Citizenship Education North and South: Learning and Progression (CENSLP)
Final Project Report

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1. Introduction

Understanding our subjects and the nature of subject knowledge and progression in learning are essential aspects of initial teacher education (ITE) but, in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, as in most areas, models of Citizenship Education (CE) are heavily dependent on the official definitions of citizenship developed by curriculum officials, with varying levels of political control and teacher consultation. Whilst there are networks of teachers bringing together CE teachers (for example the Five Nations network funded by the Gordon Cook Foundation) there has been little work developed by teachers to identify a comprehensive model of what it is that CE teachers actually do in the classroom and what young people do (and should) learn in the subject. We believe this makes CE particularly vulnerable to political influence and that it can become a repository for wider social policy concerns. Whilst there is always a need to identify a form of CE that suits the context in which it is being taught, this must be balanced by a more informed sense of what the core of the subject entails and how young people actually learn citizenship.

In other comparable subjects there have been teacher-led initiatives in the past such as the Humanities Curriculum Project (Stenhouse, 1983), and project CHATA (Lee & Ashby, 1987), which identify key concepts, skills, questions and areas of factual knowledge that together comprise the 'subject lens' that young people can apply to think about the world from a particular perspective. This project begins to develop such a model for CE, focusing on what is distinctive about seeing the world as a citizen, and thus developing a clear model for how teachers structure their teaching and how young people learn in CE. This will facilitate a discussion about attainment and progression within the subject as a school subject, and help to further distinguish CE from citizenship, as a political construct.

This small project, supported by SCOTENS, set out to generate a working model to underpin a larger scale research project, and as such it has allowed us to pilot a methodology and yield some initial working models for conceptual and skills progression. Whilst we do not claim to have discovered a universal model of progression in conceptual learning, we hope to have illustrated the value of thinking seriously about subject knowledge in CE and the complexities involved in asking students to use abstract concepts to think about citizenship.

2. Literature review

2.1 The re-emergence of knowledge in curriculum studies

Debates about the curriculum have recently re-focused on the nature of knowledge, reacting against a global trend towards curriculum reform in which generic outcomes and skills were foregrounded (Priestley, 2011). Young's (2012, 2013a) concept of 'powerful knowledge' has been particularly influential in this debate and he argues that school subjects are important because they provide 'epistemic access' to what is considered to be generally valuable knowledge. School subjects therefore provide a means by which society can pass on knowledge and induct the next generation into traditions of knowing and thinking about the world which, through mastery, they can then supersede. In response to White's (2012, see also Brown & White, 2012) criticisms that this is an essentially conservative view of the curriculum Young acknowledges that these subjects do indeed operate as boundaries of constraint, but also as boundaries of possibility, in that they enable students to understand the world in different ways, and ultimately give them access to knowledge creation. In his exploration of these issues Beck (2013) has argued that powerful knowledge 'empowers' learners to act in the world, but Young (2013b) is adamant that he wants to move away from the social relations of knowledge and to engage with the epistemological foundations of the curriculum. In doing so, Young draws on the distinction made by Vygotsky and argues that powerful knowledge surpasses the knowledge that can be gained through direct experience and includes

theoretical or scientific concepts, drawn from established academic disciplines. Unlike everyday knowledge, such concepts must be taught and learned within academic disciplines.

This raises some problems for thinking about citizenship education, because citizenship represents no single academic discipline, however, Young remains open to some spaces in the curriculum which are not based on traditional subjects (Young, 2012). He acknowledges that some established subjects, such as geography, are slightly problematic in that they draw on numerous disciplines and because there is some overlap between the subject-specific scientific concepts and those developed through everyday life, e.g. a geographer understands 'London' in specific ways, using geographical concepts (city, urbanisation, development, globalisation) whilst a child will also have a range of everyday knowledge about their city. This represents at least two significant challenges for citizenship educators. First we have to think deeply about the nature of knowledge represented in our school subject, so that we can clearly draw on established disciplinary thinking and give access to powerful knowledge. Secondly, we have to think seriously about responding to one of the tensions identified by Beck (2013) and make convincing links between the everyday material of citizenship (and the common-sense, spontaneous understandings that arise) and the more esoteric disciplinary knowledge that will prove to be more powerful. These are linked, Young argues, because "in devising a curriculum, it is the knowledge structures where we have to start... any attempt to develop a pedagogy that imagines it can avoid, rather than work with, the 'epistemic constraints' of a subject will be doomed to fail" (Young, 2013: 197).

Whilst such arguments have recently been associated with conservative thinkers, such as Hirsch (1987), there are also connections to a different strand of thought represented by Bruner and Shulman. Bruner (1960) argued that teachers must strive to make learning motivating by showing how individual lessons contribute to the broader task of engaging with the world, making generalisations, and interpreting complexity in order to achieve understanding. He believed that the conceptual structure of the subject which would achieve this is also important in practical terms for the teacher. Being conscious of the deep structures of the subject means students can sort new knowledge into a structured pattern, which helps to secure memorization; it also helps them to identify the relevance of existing knowledge to new situations; revisiting core concepts and subject structure also helps to ensure learning is progressive over time, and minimises the risk that new learning simply replaces earlier learning. This question about how one defines the structure of a subject was also addressed by Shulman (1988) who observed that in addition to their in-depth specialist pedagogical and curricular knowledge, teachers needed to understand the structures of their subject in two ways. First he describes the *substantive* structures, by which he means the principles and concepts which organise the knowledge in a domain; and secondly he describes the *syntactic* structures, relating to the rules by which knowledge is established, the procedures for establishing validity, or what we might call the epistemological foundations for the domain.

This leads us to outline a 3-dimensional view of knowledge, which might help teachers to think about how they engage with and interpret their subject areas:

1. The first dimension refers to the factual knowledge we want to teach, in Citizenship this may well involve learning about democratic institutions, roles and processes. How does one stand as an MP, who stands and who gets elected? What is the role of an MP in parliament? How do MPs relate to their constituents and why does this vary? These are all answerable to some extent by relatively straightforward information.
2. The second dimension refers to Shulman's substantive structures and deals with the core concepts that underpin and structure the subject. Here one might consider the concepts of citizen, state, power, democracy, deliberation etc. These mark out the distinctive academic territory of the subject and, importantly, it is these concepts which are likely to enable students to perceive the usefulness of the subject. These ideas

provide a flexible framework through which one can make sense of the world as a citizen. This is more powerful knowledge than the first dimension because it is of more general use and helps us to read the world in different ways.

3. The third dimension refers to this broader sense of knowing what it is to engage with an issue through the distinctive lens of citizenship. This is partly related to Shulman's notion of the epistemic rules of the game, and thus grasping what it is to argue and think politically. It is possible to approach global warming through a scientific lens, through an historical lens, or through a citizenship lens. The questions one asks and one's expectations of what would stand as a convincing answer, are influenced by the lens one adopts.

By contrast, Beck points out that some of the work undertaken in citizenship education actually appears to be 'knowledge of the powerful' as opposed to powerful knowledge in that it seeks to promote educational experiences which are "cognitively restricting – in the sense that, by design or in effect (often both), they deny students access to alternative ways of understanding" (Beck, 2013: 181) and thus students are restricted in their understanding of the specific situation in which they find themselves as well as being restricted in their ability to understand the issue in general. Clark and Newman (1997) refer to such examples as 'governmental projects' and in their research they explored reforms to create neo-liberal consumer-citizens, which close down people's understanding of citizenship, rather than opening it up. Here then, the distinction between the two forms of knowledge becomes crucial. Citizenship education, as knowledge of the powerful, becomes a programme of indoctrination and cognitive restriction, as students are encouraged to adopt a world-view which reflects the interests of those in power. On the contrary, citizenship education, as powerful knowledge, furnishes students with an understanding of ideological debates and different traditions of citizenship, and thus enables individuals to use conceptual frameworks for making sense of the world as citizens.

2.2 Citizenship knowledge

The foregoing discussion opens up a further problematic area for citizenship educators in that citizenship is often seen as one of the aims of education, rather than as distinct subject for learning. As such, teaching citizenship often involves identifying moral ends (such as commitment to act responsibly and look out for the interests of others), and developing skills (such as the ability to structure an inquiry, engage in debate and undertake action) as well as securing knowledge. Indeed, the revival of citizenship education in recent decades has been associated with a critique of traditional civics (which accentuates the knowledge dimension) and a focus on a newer tradition of active citizenship (which accentuates the skills and motivational dimensions) (Jerome, 2012; Kerr, McCarthy and Smith, 2002). In practice, one can strike the balance between these dimensions in various ways. The influential political literacy project of the Hansard Society in the 1970s (Crick, 1978) focused on the practical skills of citizenship and in doing so seemed to relegate knowledge to a 'just in time' package of information, to be sought only when it is needed to inform practical problem solving. This seems to ignore the complexity of what constitutes progression in knowledge acquisition, and adopts a rather piecemeal approach to powerful knowledge. Beck considers an alternative way to balance these dimensions by insisting that some powerful knowledge might demonstrate how to become effective at securing undesirable outcomes, and might therefore have to be withheld from students in school, to avoid "morally repugnant forms of empowerment" (Beck, 2013: 184). This seems to resolve the tension by asserting moral concerns over the knowledge or skills dimensions. As such, this seems suspect both ethically and pragmatically – in practical terms it is unlikely, in the Internet age, that children can be shielded from information, and ethically it seems counter-productive to embark on an education programme which seeks to maintain selective ignorance. On a rather different note, Ploeg and Guerin's (undated) argument rejects almost entirely the moral aims of citizenship education and privileges knowledge. Starting from the premise that a

liberal state must ensure citizens are fully informed of the possibilities for action, but should not compel them to join in, they argue the correct 'educational' response is to build students' knowledge and understanding of citizenship so they can make their own informed decisions about whether (and how) to participate. Unsurprisingly, although Young does not tackle citizenship explicitly, he hints at his answer when he warns, "It is seductive to assume that democratic politics points not just to the democratization of access to education but to more democratic pedagogies and curricula" (Young, 2013). Clearly, be believes that if we are to avoid such seductions, we should privilege knowledge over process or other educational aims.

We think the pragmatic answer lies in analysing the distinctive nature of citizenship, as a way of making sense of the world, and ultimately of conceptualising one's role within the world. There are educational precedents to follow here, for example in relation to school history Counsel (2000) argues compellingly that the age old debate about knowledge v. skills is a false dichotomy because knowledge can only be fully understood and used when one is conducting some form of historical enquiry. In a similar vein, we argue that a proper account of citizenship education should acknowledge that the knowledge and skills are inseparable. The perceived need for action does not automatically emerge from a common-sense understanding of everyday life, nor from some mysterious urge to action, rather it often emerges from a deep political understanding of the world. Similarly, the kind of action that would be useful is not just a matter of somehow 'reading off' the contextual information and identifying the best method, this too requires some deep understanding of the nature of politics and the nature of the problem one seeks to solve. This resonates with Niemi and Junn's (1998) conclusion that a level of civics knowledge provides the intellectual basis for engaging in public discussions and planning citizen action.

Whilst the shift from the civics tradition towards citizenship education has usefully emphasised the significance of the active dimension to citizenship, it is equally important to understand the continued importance of developing children's knowledge about citizenship. The remainder of this article therefore seeks to explore the extent to which knowledge has been addressed in contemporary curricula.

2.3 What have we learned from previous comparative analyses?

Citizenship education is an area which is significantly shaped by the prevailing political context, as well as the educational context (Jerome, 2012; Pykett et al., 2010). This has led several authors to adopt comparative approaches to shed light on this area within the four nations of the UK. Andrews and Mycock (2007) provided an initial analysis which emphasised how citizenship has emerged with distinctive foci in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. Much of their analysis was confirmed in a later study by Kisby and Sloam (2011) which described how Scotland and Wales have emerged with a stronger focus on cultural identity and community, but with a somewhat patchier curriculum commitment (relying on non-statutory advice and frameworks and embedding citizenship in other subjects – Personal and Social Education in Wales and Modern Studies in Scotland). In England and Northern Ireland, whilst there is a shared commitment to explicit citizenship education, these have taken very different forms, with Northern Ireland focusing on human rights and international links, and England focusing increasingly on identity and multiculturalism (although this analysis predates the 2014 revised curriculum in England). In reviewing education provision in each of these contexts both sets of authors tend to discuss broad issues relating to intentions or teaching models, rather than analysing knowledge in any depth.

The knowledge requirements of the curriculum, insofar as they feature at all in Andrews and Mycock's analysis, tend to illustrate the different emphases on citizenship identity, so in Northern Ireland they draw attention to the curriculum's insistence that students can develop values based on "internationally recognised principles of equality, human rights, justice and democracy," whilst in

England students are taught about diversity and migration. In their analysis, citizenship education in England therefore addresses knowledge which might help students understand multiculturalism and in Northern Ireland it provides students with a non-sectarian framework which can be used to build post-conflict citizenship identities. Kisby and Sloam discuss political literacy as one of their four comparative themes, and in doing so draw on Crick's (1978) earlier definition which, as we have seen, focuses primarily on skills. This leads them to treat knowledge relatively lightly in their discussion, for example, noting where knowledge and understanding are referred to, but not interrogating the specific learning intentions.

Whilst these comparative analyses are useful in highlighting the ways in which broad conceptions of citizenship differ across the four nations of the UK, there is clearly a gap to address in relation to the ways in which knowledge is envisaged in these curricula. Whilst they have gone some way to respond to the questions 'what is the purpose of citizenship education?' and 'how is citizenship education planned?' the remaining question, 'what are students expected to know and understand about citizenship?' deserves further attention. In the next section of this paper we address this and also extend the discussion to include the Republic of Ireland, which provides a further useful comparative case for understanding how curricula are constructed within specific contexts.

3. Citizenship in the Curriculum in Ireland and Northern Ireland
3.1 Ireland – Civic, Social and Political Education
In the Republic of Ireland citizenship forms part of 'Civic, Social and Political Education' (CSPE) in the junior cycle (12-15 year olds). The curriculum is being reformed at the time of writing and CSPE, which was introduced as a mandatory subject in 1996 (Keating, 2009), is now an optional short course (DES, 2012) and will revert to teacher assessment in 2017, with the examination being phased out (DES, 2014). This indicates that the low-status of the subject continues to be a limiting factor in translating intentions into reality (Bruen, 2014). Keating notes that the introduction of CSPE marked a move away from a traditional national model of citizenship and the adoption of a more cosmopolitan approach embracing the principles of international human rights and recognising that citizenship is played out in different communities and at different levels (Keating, 2009: 170).

Knowledge is foregrounded in the course objectives, including the acquisition of "basic knowledge and understanding" in a range of content (our first dimension of knowledge). CSPE as a whole is divided into four areas, each of which is closely associated with one or more of seven key concepts: the area labelled 'the individual and citizenship' is linked to human dignity and stewardship; 'the community' as an area of study is linked to the concept of democracy; 'the state – Ireland' is linked to rights and responsibilities, democracy and the law; and the final area 'Ireland and the world' is linked to development and interdependence (NCCA, undated). Whilst on the face of it, these form the second dimension of subject knowledge and provide valuable organising concepts for teachers, the definitions convey some characteristics of 'knowledge of the powerful' as opposed to 'powerful knowledge.' For example, in defining democracy the curriculum writers assert "non-participation or exclusion can lead to alienation, apathy and lack of responsibility", and the definition of rights and responsibilities includes the phrase "responsibilities go hand in hand with the rights accorded to individuals" (NCCA, undated: 10). In these kind of assertions the curriculum moves beyond an account of what the concepts mean and how they are used in legitimate debates about democratic politics, and instead, by advocating that teachers teach these normative assertions as fact, the curriculum ultimately promotes a form of cognitive closure.

The skills specified in the curriculum hint at the third dimension of powerful knowledge by defining the subject as an area where students identify relevant issues and sources of information; analyse and evaluate such information; communicate with others in a range of ways and undertake action

using social and political skills. In fact, in the final category one can see the most direct reference yet to specific skills related to "political organising, procedure, and decision-making" (NCCA, undated: 13). This clarification of the kind of perspective represented by citizenship is also evident in the section defining desirable attitudes and values, which discusses the importance of students developing an appreciation of critical awareness and independence of thought, an appreciation of, and respect for, differing viewpoints, ideas and cultures, and a respect for critical thought processes and non-violent ways of resolving conflict and achieving change (NCCA, undated: 14). However, the tension between this and the more restrictive conceptual definitions noted above, leaves some uncertainty as to the overall approach likely to be adopted.

3.2 Northern Ireland – Learning for Life and Work

The curriculum in Northern Ireland embeds citizenship as a theme in a larger (low status) subject. In Northern Ireland 'local and global citizenship' has been included as one of three themes within the wider subject of 'Learning for Life and Work' since 2007. The local and global title for the citizenship theme clearly sidesteps the problematic nature of 'national' citizenship which, for the citizens of Northern Ireland, continues to be a contentious issue. The pragmatic reasons for pairing local and global like this in a divided society are also complemented by the intention that the notion of global citizenship can provide a unifying citizenship identity which the nation cannot provide. However, there are also well known challenges in getting these two perspectives to coalesce. The mantra of 'act local, think global' can often lead to relatively minor de-politicised behaviour changes, for example turning off the light, not leaving the television on standby or recycling paper as a response to global warming, with no deeper sense of the political nature of the problem. Or it simply turns into a form of "intellectual tourism" (Roman, 2003) in which students learn about the lives of the distant 'other' and occasionally participate in acts of charity, which can again ignore more critical perspectives on inequality and side-line the political dimension to citizenship action (Waldron et al., 2011). One small scale study in Northern Ireland documented both these phenomenon among a group of secondary students – they knew about some global problems, but had a relatively superficial grasp of how these connected to their lives in Northern Ireland (Niens and Reilly, 2012).

The curriculum itself offers a fairly robust account of the subject in terms of specifying the conceptual framework underpinning citizenship. The curriculum for key stage 3 (11-14 year olds) is organised around four key concepts (second dimension of knowledge), each of which is then exemplified by specific areas of content to be related to those concepts (first dimension). The four organising concepts are expressed as pairs: diversity and inclusion; human rights and social responsibility; equality and social justice; and democracy and active citizenship (CCEA, undated a). One can discern much clearer thinking behind these headings than was evident in other curricula, for example, the phrase 'human rights and social responsibility' clearly challenges the somewhat general assertions that 'rights and responsibilities' must always be linked. This phrasing is compatible with the notion that an individual's human rights are the responsibility of the state, and are not directly dependent on that individual living up to their responsibilities in some way; it also acknowledges that citizens do have social responsibilities to one another (some specifically codified in law, others implied by an assumed social contract). This more nuanced thinking is evident in the suggested content which includes learning about various human rights instruments, learning about the nature of those rights (e.g. individual and group rights; limitations on rights) and applying the concept of social responsibility to consider the extent to which governments and individuals *should* act. Taking 'democracy and active participation' as a second example, the content specifies children should learn about the rule of law, the promotion of equality and the nature of laws and justice as specific characteristics of democracy; and specifies a variety of forms of action, including school-based participation, community action, lobbying, campaigning, working through NGOs and dealing with elected representatives.

McEvoy (2007) documents a process of 'to-ing and fro-ing' in the formation of the curriculum as teacher workshops linked to the roll-out of citizenship education elicited feedback which led to refinements in the curriculum, thus explaining how the concepts and content came to be so well-aligned in this curriculum. McEvoy also notes that the new curriculum represented a step-change to the 'Education for Mutual Understanding' curriculum initiative which preceded 'local and global citizenship' because the former focused on individual prejudice and did not refer to human rights principles. Whilst arguing that references to human rights 'as values' rather than as 'accountability mechanism' are problematic, McEvoy also observes that the focus on human rights is a powerful discourse through which to frame and address conflict, and thus is particularly significant in Northern Ireland.

The third dimension of powerful knowledge is not addressed explicitly, however, there are clear indications in this curriculum of the distinctive nature of citizenship knowledge and understanding. This is reflected, for example, in the requirement to study issues from a range of viewpoints, which helps to indicate how the more general skills of investigation, critical and flexible thinking, and creativity might be applied in the context of citizenship study. Taken together these indicate that multiple perspectives on the same issue are an essential element of thinking about citizenship, and that these are all equally valid ways to understand a problem. Such issues are further promoted in the key stage 4 non-statutory guidance (14-16 year olds) which specifies students should be encouraged to develop "a more critical and discriminatory response to the information they discover" and "identify and compare the values and viewpoints of self and others" (CCEA, undated b: 41). This is clearly important to democratic citizenship education in any context, but in Northern Ireland it provides an essential framework for understanding the social and political divisions which are still prevalent. However, as McEvoy points out, establishing an appropriate framework is not the same as ensuring all students will consider the distinctive legacy of the conflict within the context of a transitional society. This lack of explicitness leaves open the possibility that a 'culture of avoidance' will persist (McEvoy, 2007: 147).

4. Research Methods

After analysis of the curriculum documents the researchers identified two concepts which were relevant across both contexts: power and rights. In consultation with other teacher educators a series of accessible tasks was developed which could be completed by children at the end of primary school (10-11 years of age) and older children (up to 18 years of age). The tasks were designed as a stimulus to enable the participants to demonstrate their understanding of the two concepts. Following further consultation with teachers and a small pilot, some small amendments were made to the structure of the tasks and these tasks were used as the basis of classroom work for all children (see appendix). All the activities were completed in class time (generally during an hour lesson) and each respondent had their own hard copy of the activity pack to complete.

Ethical approval was gained in both universities and each head teacher was briefed on the project and provided institutional consent. Children were asked to complete the tasks in class, as a regular citizenship education activity, but were given the opportunity to withhold their work from the researcher if they did not want to share their thoughts on the tasks. None of the students took the opportunity to opt out of the research.

In each area one primary and one secondary school were recruited to the project, drawing on already established contacts. The only criteria used to filter schools was that they had to undertake some form of citizenship education in the curriculum. The project was very small scale and we were not constructing a sample which claimed to be representative in any way, but we have reported below the significant characteristics of the schools involved.

Ireland Participants

Multi-denominational, co-ed, Primary	16 respondents	11 years of age
Catholic, co-ed, Secondary school	24 respondents	14 years of age

Northern Ireland Participants

Integrated Primary School	31 respondents	10 years of age
Catholic Girls' Grammar School	17 respondents	14 years of age
	24 respondents	16 years of age
	8 respondents	18 years of age

Each researcher undertook an initial analysis of their data to identify broad patterns and types of responses evident across their sample. This analysis adopted an inductive process in which researchers read the responses closely with a view to identifying clusters of similar answers and trying to identify and describe some of the common characteristics of these responses. These initial ideas were compared at the beginning of a meeting convened to complete the analysis. During this meeting each researcher read through the complete set of responses from the other area and, having familiarised themselves with all the student data, the initial analyses were revisited and refined to identify discernible patterns. The categories and descriptions we have produced as a result of this process are designed to capture some the different ways in which students addressed the tasks, and some of the differences evident in the types of answers they provided. We did not code every response retrospectively against the categories we developed, and it is evident that several students' answers have characteristics that would meet aspects of several categories, so we do not want to suggest that these describe a child's level of attainment in some measurable or fixed sense. Rather we conceived of these categories as capturing something of the complex ways in which relatively simple tasks can reveal students' engagement with, and understanding of, these core citizenship concepts. As such the descriptors below are intended to function as a heuristic device, to enable teachers and student teachers to appreciate how one might think about students' understanding of power and rights and thus indicate some of the implications of taking knowledge seriously in CE.

5. Findings

5.1 Power

Having reviewed the students' responses about power there are some preliminary comments we want to make to set the scene for the analysis that follows. The first observation is that by and large the children and young people perceive that they are relatively powerless in school. Students and cleaners were generally identified as the least powerful people in the school, whilst head teachers and governors were seen as most powerful. To some extent this is perfectly understandable, and does indeed reflect the ways in which power is organised in schools. However, as the questions became more specific, and students were asked to think about what they could do to influence a decision, it was apparent that they did not feel as powerless as might be suggested by those initial responses. The specific situation, opening up the possibility of a specific set of responses, meant the students demonstrated a greater sense of agency than might be suggested by their general answers. This may be related to the context-specific nature of the problem, concerning as it did the re-development of the school grounds, where the students would rightly feel they were stakeholders. It is evident then, that despite feeling in general terms that they are powerless, this does not lead to

despondency about not being unable to influence decisions, in fact the respondents suggested a wide array of strategies and frequently demonstrated their expectation that they could influence the outcome. Perhaps the concrete framing of the question is important here both in gaining a reliable response about children's sense of their own power, and in teaching about power and promoting a greater sense of agency.

The second general observation to make is that we were struck by how few references the children and young people made to social media and on-line activism in their discussion of possible action. It is difficult to know whether this reflects the key messages they have picked up from their citizenship teaching to date, or whether this is genuinely a gap in their experience. Either way, in a climate where we often assume we are teaching 'digital natives' it is interesting to note how few of our respondents make the connection between on-line activity and everyday political problems and actions.

The third observation to make is about another absence, this time an absence of specific knowledge about citizenship and politics. Very few of the responses mentioned any formal processes or institutions outside of the school. The possible involvement of local authorities (Education and Library Boards in the North) was rarely mentioned, only a few vague references were made to politicians, and no-one mentioned planning permission processes. It is perhaps unsurprising that children and young people do not have such specific knowledge, but it is worth reflecting on this absence in the context of citizenship education. One of the strengths of the new citizenship education, as opposed to the old civics model, is that it focuses on processes, skills and analysis rather than focusing on knowledge acquisition. However, there are clearly times when some very specific knowledge is helpful to frame and understand a problem. In this instance, it is difficult to imagine how to organise a meaningful active citizenship campaign without thinking about how one would use the public planning process as a means to influence decision-makers and make one's views heard. We note this then as challenge for the teacher, to strike the right balance between creative problem solving, and the provision of appropriate technical knowledge to inform such processes.

A fourth observation relates to the contexts in which we collected the data. Here it is important to remember that the samples were very small, and so we cannot draw any significant conclusions about the differences between the North and South. However, it is worth noting that in Ireland builders and developers have been pilloried in public for a number of years in the wake of the economic crash, and therefore our scenario, focusing as it did on property developers, may well have provoked more animosity than it did in the North. This certainly seems to be reflected in the students' responses, which were more likely to be confrontational in the South, for example, strikes and direct action were more commonly suggested here, whilst petitions and letter writing were more common in the responses from the North. As we have already noted, this may reflect the peculiarities of the classes we involved, rather than any deeper attitudinal differences between populations, however, it struck us as we read the responses, and it is useful to bear in mind when considering the responses we discuss below.

In presenting the following analysis we have ordered the categories of response in what we take to be a broadly progressive order, which is to say that we start with the simpler and more basic responses and build towards increasingly sophisticated types of response. As our data does not track the same children over time, we cannot suggest that this series of steps describes individuals' development. Rather we offer it as a way for teachers to think about the different ways in which children may engage with the concept of power and in particular with the idea of citizens' power to undertake action and influence decisions. The purpose of these definitions is therefore to encourage

teachers to reflect on the nature of their students' understanding and to think about what other aspects might be helpfully addressed to further develop this.

I Pre-political thinking

Many of the younger children's responses re-defined the problem of other actors' motivations as simply a lack of knowledge about the situation. This enables them to side-step the political nature of the problem by failing to acknowledge the situation as one in which there is a confrontation between people with different interests (on the one hand the property developers wishing to develop part of the playground, and on the other the children who want to keep their playing space intact). Typically children responding in this category tended to assume that simply by vocalising their own preferences, this problem could be resolved. This was exemplified in comments such as "surely they can't [proceed with the building] once they know" (Irish, Secondary student) and "ask them nicely and say I am sorry but you can't" (Northern Irish, Primary student). It follows from this stance that action can be restricted to simply expressing one's view clearly, for example "telling the principal" (Irish, Primary student) or "tell them what we use it for, maybe it will change their minds" (Northern Irish, Primary student). Whilst some of these responses allude to political actions, such as voting, they lack any broader sense of how a vote would connect to a decision, for example one answer, "have a vote for the two sides to see what would happen because it's very fair," uses the concept of a vote but assumes that the outcome would follow automatically from the vote itself, rather than inform any subsequent action or decision-making process.

This kind of response was not only evident in the youngest students' responses, although it was more prevalent there. For some older students, the pre-political nature of their reasoning could sometimes be masked by a superficial veneer of citizenship knowledge, for example one student suggested an organised student occupation of the field, but his reasoning was "to show the builders how good we are (at) sport" (Irish, Secondary student). This clearly assumes that if the builders knew the fields had been put to good use, they would withdraw their attempt to develop the land. Similarly an older student suggested they could "draw up a plan of the school to show the effect of reducing the size of playgrounds" and that this was a good idea because it "would make it clear what the cost of selling really is" (Northern Irish, FE student). Here again the willingness to re-define alternative interests as ignorance prevents the student from developing a genuine political response, even though they are learning to apply some knowledge about forms of protest.

Other responses in this category assume the whole problem can be avoided by some alternative means, for example one student suggested the solution was to "find them a nice piece of land that nobody owns so they don't buy our land" (Northern Irish, Primary student). This acknowledges the developers have different interests, but it is nevertheless pre-political in the sense that it continues to sidestep the conflict of interests.

II Vicarious action

Some students preferred to defer to other, more powerful actors, to represent their interests and take the appropriate action. Such responses typically deferred to the teachers (even though these were not typically identified as having the most power in school), for example "Talk to the teachers about this, they could help you with stuff" (Northern Irish, Primary student). Some looked to others, such as "Beg the governor to tell them to go away" (Northern Irish, Primary student). Similar thinking is also evident among some of the older students' responses, for example one argued that students should "write a letter to the Principal / Board of Governors on behalf of pupils" in order to ensure "the senior staff will be alerted to the students' opposition" (Northern Irish, FE student). In some ways this type of response forms the basis for a more sophisticated form of indirect action, but these examples are still essentially pre-political because they tend to assume the mere act of talking

or requesting will result in the desired actions or outcomes. Neither the possibility of conflicting interests, nor the distinction between desire and outcome are acknowledged.

In these first two categories it seems that thinking about power is relatively undeveloped. If one refuses to acknowledge conflict, as the responses in category I do, then to a large extent the problem of power does not arise. If one passes the buck, as do our respondents in category II, then power is simply something that others have, and we do not.

IIIa Direct actions (politically naïve)

In the third category we place the bulk of responses which seriously explore actions which could be undertaken by individuals and groups to directly influence the outcome. These answers acknowledge the reality of different perceptions of the situation and different motivations, and therefore engage politically with the problem as a clash of interest.

Because of this acknowledgement of conflict, it seemed to us that some of these direct actions were not pre-political, although they were certainly politically naïve. In this category we place some of the responses which drew on children's direct experiences of getting their own way: "Shout and scream;" "Do cutesy eyes;" "I would pretend to cry;" and the ominous "Annoy them till they crack" (Northern Irish, Primary students). There is no doubt that for a ten year old, these direct actions may well be tried and tested methods for over-riding a relatively powerless position and securing the desired outcome from adults who ostensibly have more power. These children also exercise a more purposeful agency than we have seen in the first two categories. They know how to achieve change in a direct interpersonal exchange, although they do not draw on any established knowledge about citizenship and politics in order to do so. They are also limited by demonstrating thinking which only makes sense in the context of direct one to one relationships. Unlike parents, building developers can simply walk away!

IIIb Direct actions (politically literate)

Many of the respondents, especially in secondary school, were able to make what we might recognise as more overtly political recommendations for action which are more grounded in an understanding of the context. Some of these represented a more direct form of action to disrupt the plans of others, for example one student suggested "Chain myself to the fence" (Northern Irish 10 year old), whilst another argued they could "Camp on the fields to block the builders" (Irish 15 year old). These are building on traditions of direct action, and what distinguishes them from the politically naïve action is that they are indeed likely to have some effect. Blocking access by putting oneself at risk is likely to stop the builders, at least temporarily.

Other types of response that might be classified as politically literate action include petitions and letter writing that move beyond the simple assertion that these will clear up misunderstandings (category I) or that others will automatically do as requested (category II). One student proposed writing letters to governors, because "if enough people wrote… in a sense they would have to listen" (Northern Irish 16 year old). This indicates that students' power is represented by their numbers, rather than their individual voices, and this reflects a significant advance in understanding power in a democracy. Simply put, whilst a governor may officially have more power than a student, all the students standing together may have more effective power than the governors in a specific situation, despite the power officially invested in their role.

IV Chains of influence

Responses in the final category more completely acknowledge that others have their own reasons for pursuing courses of action, therefore action can be taken to change other actors' calculation of the benefits to accrue from such action. These responses also reflected the respondents'

understanding that coalition building can be adopted as a deliberate strategy. A typical example suggested students could "Get pupils and staff to write a letter to persuade the government" (Northern Irish 16 year old), whilst another made a similar point arguing that this would "show how strongly people feel about the idea, but not only young people, adults too" (Northern Irish 16 year old). These demonstrate how a student's best line of action to stop developers may not be to directly engage with the developers, but rather to enlist others who have greater power. This is reflected in another response: "Write a letter to all parents condemning what was happening. Parents… have the ultimate control over their kids, so they could pose a major threat if they are not happy, they could pull their kids from that school" (Northern Irish 18 year old). Such reasoning was further exemplified by the student who suggested "I could ask my parents to formally complain to the board of governors. The governors need pupils at the school so if people were threatening to pull their children out of school they would listen" (Northern Irish 16 year old).

These forms of coalition building are more sophisticated than those in category II because they start to unpick the mechanism through which such chains of influence work. This is even more evident in some of the alternative proposals, one of which suggested the following: "Protest – start petitions, rallies and public outcry… that would gain media attention. Negative media attention could affect the school's image negatively and may cause them to cancel the decision so as not to harm it further. Also it would encourage others who are not connected to school to protest and there is power in numbers" (Northern Irish 18 year old). Similarly another student suggested they could "Complain to governors and threaten to strike… there would be a lot of negative attention from the media and this would be bad for the board and the school reputation and so the governors do not want this to happen" (Northern Irish 16 year old). These responses demonstrate an even more sophisticated understanding of what we refer to as chains of influence. This can be demonstrated by laying out the indirect chain of influence proposed in these answers:

- Identify the powerful decision-makers: If a student wants to block a developer's access to their school land, then this can best be undertaken by identifying the people with the most obvious power to make the decision – in this case the school governors.
- Identify the key interests of those decision-makers: Students avoid the naïve assertion that once told, governors will want to do what children want them to, and these responses recognise a more likely motivation – governors' primary interest will be to protect the reputation of the school.
- Identify a factor that would affect those key interests: Negative media attention would threaten the school's reputation.
- Identify an action that would affect this factor in your favour: A strike or public protest would be likely to gain media coverage.
- Identify a realistic student action to achieve this: Therefore, threatening strike or public protest might have the effect of preventing the building from proceeding.

What these broad categories of response indicate is that the quality of a student's understanding of power, their own agency, and the potential of political action is reflected in their rationale for an action rather than the sophistication of a proposed action in itself. Students at every level suggested petitions, but the extent to which they understood how and why they might be appropriate varied greatly. Many older students continued to offer answers which, whilst more extended and better written, essentially avoided the political nature of conflict or simply passed the buck to other more 'powerful' people. Similarly, some of the younger students hinted at a more sophisticated understanding of why an action might be useful. Ultimately we would suggest a citizen undertaking any form of protest or direct action will need some viable model of how and why this is likely to result in the desired outcome, in the given context. This is what we take to constitute a politically literate response, and it is the reasoning revealed in such judgements that demonstrates the depth of understanding of their citizenship learning. Two of the key issues which seem to help here are an

awareness of the different bases of power and the specific motivations and interests of actors in a particular context. In relation to the former, a relatively small number of our respondents noted that power could derive from (i) one's role in an organisation (bureaucratic power), (ii) from an individual's qualities (charismatic power), (iii) through control of resources (economic power), or (iv) through a number of people coming together (democratic power). Understanding the various bases of power enabled students to suggest and explain a richer range of strategies which explored extended chains of influence and coalition building. These strategies also enabled students to start to think about influencing people in this particular context, rather than simply asserting generic one size fits all types of response (such as asking, telling, or cajoling someone to do what you want; or having a vote because it is fair). These answers could be suggested for almost any similar problem, whereas the more sophisticated responses are more firmly rooted in the specific problem.

5.2 Rights

In relation to the shorter activity on rights, it is useful to note that very few of the children and young people solved the problem in favour of the parents' religious preferences, and the vast majority decided that the child should receive the treatment. There was a wide variety of reasons for this, but it is in line with the judge's decision in the case on which this scenario was based.

Our second preliminary observation is that many children (especially younger ones) simply ignored our attempt to frame this as an issue of conflicting rights and engaged with it in more straightforward personal or ethical terms. The most significant finding then is that many children failed to engage with the concept of rights at all, and felt able to deal with the dilemma without recourse to rights language. This might indicate a challenge for teachers to demonstrate the relevance and usefulness of rights to think about problems. Perhaps an issue here is how one handles the relationship between a concrete and specific problem (should the child have the medical treatment or not?) and an abstract concept (different people have different rights). For many of the younger children, they felt able to solve the problem with common sense ideas of what is 'right' and therefore did not require the more general concept of 'rights' at all.

The third observation is that none of our respondents drew on specific terminology or concepts relating to human rights, such as the idea that some rights are absolute but most are qualified. None made the more general point that rights often clash and therefore need to be balanced in practice. And very few discussed the role of government, as distinct from individual responsibilities. These omissions indicate that there is some useful knowledge that would help to frame the problem, which students are not able to draw on.

To some extent, the students' willingness to deal with the issue as a straightforward ethical dilemma requiring a resolution, rather than only as an instance of clashing rights, reflects Kohlberg's earlier work on the development of moral reasoning. In his account the application of abstract principles to a problem is a later phase of moral reasoning, not attained by all adults. Critiques of his work have argued that pragmatic, empathetic, context-related solutions are actually potentially more useful and valuable forms of moral reasoning than the application of abstract principles and so we are intensely conscious here of the potentially controversial nature of implying some kind of hierarchy. Nevertheless, we have categorised the responses below to indicate some of the different ways in which this relatively straightforward task was interpreted and solved, and we have numbered them to imply some form of progression. This reflects the limited claim that our focus here is on students' ability to engage in rights-informed reasoning, because rights are an important aspect of citizenship education knowledge. This does not imply that some of the 'lower' responses are not morally valued, rather that they sidestep the invitation to consider the problem from a rights-perspective. To that extent, this represents a challenge to citizenship teachers.

I Simplification and avoidance of rights-talk

One strategy adopted by respondents to avoid talking about rights was to simplify and reinterpret the problem. Some examples included re-describing the dilemma as simply a clash of wills, or by dismissing the parents as unreasonably caring more about their religion than their own child. By dismissing matters of principle and asserting individual preferences, this problem is turned into an extreme version of an everyday clash between parent and child. Motivations can more easily be dismissed if they are mere 'preferences' (as opposed to statements of principle) and so such responses were able to resolve the situation simply by declaring the parents to be wrong or unreasonable, for example "… they love their religion more than their own child and that's not right" (Northern Irish 14 year old).

An alternative approach to simplification entails re-interpreting an opinion, so for one child the religious obstacle was removed by declaring "… I don't think that God wants anyone to suffer…"(Northern Irish 14 year old) therefore the parents are wrong. A similar strategy of re-definition is apparent when students assert the parents' religious rights, they also re-define the medical intervention as more risky than the scenario suggests, for example, one student wrote "he could die during the operation… let him keep the burnt skin" (Northern Irish 10 year old), which enabled the problem to be solved fairly easily – the child is likely to die so overriding the parents' wishes would mean everyone loses, whereas at least the parents could have their wishes respected.

II Pragmatic solutions

Some responses offered pragmatic solutions without re-defining the problem or denying the validity of the different beliefs and principles. These typically focused on the need to avoid suffering and pain, for example, "a child should not have to be put through pain or suffering" (Northern Irish 18 year old). Some also offered novel additional suggestions, such as "make sure that the blood is from a family member or a friend of the parents to keep them happy" (Northern Irish 14 year old). A smaller number explored other solutions such as "give the child the next best thing after the blood transfusion… because I don't want to offend their religion" (Irish 10 year old).

III One right trumps others

A common response was simply to assert that life trumped all other considerations. This was not always couched in rights language, but was generally asserted as a self-evident truth. Some children simply generalise their own opinion and therefore place themselves as the moral arbiter "a healthy child is more important to me" (Irish 10 year old), whereas others make a similar assertion within a rights-based argument, for example "everyone has the right to life… the government has to do what's best for the child" (Northern Irish 16 year old).

To deal with the problem of clashing rights some students made their comparative reasoning overt "someone's life is worth more than a rule in religion" (Irish 10 year old); "the life of their child should come before any religious beliefs…" (Northern Irish 16 year old); "religious beliefs should be respected, just not when it is a matter of life or death" (Northern Irish 14 year old). Such answers prioritised the right to life over the right to pursue religious beliefs.

A very small number of students also asserted a right we had not explicitly addressed in our resources – the child's right to choose, or at least to be consulted (Article 12, UNCRC). Here students reacted against the idea that adults should compete to make a decision affecting the life of the child. One of the more developed examples of this approach specified that for a child below the age of ten the treatment should proceed, but over that age the child should be free to choose, including the right to choose to die if they shared their parents' religious beliefs (Irish 15 year old).

IV Rights reasoning

There is a subtle distinction between categories III and IV, but we felt that it was useful to try to indicate the difference because in the final category we place attempts to discuss competing rights within a rights based argument. This is clearly fairly challenging, especially as students did not have access to precise language and concepts which would help them with this. Nevertheless, one student we consider to be trying to do this argued that the principle of the best interests of the child was paramount and this leads to the conclusion that life was in their best interests (Northern Irish 18 year old). This is subtly different from simply asserting that life is more important than religion, because the justification is not dependent on what is ethically right, rather it draws on an aspect of the human rights framework. Similarly another student argued "the UNCRC states governments should do everything possible for the survival and development of a child… parents have the right to provide guidance and bring them up in a religious group, but the child should also have a say and the parents can only provide guidance" (Northern Irish 16 year old). Here the decision to prioritise the right to life is justified through broader children's rights principles, and through a close reading of the competing rights, not simply by asserting one right over another. It seems significant that these answers attempt to work within a rights-based argument without access to the knowledge that the best interests of the child and the right to life are two of the four 'general principles' guiding the interpretation of the other articles in the UNCRC.

So, in relation to rights there are some broad conclusions to reiterate in relation to the quality of students' responses. The first point is that there is a tendency for some students not to see the relevance of rights as a framework, and to resort to simple assertions of what is 'right' in solving an ethical dilemma. This tension between 'the right', and 'rights' may usefully be addressed if we want to promote human rights as a relevant framework for understanding difficult situations and for thinking about how to construct solutions. Rights may be challenging because they are abstract, but we may need to think more critically about the relationship between rights and other competing abstract concepts, such as fairness. When thinking about rights, students are often attempting to balance rights and find ways to prioritise some rights over others, but this is difficult without access to some fairly basic concepts such as limited and absolute rights, UNCRC articles and general principles. In effect it feels as though the students are having to invent their own way to interpret rights, rather than being able to draw on the associated concepts and precedents that would help them do this.

Conclusions

The research project set out to explore how young people engage with and understand core concepts in citizenship education. By identifying two examples of power and rights we have illustrated how an inductive qualitative analysis of student work may yield a provisional model for thinking about how students understand these concepts. As already stated, we see this project as a proof of concept to some extent, to test out whether this approach yields useful outcomes for those involved in citizenship teacher education. Whilst we are careful to describe the levels we have outlined as a heuristic device, we believe this is useful because it offers teachers an example of how they can plan for progression in conceptual development, and how they might approach the task of providing diagnostic feedback to students. Whilst we have arranged the categories into numbered levels, and thus imply some linear form of progression, we also recognise that in some regards these simply represent different aspects of thinking about power or rights. We acknowledge, for example, that some students will exemplify politically literate individual action (level IIIb) at a very sophisticated level, whilst others might demonstrate a relatively basic understanding of their role in extended chains of influence (level IV), and we are not claiming that one must be seen as more advanced than the other. The challenge for the teacher is to understand the characteristics of a student's thinking and to help them extend their understanding by prompting them to consider

alternative or additional perspectives. In devising tools to achieve this, this project demonstrates that there is some benefit in starting with students' own work and reflecting on this, as a complementary approach to more established ways of thinking about these concepts, for example by borrowing from social and political theory, where such concepts are well developed. We feel therefore that this provisional analysis from a small sample yields a useful starting point for citizenship teacher educators, and suggests this is a fruitful area for further exploration, both in terms of broadening out the range of concepts explored, and in developing more sophisticated research strategies to capture students' thinking beyond their short written responses to tasks. Further work will explore the value of focused conversations and transcription to encourage greater depth and exploration in students' responses.

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Appendix – Research Tasks

Power
Activity 1 – Who has power?

In your school there are lots of people. They are all part of the same school but they are also different. They have different work to do. They also have different power to make things happen.

Look at the set of cards and organise them in order, with the most powerful people at the top and the least powerful people at the bottom. Write down the people in order on this sheet. You can put more than one person in the same place. If we've missed someone out in the cards you can write them down.

Then for your top choice explain why you think they are the most powerful person. And for your bottom choice, explain why they have the least power. Pick one person who seems to be in the middle and explain why you placed them there.

Most powerful

I put this person at the top because _____

_____

_____

_____

I put this person in the middle because _____

_____

_____

_____

Least powerful

I put this person at the bottom because _____

_____

_____

_____

Head teacher	School-keeper / Premises Officer
Class teacher	Cleaner
Parent	Student
Governor	Learning Support Assistant
Lunch time Supervisor	Secretary

Power
Activity 2 – A situation

Imagine your school has been invited to sell half of the playground or playing fields to a company that wants to build a block of flats on the land.

Who do you think <u>should</u> be involved in making the decision?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Who would have the <u>most</u> power to influence the decision?

_____

Why do you think they would have more power than others?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Who would have the <u>least</u> power to influence the decision?

_____

Why do you think they would have less power than others?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Power
Activity 3 – How much power would you have?

Imagine this situation was really happening, and a company really did want to buy half the playground or playing fields from your school.

Do you think you would support this idea?

_____

What could you do to try to influence the decision?
Try to think of at least 2 actions you could undertake that would influence the decision.

Action 1 _____

_____

_____

_____

Why do you think this is a good idea? _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Action 2 _____

_____

_____

_____

Why do you think this is a good idea? _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Rights
Activity

The situation
A child has burned themselves badly in an accident and the doctors decide the best treatment is a skin graft (moving some normal skin to replace the burned skin). This requires a blood transfusion (giving the child blood from someone else to replace blood they lose during the operation).

The problem
Normally doctors need to ask parents for permission to carry out any medical treatment. In this case the child's parents follow a religion which does not allow blood transfusions. Because of their religion the parents will not give the doctors permission to carry out the operation. The doctors have asked a judge for permission to go against the parents' wishes and give the child a skin graft operation and a blood transfusion.

Your challenge
Imagine you are the judge and you have to decide the right answer to this problem. Your assistants have told you that there are some important rights involved in this case (see the information sheet). Before you make the decision, read the information sheet and think about why this is such a difficult decision for you to make.

Why is this difficult? _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

What is your decision? _____

_____

What are your reasons for this decision? _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Continue on the back if you need more space

Rights
Information sheet

Here are some of the rights that are relevant to this problem. Some are from the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) which applies to all children up to the age of 18 years. The others are from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) which applies to everyone.

The Right to Life

Article 3 (UDHR)
Everyone has the right to life.

Article 6 (UNCRC)
1. Every child has the right to life.
2. Governments should do everything possible for the survival and development of the child.

The best interests of the child

Article 3 (UNCRC)
The best interests of the child must be the primary concern when adults make decisions that affect children.

Religious freedom

Article 14 (UNCRC)
1. Children have the right to think and believe what they want and to practise their religion.
2. Parents have the right to provide guidance to children and bring them up in a religious group.

Article 18 (UDHR)
Everyone has the right to think and believe what they want and to practise their religion.