this issue further and make recommendations for change.
- (3) Students decide what action response they would like to make and seek support to proceed from school representatives (i.e. school council, senior management team or governors).
- (4) Students take collective action to try and implement their action response.
- (5) Students critically reflect upon and celebrate the learning gained through this initiative.

This programme has enabled young people in the school to conduct a range of community action projects. This includes building a bridge between the school's students and its local elderly residents through organising a joint trip to learn ballroom dancing, and creating a game-based event as an introduction to the school for Year 6 pupils to help them with the transition into secondary schooling.

In this way Citizenship Education holds the potential to help empower young people to make a positive contribution to their schools and communities. A number of national initiatives and organisations already exist to provide practical support for teachers on how young people can be helped to develop enterprising social action projects and engage in positive behaviour in and outside of school (Price 2003; Changemakers 2005; Envision 2006). A key issue in the implementation of CE six years since it was first introduced in the national curriculum in England is for it to continue to champion the transformative learning potential of the full range of approaches to student voice, working with students as active citizens in both school and community development.

Conclusion

From talking to learners to talking to them and with them; from listening to learners to being heard by them. (Freire 1998, 63)

Citizenship Education and student voice have much in common. Rudduck (2003, 5) states that the stories of the two movements often 'speak each other's language'. Both are presently enjoying a surge of interest and relative popularity with policy makers. A key assertion of this research project is that CE educators will greatly benefit from exposure to the student voice tradition, its theoretical base, examples of good practice and current areas of debate.

Teachers taking part in this research project found the consultation exercise provided a fresh insight into their students' perspectives, values and personal experiences. This helped to identify topical issues, pressing questions, and gaps or inconsistencies in knowledge for their CE classes. Freire (1998) argues that having first listened to their students, educators are then in a better position to be heard by their students as a result. Consultation with students can make a positive contribution to teacher–student relationships, helping to sustain an active and collaborative rather than passive or oppositional orientation. As Rudduck and Flutter (2004) argue, what students tell their teachers can make a difference. This small study has shown how through hearing the perspectives of young people, apt ideas for future CE activities can be identified and shaped by teachers. It has also served to highlight a view of young people possessing great potential as both care-takers and change-leaders within their communities.

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