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**Virtues, values and the fracturing of civic and moral virtue in Citizenship education
policy in England**

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Abstract

This paper analyses the fracturing of civic and moral virtue within curricular policies pertaining to Citizenship in England since the late 1990s. A longstanding aim of education and schooling, the teaching of citizenship gained a more secure base in the English curriculum with the introduction of Citizenship as a statutory subject for 11-16 years olds from 2002, which owed a great deal to the *Report of the Advisory Group on Education for Citizenship and the Teaching of Democracy in Schools* (Crick Report). The report drew intimate connections between civic virtue, moral virtue, and personal character. These connections have become seriously fractured over the years since the Crick Report. In charting this fracturing, the paper will examine how the character-influenced direction taken in the early/mid-2000s was replaced by, at first, a more general emphasis on British Values before morphing into a more specific, though no less problematic, concentration on Fundamental British Values. While character education has gained significant policy attention in England over the last 6 years, the civic dimensions have been at best underplayed, with little connection to education for citizenship. It is argued that without greater clarity and consistency about the how the moral – including moral virtues – intersects with the civic in contemporary Britain, official curricular policy (whether for Citizenship education, character education or more generally) will restrict rather than encourage the education of young citizens who are informed, wise, responsible and active participants in their communities.

Key Words

Citizenship education, civic virtues, moral virtues, character education, British values

Introduction

This paper examines the fluctuating levels of attention paid to civic and moral virtue within official curricular policies pertaining to Citizenship education¹ in England in the period since 2002. A longstanding, though not necessarily deeply implemented, general aim of English education and schooling, the need to attend to education's role in cultivating young citizens gained a more focused and secure base in the English curriculum with the introduction of Citizenship as a statutory foundation subject for 11-16 years olds from 2002. The introduction of this "new" subject owed a great deal to the highly influential *Report of the Advisory Group on Education for Citizenship and the Teaching of Democracy in Schools* (QCA, 1998), known commonly (and hereafter) as the Crick Report after the Group's chair (later Sir) Bernard Crick². The new subject was predicated, in large part, on addressing the lack of attention paid to preparing young people for citizenship in schools. Indeed, and following previous reports and academic studies (see, for example, Crick and Porter, 1978; NCC, 1990; Morrell, 1991), the Crick Report itself drew attention to the fact that for most of the twentieth century education for citizenship within state schools had remained an 'unfulfilled expectation' (QCA, 1998: 8, 1.6). According to Derek Heater, education for citizenship in the twentieth century had been defined by a 'tradition of feeble hesitancy' (Heater, 2004: 98). Similarly, Terence McLaughlin (2000: 544) argued that official approaches to citizenship education during this period were characterised by their 'diffuse and uncoordinated' nature, while David Kerr (1999: 204) noted

¹ For the purposes of this paper we use the term Citizenship education when referring to the specific National Curriculum subject, and the term citizenship education when referring to the more general educational processes and activities (which may include school ethos, extra-curricular activities, cross-curricular teaching and so on).

² Crick himself was a highly esteemed political philosopher. Indeed, his role as Chair of the cross-Advisory Group owed a great deal to the fact that Crick had lectured the then Secretary of State for Education and Employment, David Blunkett, during the latter's undergraduate degree in Political Theory and Institutions at the University of Sheffield.

that, prior to the Crick Report, the majority of guidance followed the pattern of ‘noble intentions, which are then turned into general pronouncements, which, in turn, become minimal guidance for schools’³.

A central and significant feature of the advent of the new subject was to foreground *civic virtue* and to draw intimate connections between civic virtue, moral virtue and personal character. As the analysis offered here suggests, however, these connections have become seriously fractured over the years since the publication of the Crick Report – so fractured in fact that citizenship education and character education are today treated in policy as largely separate concerns and endeavours. The academic context is also one in of contestation regarding the proper relationship between citizenship education and character education (Jerome and Kisby, 2019; Peterson, 2020; Kristjánsson, 2021).

The aims of this paper are to consider how civic and moral character were closely associated in the Crick Report, how this connection was fractured by several “turns” towards alternative framings of the moral dimensions of citizenship, and how this fracturing remains problematic today in the context of Fundamental British Values, the marginalisation of Citizenship education, and governmental interest in character education. In light of the analysis offered, the paper concludes that any meaningful form of education for citizenship must reconcile the civic with the moral. In pursuit of these aims the paper comprises three sections. The first section examines the close connection between moral and civic character as expressed within key policy documents and accompanying discussions in the late 1990s and early 2000s that shaped the introduction of Citizenship education into the National Curriculum for English state secondary schools in 2002. In the second section the turn away from character towards more general British values is explored in the context of a revised Citizenship curriculum positioned by government to respond to several societal concerns, including divided communities and radicalisation.

³ For more detailed work on the history of education for citizenship in England throughout the twentieth century, see Batho, 1990; Carr and Harnett, 1996; Kerr, 1999; Davies, 1994, 1999a, 1999b; Davies *et al*, 1999; Heater 2001; 2004; Clarke, 2007.

The third section charts the movement from shared British values to the promotion of Fundamental British Values since 2010 in order to suggest that through this process the moral dimensions of Citizenship education have become even more confused, contentious and obscured. In the fourth section policy interest in character education over the last seven years is considered, and it is argued that such interest has represented something of a lost opportunity to recapture the close relationship between moral and civic character. The analysis offered in this paper is timely given (1) the continuing presence of Citizenship education as a national curriculum subject, and ongoing tensions about its quality and extent in schools; (2) the controversial and contested duty on schools in England to promote Fundamental British Values; (3) the recent focus on character education in English educational policy; and, (4) recent criticisms of character education that have criticised its lack of political focus and which treat virtues, civic or otherwise, in largely critical terms. More broadly, it remains the case that given that citizenship, and by extension citizenship education, remains an essentially contested concept there is a need for greater clarity, not least so that educators can direct their efforts in forming young citizens appropriately. As Heater (1990: 316) wrote over three decades ago, ‘the teacher cannot possibly be expected to prepare young people for adult life as citizens without a complete and agreed understanding of what that status entails’.

Conjoining civic and moral virtue: The Advisory Group and the Citizenship Order

Most, if not all, analysis of education for citizenship in England over the last twenty years has made reference to a greater or lesser degree to the *Report of the Advisory Group on Education for Citizenship and the Teaching of Democracy in Schools* (The Crick Report; QCA, 1998). Echoing the wider commitment of the, then, newly elected Labour government to broadly communitarian ideas (Hale, 2006; Dunn & Burton, 2011), the connection between civic and moral character was central to the terms of reference of the Advisory Group. These terms, often overlooked in the extant literature, were: ‘To provide advice on effective education for citizenship in schools – to include the nature and practices of participation in democracy; the duties, responsibilities and rights of individuals as citizens; and the value to individuals and society of community activity (QCA, 1998: 4)’. Most immediately, so far as England is

concerned, the recommendations of the Report led to a statutory order for the inclusion of Citizenship education as a compulsory foundation subject within the revised National Curriculum in English state secondary schools for teaching from September 2002. While the programmes of study for Citizenship as Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 were deliberately ‘light touch’, there was an explicit intention that the Crick Report and the programmes of study ‘must be read together’ (Crick, 2000: 119).

Close reading of the Crick Report highlights not only that civic virtue formed a central focus, but also that civic virtue and moral virtue were cast as essentially connected. Though the Crick Report (and indeed at times Crick himself) used values and virtues somewhat interchangeably – and here it should be noted that in educational discourse throughout the 1990s and 2000s the concept of values was used far more commonly – it is clear that the Advisory Group had in mind an education that would cultivate in young people the disposition to play an active, responsible and informed part within political communities. Indeed, and of importance to the analysis we develop in later sections, the attention paid to moral and civic virtues within the Crick Report was predicated on the desire (not least of Crick himself) to avoid a form of political learning limited to studying key facts about the constitution and political institutions. In other words, the stated aim of the Report throughout – namely, active citizenship – was conceived, and could only be fully understood as involving, an intimate relationship between the civic and the moral basis of political participation and, in turn, of membership of political communities. Indeed, this coalescing of the civic and moral represented a widening of the political literacy approach Crick himself had advocated previously, most notably in the *Programme for Political Education* in the 1970s. In the preface to his *Essays on Citizenship*, Crick (2000: x) reflected that:

‘political education and political literacy’ was too narrow in the 1970s.

‘Citizenship’ conveys better than ‘political education’ the ancient tradition, long before the democratic era, of active participative inhabitants of a state exercising both rights and duties for the common good, whether in official or voluntary public arenas.

Crick (2002) also extolled this commitment to the deep relationship between the moral *and* civic dimensions of participatory citizenship in the mainstream press. Writing in *The Independent*, for example, he argued that ‘teachers... need to have a sense of mission about the new subject, to grasp the fullness of its moral and social aims’. Here, Crick drew attention to a statement cited in the Crick Report from academic David Hargreaves, who in order to reinforce the connection between political and moral engagement had argued in the *Demos* pamphlet, *The Mosaic of Learning* (1994), that ‘civic education is about the civic virtues and decent behaviour that adults wish to see in young people’. In the same piece, Crick also restated the importance of viewing the three strands of citizenship education the Report had set out – social and moral responsibility, political literacy, and community involvement – as ‘related’ and ‘mutually dependent’. In doing so, he made explicit mention of the fact that learning social and moral responsibility involved ‘children learning from the very beginning *socially responsible behaviour and personal character* both in and beyond the classroom’ (emphasis added).

Notwithstanding the position of some advocates of education for citizenship who wanted to differentiate, and even separate, the new subject from the more personally focused Personal, Social and Health Education (see, for example, Kerr and Cleaver, 2004; Calvert and Clemitshaw, 2003; Adams, 2005), the Crick Report and again Crick himself were clear about the crucial and intimate connections between personal character and civic virtue. Explaining the connection between moral and civic participation, Crick (2000: 9) argued that ‘exercising “real responsibility” is the best school of moral life and an essential condition for each individual’s free action to be compatible with, indeed enhanced by, those of others’. Reiterating the importance of experiential forms of learning, Crick (2000: 124; emphasis added) also contended that ‘moral values must surely arise from experiences if they are to enter a *person’s character* so that they as if instinctively influence behaviour’. The Crick Report itself had made clear that ‘moral values and personal development are the preconditions of citizenship’ (QCA, 1998: 11). The stance adopted, and which informed the light touch curriculum content of the Citizenship Order, was therefore one that understood citizenship as embodied not just by participation but by a sense of responsibility to oneself, to others and to the common good. In his *Essays on Citizenship*, Crick contended that (2000: 125-126) ‘you can put the word responsibility into a good long list of moral and civic concepts to be learned’, also suggesting

that there are ‘three parts to both moral and political responsibility: care for others, premeditation and calculation about what effect actions are likely to have on others, and understanding of and care for the consequences’. As such, the framing was one that understood civic and moral virtue to be central to citizenship and, by extension, to citizenship education. In other words, and to conclude this section, the vision of citizenship extolled was founded on and shaped by the personal, social and political character of citizens.

Cracks Appear: The turn to “British” Values and the neglect of virtue

Despite the centrality of civic and moral character to the vision of citizenship education in the Crick Report, and indeed the more general interest in character education that began under the Labour government in this period (Arthur, 2005), the concepts of virtue and character failed to gain traction. In the early- to mid-2000s a number of factors coalesced to shift the focus of citizenship education away from an emphasis on civic virtues. To understand how attention to civic virtue, moral virtue and character in official policy discourse on and about citizenship education in England in the mid-2000s waned, we need to understand first the wider shift in the political discourse on citizenship.

This shift was one through which attention on citizenship became increasingly animated by, and directed towards, heightened concerns about a (real or perceived) lack of social cohesion in England and the wider United Kingdom. As a result, broader government discourse, most (though not all) academic discussion on citizenship education, and educational policy in Citizenship education moved some distance away from notions of civil renewal, civic responsibilities and civic participation in communities, turning instead towards the need/desire to foster “British values” and a sense of community cohesion. Such concerns about the lack of social cohesion and unifying values were brought about by several key events, including: the series of riots in several northern English towns (Oldham, Burnley and Bradford) in 2001; the recommendations of two leading reports on multiculturalism (Parekh, 2000) and social cohesion (Cantle, 2001) in the UK; the terrorist attacks in London on 7th July 2005; the (albeit limited) rise in support for the far-right British National Party in the early 2000s; and, concerns

about whether the process of devolution would lead to the break-up of the United Kingdom (including what impact this might have on English identity).

In regard to wider public policy, the move to British values and community cohesion as core concerns of and for citizenship was driven by interest of key members of Labour governments between 1997 and 2010– including Gordon Brown (initially as Chancellor of the Exchequer and then, from 2007, as Prime Minister), Jack Straw (as Home Secretary, Foreign Secretary, Leader of the Commons, and Justice Secretary) and Alan Johnson (as Secretary of State for Education and Skills) – who argued that the idea of shared British values could sit alongside giving due acknowledgement and respect to plural, multicultural identities. In 2000, Home Secretary, Jack Straw (2000) spoke of the importance of revitalising ‘enduring British values’, while in 2007 as leader of the Commons he called for the development of a ‘British story’ to foster citizenship (BBC, 2007a). In one of a range of speeches on citizenship and identity, not long before becoming Leader of the Labour Party and Prime Minister, Gordon Brown (2006) contended that:

Britishness is not just an academic debate—something for the historians, just for the commentators, just for the so-called chattering classes. Indeed in a recent poll, as many as half of British people said they were worried that if we do not promote Britishness we run a real risk of having a divided society [...]

And I believe that out of a debate, hopefully leading to a broad consensus about what Britishness means, flows a rich agenda for change: a new constitutional settlement, an explicit definition of citizenship, a renewal of civil society, a rebuilding of our local government and a better balance between diversity and integration.

As Brown's words here suggest, while notions of renewing civil society through civic participation remained – and indeed remained a core focus for other key figures in the Labour governments of the time (most notably Tony Blair and David Blunkett) – notions of Britishness and national identity increasingly dominated official discourse about citizenship. Importantly, the increased framing of citizenship as fundamentally about *national identity* and developing a *commitment to shared British values* had an important implications pertinent to the overall arguments we are making about Citizenship education. One important implication in particular was that, and apart from certain figures such as David Blunkett, key government discourses, papers and reports on citizenship made no or little explicit reference to civic and/or moral virtues (see, for example, Cabinet Office, 2007; Goldsmith, 2008). As such, the core principle that citizen *virtue* was the means through which a commitment to one's communities and fellow citizens could manifest became replaced and compromised in favour of the promotion of a list of shared, national *values*, such as tolerance, freedom and democracy, around which cohesion could be forged. In turn, educational discourse and policymaking, including that regarding Citizenship education, became similarly directed towards matters of identity and shared values. Indeed, during this period, education was identified as a key site, not only for helping children to explore their identities, but to do so in a way that cultivated a commitment to British values. Speaking in 2007, then Secretary of State for Education, Alan Johnson, argued that 'We must teach children about our shared British heritage while fostering an understanding of our cultural diversity and the uniqueness of our individual identity' (Garner, 2007). Commissioned by the government to explore how diversity and citizenship were being, and could be, taught in schools, the *Curriculum Review: Diversity and Citizenship* (known commonly as the Ajebo Review (DfES, 2007)) found the quality of education for diversity in schools to be 'uneven', with some school leaders and teachers lacking the clarity and confidence needed. In addition, the Review found links with the community to be 'often tenuous or non-existent' (DfES, 2007: 6), and also that:

The term 'British' means different things to different people. In addition, identities are typically constructed as multiple and plural. Throughout our consultations, concerns were expressed, however, about defining 'Britishness', about the term's divisiveness and how it can be used to exclude others.

Amid concerns about the lack of shared values being educated in schools in line with the shift in wider government rhetoric on citizenship, and on the recommendation of the Ajebo Review, the revised statutory curriculum for Citizenship education in 2007 included a new strand entitled *Identity and Diversity: Living Together in the UK*. Commenting positively on the Review, Alan Johnson (BBC, 2007b) argued that:

More can be done to strengthen the curriculum so that pupils are taught more explicitly about why British values of tolerance and respect prevail in society and how our national, regional, religious and ethnic identities have developed over time [...] I believe that schools can and should play a leading role in creating greater community cohesion. The values our children learn at school will shape the kind of country Britain becomes.

The revised curriculum for Citizenship included ‘identities and diversity: living together in the UK’ as one of three key concepts (QCA, 2007: 43). At Key Stage 4, this concept included four elements:

- a Appreciating that identities are complex, can change over time and are informed by different understandings of what it means to be a citizen in the UK.
- b Exploring the diverse national, regional, ethnic and religious cultures, groups and communities in the UK and the connections between them.
- c Considering the interconnections between the UK and the rest of Europe and the wider world.
- d Exploring community cohesion and the different forces that bring about change in communities over time.

The last of these four elements connected explicitly the revised curriculum for Citizenship with the new statutory duty on maintained schools in England to promote community cohesion following the Education and Inspections Act (2006).

To be clear, our argument is not to suggest that there was no interest in virtues. Rather, and in contrast to understanding virtues as fundamentally concerned with the moral and civic *character* of citizens as the Crick Report had, when they did receive brief mention, virtues were cast as something external and as akin to values associated with living in the United Kingdom and sharing a sense of British identity (for example, valuing the virtue of tolerance). Writing in 2008, Crick (2008: 36) offered the following reflection on then Prime Minister Gordon Brown's commitment to "Britishness":

So Britishness must express 'a shared purpose' and 'shared goals'? And he wants this to be taught in 'the new citizenship curriculum' [...] such language is like that of the old-fashioned nationalism of central Europe between the two World Wars. But it is really how states hold together, especially in the modern world of, whether we like it or not, a global economy and of all notions of national sovereignty needing to be so qualified as to be almost useless in understand actual politics. I do not believe in overriding national purpose 'purpose' (sic), rather I believe in behaviour – decent civic behaviour to each other as common citizens.

Moreover, and while there must always be room for discussion and flexibility in defining values, there was a sense that the government were overly vague so far as what actually constituted Britishness was concerned and undecided whether these values could actually be

taught, with the then Minister of State for Schools and Learning, Jim Knight (BBC, 2007c) stating that ‘the values of being British as we define them for ourselves can't be taught’ and that citizens should ‘be proud of your country but define Britishness for yourself’.

The extent of the shift in direction from virtues to national values is highlighted further by the fact that a large literature review of citizenship education written in 2004 by David Kerr and Elizabeth Cleaver of the *National Foundation for Education Research* as part of the Department for Education and Skills funded 10-year Citizenship Educational Longitudinal Study made no reference to ‘shared values’, ‘Britishness’, ‘British identity’, or to ‘national identity’. By 2007 circumstances had been reversed. Though by no means the only example, an illustrative case in point is the Report of an Inquiry into Citizenship Education undertaken by the House of Commons Education and Skills Committee (House of Commons, 2007). Running to more than 350 pages in total and including evidence from a range of witnesses questioned as part of the inquiry, the Report includes scant mention of the concepts of virtue or character, and no references at all to moral virtue or civic virtue. In fact, the only explicit attention paid to the terms character, character education and virtue is found in the witness evidence provided by the then Most Reverend Vincent Nicholls, Archbishop of Birmingham and Chairman of the Catholic Education Service (evidence, not cited directly in the main sections of the Report). In contrast, the terms British, British identity and British values receive numerous and sustained attention.

In understanding the shift from moral and civic virtue to identity/ies and national values we should not lose sight also that at this time (and in contrast to today, as is explored latter in this paper) the concepts of character and virtue were not ones common within English educational circles. Policy documents, whether at governmental or school-based levels, favoured the more common and indirect, though much less specific, concept of ‘values’ to the more complex concept of ‘virtues’. As will be explained in the next section, the language of values was to be cemented and entrenched further by the move from discussion around British values to *Fundamental British Values*.

Deepening the divide: the turn to “Fundamental” British values

While the moral focus of Citizenship education in the mid-2000s shifted towards British values, the period of the Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition government (2010-2015) and of successive Conservative governments since (2015-2017, 2017-2019, 2019-today) has been shaped increasingly by concerns about violent extremism and radicalisation, including the connections to the Prevent strategy, one of the four strands of the wider Contest counter-terrorism strategy⁴. While Prevent was introduced in the post 9/11 climate by the Labour government in 2003, various policy measures post-2010 served to intensify its impact on education and schooling in England. In June 2014 the Coalition government stated its intention to ‘create and enforce a clear and rigorous expectation on all schools to promote the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect, and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs’ (Wintour, 2014). Strengthening the focus on Fundamental British Values further, in November 2014 the Department for Education (DFE, 2014a: 5) advised that schools must ‘promote’ Fundamental British Values as part of their provision for pupils’ Social, Moral, Spiritual and Cultural education, specifying that schools ‘should promote the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs’. The Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 placed a duty on a range of public organisations, including schools, to have ‘due regard to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism’ (DfE, 2015: 3), a measure that has provoked considerable academic debate and concern (Revell and Bryan, 2018; Busher, Choudhury and Thomas, 2020; Lewis, 2020). Non-statutory advice to schools and childcare providers published at the time made clear that ‘it is essential that staff are able to identify children who may be vulnerable to radicalisation, and know what to do when they are identified’ (DfE, 2015: 5). The advice also suggested that ‘schools and childcare providers can also build pupils’ resilience to radicalisation by promoting fundamental British values and enabling them to challenge extremist views’ (5).

Though not representing a complete departure from Labour’s commitment to teaching British values, two important differences can be identified (Peterson, 2018). First, the general commitment to British values as broadly determined but open to (re)shaping through dialogue

⁴ The other three strategies which comprise Contest are Pursue, Protect and Prepare.

and including diverse perspectives was replaced by a set of non-negotiable *Fundamental* British values. Rather than being open to interpretation, Fundamental British Values run the very real risk of promoting a static and fixed set of national values that underplay the extent to which any set of national values are shaped and adapted over time and which fail to acknowledge the educational need to explore issues and ideas in within the national context. The second was the direct link between promoting Fundamental British Values in schools and wider policies in other government departments, most notably the Home Office, focused on counteracting radicalisation and violent extremism. This direct link was consolidated through the list of Fundamental British Values to be promoted and monitored in schools being taken directly from the Prevent strategy. Crucially, in moving away from a more generalised sense of British values, the turn to Fundamental British Values served to further divide any connections between Citizenship education and civic and moral virtues. Indeed, the Casey Review (DCLG, 2016) of *Opportunity and Integration* in the United Kingdom critiqued the narrowing of British values, arguing instead for a return to a more general approach focused on developing a shared sense of British values:

The promotion of British laws, history and values within the core curriculum in all schools would help build integration, tolerance, citizenship and resilience in our children. **More weight should be attached to a British Values focus and syllabus in developing teaching skills and assessing schools performance.**

(DCLG, 2016: 168; emphasis in original)

While the promotion of Fundamental British Values as manifested in government education policy certainly paid some attention to the idea of shared values, the benefit of such common ground was positioned predominantly with regard to the need for protecting and promoting British values as a way of preventing radicalisation with, once again, education and schooling playing a key role. However, and alongside this, whereas the Citizenship curriculum was the key driver (at least in intention if not in reality) for the teaching of British values in the period between 2007 and 2010, three inter-related factors impacted on the place and role of Citizenship education as a vehicle for teaching pupils the given ethical dimensions of

citizenship – including civic and moral virtues. The first was that the requirement for schools to promote Fundamental British Values was not unreasonably located as a whole-school responsibility, combining pastoral care, safeguarding, and Social, Moral, Spiritual and Cultural education (SMSC). While Citizenship education *could* provide a role in this regard, it was not identified in policy as a core driver of, and mechanism for, engaging pupils in discussion about the ethical dimensions of citizenship. That this has been so impacts on how Fundamental British Values and Citizenship relate, including the way that values are framed. As Starkey (2018: 160) has suggested, the ‘tension between FBVs and Citizenship reflects the political debate as to whether the struggle against terrorism requires discussion of political options rather than the closing of space for considering identities and diversity’.

This latter reflection explicitly suggests different pedagogical intentions, intimating a second factor – the (re)positioning of teachers (whether desired or not) to a reconstituted role based on surveillance over and above pedagogy. A number of studies have highlighted the tensions faced by teachers in implementing Prevent, including the problems they identify with both the policy itself and the duty to promote Fundamental British Values (Bryan, 2017; Revell and Bryan, 2018; Vincent, 2019; Lewis, 2020). For example, Busher, Choudhury and Thomas (2020: 38) report that teachers in their study ‘expressed concern that [the] framing of values played into societal narratives of exclusion, superiority, fixed cultural boundaries and a them-and-us politics’. Some respondents in this study eschewed the adjective “British” altogether. The third factor was that, in the period since 2010 the teaching of Citizenship education in many English schools has remained limited and narrow (Moorse, 2015), a trend not helped by the narrowly drawn revised National Curriculum for Citizenship that has been in place since 2013 (DfE, 2013) and which makes no reference at all to the concepts ‘moral’, ‘values’, ‘character’ or ‘virtues’. Markedly, a House of Lords Select Committee on Citizenship and Civic Engagement report (2018: 123) recommended that ‘the Government should stop using the term Fundamental British Values and instead should use the term Shared Values of British Citizenship’. In addition, the Committee recommended that the promotion of such shared values should be distinct and detached from counter-extremism policy. Significantly for our analysis here, the report also called for a ‘statutory entitlement to citizenship education from primary to the end of secondary education’ refraining that ‘the Government has allowed citizenship education in England to degrade to a parlous state. The decline of the subject must be addressed in its totality as a matter of urgency’ (124). In their

response, the Government (MoHC&LG, 2018: 2) stated that it ‘would not be revising the regulations and guidance to remove references to the term fundamental British values’. With regard to Citizenship education, the response was to deny the serious issues concerning how the subject was approached and taught in English schools, asserting instead that schools could choose to prepare pupils for citizenship in a range of ways – including through the promotion of Fundamental British Values.

The turn to character: A (so far) lost opportunity

Since 2014 character education has been subject to a great deal of policy interest within government education policy in England (as well as, though to a lesser extent, within the education policies of the Labour party, see for example Hunt, 2014; Arthur, 2019). During their time as Secretary of State for Education, both Nicky Morgan (2014-2016) and Damian Hinds (2018-2019) advocated strongly for the importance of character education in English schools. In 2019 the Department for Education (2019: 4) published non-statutory guidance to schools on character education and development, setting out six character benchmarks that ‘summarise the most important features of good provision for character education’. Furthermore, OfSTED’s (2019) revised *Education Inspection Framework* included explicit reference to schools developing pupils’ character within the wider area of Personal Development. While some references have been made to citizenship, civic-mindedness and civic participation within government policy in relation to character education, such references are few and far between. Indeed, there has been a notable absence of a well-developed focus on the civic dimensions of character more generally, and on the civic virtues required by citizens more specifically. Too often, meaningful connections between character education and Citizenship education have been underplayed or, worse, neglected altogether. Instead, priority has been placed on perceived character “strengths”, such as resilience and determination, that while referencing the importance of helping others, focus mainly on overcoming difficulty, having ambition, and attaining success (see, for example, DfE, 2014). Though such strengths may be of value, they are not in and of themselves specifically civic in orientation or value – a point routinely highlighted by critics of character education (Suissa, 2015; Jerome and Kisby, 2019).

Interestingly, however, several critics of the direction taken by government policy in this area seek not a return to a language of moral and civic virtue or a reconciling of character and citizenship, but rather a move away from character towards forms of citizenship education in which the moral dimensions are more narrowly drawn and in which political literacy is at the fore. To an extent, the preoccupation with what is often narrowly construed as “the political” represents a longstanding concern that when policies and curricula for citizenship education rest firmly on morals, values and virtues the curriculum becomes depoliticised (Frazer, 2003; Starkey, 2018). Such a view is short-sighted to the extent that it delimits the political and demarcates the political and the moral, missing the fundamental connections between moral virtues and civic virtues captured so well in the Crick Report and its accompanying justifications. While further areas of discussion about the precise nature of moral virtues and civic virtues will always manifest, the absence of policy attention to the at least general connection is stark and notable. In addition, and with some notable exceptions (MacMullen, 2015; Barton and Ho, 2020) it remains the case that academic literature on citizenship education often lacks a clear narrative and framing of civic virtues, resulting in somewhat disjointed and inconsistent usage.

These latter points made, a critic might ask why the moral dimension of Citizenship education is needed at all or, even if that claim can be satisfied, why character and citizenship education should be conjoined (in other words, why they should not be separate endeavours operating alongside each other). There is not space here to respond to such criticisms, and it remains the case that there are too few conceptual and empirical studies that examine the relation between the moral and the civic in Citizenship education in England. In addition, our broad argument is that there has been, and remains, insufficient attention to the fracturing of the moral and civic in educational policy in England so far as Citizenship education is concerned. However, this said, at least some preliminary justifications for the interest we are suggesting should be the case are needed before we draw our analysis to a close.

In line with existing literature in this area, we contend that there are compelling reasons for drawing a closer relationship between character and citizenship education than is presently the case in England. To fail to recognise the relation between moral and civic character is to fail to capture, in their fullest and various forms, the connections that tie citizens to each other and

which, in turn, act to motivate them to come together in joint effort for the common good. It is civic character that enables young people to develop the sense of purpose and intent so important to meaningful political engagement and which, in turn, helps them to understand and reflect upon their connections with others. Crucially, the personal characteristics of citizens – whether they are kind, compassionate, just, honest, trustworthy, civil and so on – act as necessary preconditions of, and for, citizenship – as the Crick Report made clear. In the context of the inconsistent and variously directed approaches to the moral dimensions of Citizenship education since the mid-2000s, the current policy context is one that serves to obfuscate this connection between moral and civic character rather than clarify it for educators.

Conclusion

As previous analyses of citizenship education in England and elsewhere have also suggested (for example, Munn and Arnott, 2009; Davies and Chong, 2015; Moorse, 2020), differing political contexts and priorities have often impacted on the moral dimensions of Citizenship education. Though the extent of this impact, particularly how it has played out at the level of individual schools, is complex (in truth too complex to detail in full extent in this paper), it is clear that the interests of different governments have played an important role in determining and shaping the moral directions of Citizenship education, and more recently the civic dimensions (or lack thereof) of character education. However, the shifting, often unclear, and at times contentious approaches taken post-Crick have failed to offer much aside from conceptual ambiguity. In this paper we have charted how the very idea of the citizen as a participatory member of their communities, and of Citizenship education as concerned with forming core moral and civic virtues needed for such participation, became side-lined and replaced by a focus on national values, whether driven by a search for shared British values or a desire to promote a static list of Fundamental British Values. The shift involved is a significant one so far as conceptualising what it means to be a citizen in the UK today means and, in turn, in mediating the shape and direction of education in forming informed, responsible and active citizens. Various features of life in contemporary Britain involve some form or other of relationship between the moral and the civic, and it would be difficult to envisage how young people (or indeed citizens more generally) might actually engage in discussing and working with others in order to address matters of concern to themselves and their communities,

including addressing social injustices without *both* moral and civic virtues (Arthur, Kristjánsson, and Vogler, 2021). Indeed, the current UK context demands attention is paid to *both* the moral and political dimensions of persistent injustices that pervade communities, marginalise groups, and render problematic the fostering of stable and cohesive communities.

It is important to note too, as we have intimated at several points, that the impact of shifting trajectories at policy levels has not helped, nor in turn been helped by, the continued marginalisation and lack of priority paid to Citizenship education as a curricular subject in English schools. This marginalisation includes the lack of government commitment since 2010 to teacher education and professional development for Citizenship education. While many state schools in England are no longer legally required to follow its provisions, the National Curriculum still carries force offering (when constructed well) an important frame of reference for teachers in terms of thinking through the aims, scope and content of the curriculum in schools, including making core concepts explicit. Without greater clarity and consistency about how the moral – including moral virtues – intersects with the civic in contemporary Britain, official curricular policy (whether for Citizenship education, character education or more generally) will restrict rather than encourage the education of young citizens who are informed, wise, responsible and active participants in their communities. This separation of the civic and the moral renders policy for Citizenship education, and for citizenship education more widely, as returning to the ambiguity and neglect that characterised much of the twentieth century.

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