



## Citizenship education in Northern Ireland - An opportunity not yet realised?

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## Citizenship education in Northern Ireland – An opportunity not yet realised?

### 1. Purpose

One of the core purposes of education is to empower young people to become informed citizens, ready and committed to play their part in society. Whilst many aspects of the post-primary Northern Ireland Curriculum (NIC) contribute to this, the introduction of Local and Global Citizenship in 2007 (which we will shorten here to Citizenship education) was specifically aimed at enabling young people to gain the knowledge, understanding and skills “to participate positively in society ... influence democratic processes ... [and] make informed and responsible decisions as local and global citizens throughout their lives”.<sup>1,2</sup> In addition, an optional GCSE in Learning for Life and Work (LLW)<sup>3</sup> is available in which Citizenship education is a component.

The hope was that the introduction of Citizenship education would help to foster a more peaceful, tolerant and socially cohesive society in Northern Ireland after the dark years of ‘the Troubles’. However, 15 years after Citizenship education became a statutory curriculum requirement, it remains a subject about which little is known, there is limited shared understanding or commitment to its purpose, teachers generally favour teaching the ‘global’ aspects over the potentially more contentious ‘local’ dimensions and, in a recent survey of 16 year olds in Northern Ireland, 24% reported they had not had *any* “classes or assemblies, done projects or had class discussions” on the “NI conflict”.<sup>4</sup> It would seem, therefore, that Citizenship education is in a poor state of health and, as division between the two main communities continues to permeate everyday life in Northern Ireland, this deficit in school learning related to the “NI conflict” leaves potentially partisan narratives unchallenged and wider society unchanged.

The purpose of this briefing paper is to provide a succinct overview of Citizenship education in Northern Ireland and discuss the opportunities and challenges associated with this. The paper concludes with recommendations on how to recalibrate Citizenship education to realise its transformative potential.

### 2. Introduction

In conflict-affected and divided societies, education is widely recognised as having the potential to positively influence the promotion of cohesive values and aid reconciliation and peacebuilding processes.<sup>5</sup> Education can contribute to the development of democratic pluralistic societies by developing an understanding of human rights, an appreciation of how society and the law work, and of how to (legitimately) influence policy-making.<sup>6</sup> In countries emerging from conflict, the school curriculum<sup>7</sup> is considered an important channel through which transformative learning can occur as students explore their different experiences of conflict<sup>8,9</sup> and transition to a more peaceful society.

<sup>1</sup> CCEA <https://ceea.org.uk/key-stage-3/curriculum/learning-life-work/local-global-citizenship>

<sup>2</sup> CCEA <https://ceea.org.uk/key-stages-1-2/curriculum/personal-development-mutual-understanding-for-how-citizenship-is-addressed-in-the-primary-nic>

<sup>3</sup> CCEA <https://ceea.org.uk/learning-life-and-work>

<sup>4</sup> Smith, A., O'Connor, U., Bates, J., and Milliken, M. (2019) Citizenship Practices and Political Literacy in Young People, *Research Update* <https://www.ark.ac.uk/ARK/sites/default/files/2019-09/update129.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Bush, K., and Saltarelli, D. (Eds.) (2000) *The Two Faces of Education in Ethnic Conflict*. Florence: UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre.

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, the work of Dewey, J. (1916) *Democracy and Education*. New York: Macmillan.

<sup>7</sup> For additional areas of education which can contribute to “social repair” including integrated schooling - see Weinstein, H.M., Warshauer, S and Hughson, H. (2007) ‘School Voices: Challenges Facing Education Systems after Identity-based Conflicts’, *Education, Citizenship and Social Justice*, 2(1), pp 41–71

<sup>8</sup> Bush, K., and Saltarelli, D. (Eds.) (2000).

<sup>9</sup> Smith, A. and Vaux, T. (2003) *Education, Conflict, and International Development*. London: Department of International Development.

In 1989, The Education Reform Order (Northern Ireland)<sup>10</sup> ushered in Northern Ireland's first statutory curriculum, creating the opportunity for the conflict and societal division to be explored in schools. With the introduction of Education for Mutual Understanding (EMU) *all* schools had a statutory obligation to promote community relations<sup>11</sup> even in the midst of 'the Troubles'. Yet in spite of this worthy curriculum development, EMU failed to live up to its aspirations.<sup>12</sup> A review of EMU attributed its limited impact to the cross-curricular nature of the initiative and skirting around the conflict and related issues including, for example, human rights and equality.<sup>13</sup>

Structural changes have also been introduced in Northern Ireland in an attempt to address issues of societal division and to promote diversity, for example, the setting up of Integrated schools and provision for Irish Medium schools. The importance of encouraging cross-community contact<sup>14</sup> in an otherwise overwhelmingly segregated system of education has been a key element in many of these initiatives and underpins both Shared and Integrated Education.<sup>15</sup>

Citizenship education offers a different approach. It is essentially a curriculum-based initiative, designed to provide a statutory learning opportunity for *all* young people, regardless of which type of school they attend, to develop a deeper understanding of how the past has influenced society today and how they can play their part in shaping the future of Northern Ireland.

### 3. The origins of Northern Ireland's Citizenship programme

By the late 1990s Northern Ireland was buoyed by optimism and hope for the future, brought about by the signing of the Good Friday/Belfast Agreement. Those who dared to dream of 'root and branch' reform of the education system<sup>16</sup> saw an opportunity to address the limitations of EMU and "to reinvigorate the social contribution of the curriculum to the promotion of reconciliation and tolerance".<sup>17</sup>

The Northern Ireland Curriculum (NIC), introduced in all post-primary schools from September 2007, was, in essence, a new curriculum for a new century and reflected the vision of a 'shared future' for Northern Ireland where education can help create a "culture of tolerance".<sup>18</sup>

The NIC aims "to empower young people to achieve their potential and to make informed and responsible decisions throughout their lives" as "an individual, as a contributor to society, and as a contributor to the economy and the environment".<sup>19</sup> *Every* teacher regardless of their subject specialism has a responsibility to promote the values of good relations through cross-curricular themes (or "key elements") such as "mutual understanding", "cultural understanding" and "citizenship".<sup>20</sup>

Significant changes to address societal division were also made to 'traditional' subjects such as History in the expectation that, by the end of their compulsory study of History at the age of 14, all pupils will have learned about "the long and short term causes and consequences of the partition of Ireland and how it has influenced Northern Ireland today..."<sup>21</sup> and have had the opportunity to "investigate how history has been selectively interpreted to create stereotypical perceptions and to justify views and actions..."<sup>22</sup> The Religious Education curriculum also includes consideration of "how choices are made and influence... prejudice, sectarianism and reconciliation" as well as the opportunity to study "World Religions".<sup>23</sup> Arguably, the most radical curriculum change was the introduction of Citizenship education which brought Northern Ireland into line with wider educational trends<sup>24</sup> and aimed to help young people to explore the causes and consequences of division and difference.

### 4. The challenge of developing a Citizenship education programme in Northern Ireland

The earlier introduction of Citizenship education into the National Curriculum in England<sup>25</sup> and the Junior Certificate Curriculum in the Republic of Ireland<sup>26</sup> provided rich reference points for those working to design a 'Made in Northern Ireland' Citizenship education programme which reflected the complexities of Northern Ireland's society and met the needs (and wishes) of young people. Notwithstanding the power-sharing arrangements and the cessation of most of the political violence, the introduction of a Citizenship education programme was not without problems,<sup>27</sup> not least the challenge of developing an appropriate approach in a society where there was "no agreed concept of a 'citizen'"<sup>28</sup> and "where the existence of differing political loyalties and identities presents its own challenges".<sup>29</sup>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisi/1989/2406/article/1/made>

<sup>11</sup> Gallagher, T. (2003) 'Education and Equality in Northern Ireland', in O. Hargie and D. Dickson (Eds) *Researching the Troubles: Social Science Perspectives on the Conflict*, pp 59-83. Edinburgh: Mainstream.

<sup>12</sup> McEvoy, L., McEvoy, K., and McConnachie, K. (2006) 'Reconciliation as a Dirty Word: Conflict, Community Relations and Education in Northern Ireland', *Journal of International Affairs*, 60(1), pp 81-106.

<sup>13</sup> Smith, A., and Robinson, A. (1996) *Education for Mutual Understanding: The Initial Statutory Years*. Coleraine: University of Ulster.

<sup>14</sup> Allport, G.W. (1954) *The Nature of Prejudice*. Cambridge, MA: Addison-Wesley.

<sup>15</sup> Milliken, M. (2021) *Same Difference? Shared Education and Integrated Education*. Transforming Education Paper #13

<sup>16</sup> Gardner, J. (2016) 'Education in Northern Ireland Since the Good Friday Agreement: Kabuki Theatre Meets Danse Macabre', *Oxford Review of Education*, 42(3), pp. 346-361.

<sup>17</sup> Gallagher, T. (2005) 'Balancing Difference and the Common Good: Lessons from a Post-Conflict Society', *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*, 35(4), pp. 429-442, p. 437

<sup>18</sup> Department of Education in Northern Ireland (1999a) *Towards a Culture of Tolerance: Education for Diversity* (report of a Working Group on the Strategic Promotion of Education for Northern Ireland). Bangor, Department of Education for Northern Ireland.

<sup>19</sup> <https://ccea.org.uk/about/what-we-do/curriculum/curriculum-aim-and-objectives>

<sup>20</sup> <https://ccea.org.uk/downloads/docs/ccea-asset/Curriculum/The%20Statutory%20Curriculum%20at%20Key%20Stage%203.pdf>

<sup>21</sup> <https://ccea.org.uk/downloads/docs/ccea-asset/Curriculum/Statutory%20Requirements%20for%20History%20at%20Key%20Stage%203.pdf>

<sup>22</sup> <https://ccea.org.uk/downloads/docs/ccea-asset/Curriculum/Statutory%20Requirements%20for%20History%20at%20Key%20Stage%203.pdf>

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/de/religious-education-core-syllabus-english-version.pdf>

<sup>24</sup> Eurydice Citizenship Education in Europe (2012) [https://ec.europa.eu/citizenship/pdf/citizenship\\_education\\_in\\_europe\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/citizenship/pdf/citizenship_education_in_europe_en.pdf)

<sup>25</sup> Crick, B. (1998) *Education for Citizenship Teaching and the Teaching of Democracy in Schools* <https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/4385/1/crickreport1998.pdf>

<sup>26</sup> The introduction of Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE) became mandatory within the junior cycle (Years 9-11) in 1997.

<sup>27</sup> McEvoy, L. (2007) 'Beneath the Rhetoric: Policy Approximation and Citizenship Education in Northern Ireland', *Education, Citizenship and Social Justice*, 2(2), pp. 135-157.

<sup>28</sup> Arlow, M. (2002) 'The Challenges of Social Inclusion in Northern Ireland: Citizenship and Life Skills.' In *Curriculum Change and Social Inclusion: Perspectives from the Baltic and Scandinavian Countries; Final Report of the Regional Seminar Held in Vilnius, Lithuania, 5-8 December 2001*, edited by S. Tawil, 38-43. Geneva: UNESCO International Bureau of Education.

<sup>29</sup> Niens, U., O'Connor, U. and Smith, A. (2009) (2009) *Evaluation of the Pilot Introduction of Education for Local and Global Citizenship into the revised NI Curriculum - Final Summary Report*. UNESCO Centre, Ulster University, p. 4.

#### 4.1 A rights and responsibilities based approach

To increase acceptability, for example, to parents and politicians, a narrower concept of citizenship<sup>30</sup> was side-stepped in favour of promoting the notion of 'universal citizens' and an emphasis on human rights and responsibilities.<sup>31</sup> This approach very much aligned with the rights-based focus which characterised the Good Friday/Belfast Agreement and allowed for the establishment of the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission and the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland. In taking this approach, the aspiration was "that concepts of citizenship based on rights and responsibilities may make it more difficult to mobilise political conflict around identity issues".<sup>32</sup> In addition, this new subject was given the title Local and Global Citizenship and aimed to address the new 'local' realities of Northern Ireland as a society emerging from conflict, as well as meet the 'global' challenges of living in the 21st century and developing the identity of young people as "cosmopolitan citizens".<sup>33</sup>

#### 4.2 The 'what' of Citizenship education

The curriculum for Local and Global Citizenship is built around four inter-related concepts: diversity and inclusion; human rights and social responsibility; equality and social justice and democracy and active participation. Table 1 below provides an overview of the issues to be explored within each theme.

**Table 1 - An overview of the Citizenship curriculum**<sup>34</sup>

Key Concepts	Overview of statutory content
<b>Diversity and Inclusion</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Factors that influence individual and group identity</li> <li>• Ways in which individuals and groups express their identity</li> <li>• How and why conflict, including prejudice, stereotyping, sectarianism and racism, may arise in the community</li> <li>• Ways of managing conflict and promoting community relations [and] reconciliation</li> </ul>
<b>Human Rights and Social Responsibility</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why it is important to uphold human rights standards in modern democratic societies, including meeting basic needs, protecting individuals and groups of people</li> <li>• Key human rights principles</li> <li>• Why different rights must be limited or balanced in our society</li> <li>• Local and global scenarios where human rights have been seriously infringed</li> </ul>
<b>Equality and Social Justice</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How inequalities can arise in a society, including how and why some people may experience inequality or discrimination on the basis of their group identity</li> <li>• How and why some people may experience inequality/social exclusion on the basis of their material circumstances in local and global contexts</li> <li>• The work of intergovernmental, governmental and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) which aim to promote equality and social justice</li> </ul>
<b>Democracy and Active Participation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The basic characteristics of democracy</li> <li>• Various ways to participate in school and society</li> <li>• Why rules and laws are needed, how they are enforced and how breaches of the law affect the community</li> <li>• Investigate an issue from a range of viewpoints and suggest action that might be taken to improve or resolve the situation</li> </ul>

Experiencing 'democracy in action' in school life has been shown to impact positively on future civic engagement.<sup>35</sup> Schools are also encouraged to provide opportunities for young people to develop the skills and the confidence to experience and participate in small-scale democratic settings such as debates, mock elections and developing school councils<sup>36</sup> which "allow for them to engage authentically in matters that are meaningful to them", as well as have opportunities to contribute "to decision making about the curriculum and learning".<sup>37</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Similar to the conceptualisation of citizenship in England.

<sup>31</sup> Smith, A. (2003) pp. 15-31.

<sup>32</sup> Smith, A. (2003), p. 25.

<sup>33</sup> Nussbaum, M. (2002) 'Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism', in J. Cohen (Ed.) *For Love of Country*, Boston, MA: Beacon Press, pp. 2-17.

<sup>34</sup> <https://ccea.org.uk/downloads/docs/ccea-asset/Curriculum/Statutory%20Requirements%20for%20Local%20and%20Global%20Citizenship%20at%20Key%20Stage%203.pdf>

<sup>35</sup> Schulz et al (2017)

<sup>36</sup> Department of Education (2014) Circular: Pupil Participation 2014/14 <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/de/2014-14-pupil-participation.pdf>

<sup>37</sup> Education and Training Inspectorate (2018) Chief Inspector's Report Bangor: ETI [https://www.eti.gov.uk/sites/etini.gov.uk/files/publications/cir-2016-2018\\_1.pdf](https://www.eti.gov.uk/sites/etini.gov.uk/files/publications/cir-2016-2018_1.pdf), p. 32

### 4.3 The ‘how’ of Citizenship education

In view of the contested nature of Citizenship, an investigative approach of relevant, contemporary issues is promoted to help young people develop the capacity to critically engage with the society in which they live, as well as the wider world. No longer is it the role of a teacher to transmit knowledge to passive pupils. Rather:

**“Local and Global Citizenship is intended to be open-ended; it is not about teaching students what to think and do, but how to think and do”.**<sup>38</sup>

In the Citizenship classroom there are many questions, but few right answers.<sup>39</sup> The contested nature of the curriculum content, the lack of definitive answers and the challenge of changing roles in the classroom for both teachers and students can lead to teacher anxiety. Yet, it is in this uncomfortable space<sup>40</sup> where potentially transformative learning can take place - a space where young people can learn from teachers *and* from each other how to respond constructively when they encounter views or perspectives which may challenge their deeply held values. This is a highly important process in developing young peoples’ democratic values<sup>41</sup> and capacity for peacebuilding.<sup>42</sup> This space helps young people learn to listen, respect and understand difference and strengthen a democratic culture, thus making them more critically aware of their own positions, more able to think for themselves and potentially more resilient to biased stories about ‘the past’ that they may hear outside school - it is in this way that education can be transformative.<sup>43</sup>

### 4.4 Initial in-service training

Citizenship education was not only a ‘new’ subject for teachers to get to grips with but, because some of the concepts on which it was based could be perceived as being inherently contested, additional training was essential.

Between 2002 and 2007 an extensive development and support package of £25 million<sup>44</sup> was put in place underlining the priority given to Citizenship education at this time. Citizenship Officers were appointed by the Education and Library Boards (ELBs) and every post-primary school was offered seven days training for up to five teachers over three years. In addition, a suite of teaching and learning materials was produced by ELBs, CCEA and a number of non-governmental organisations to support teachers as they took the tentative steps into this new curriculum area.

With hindsight, it could be argued that the fundamental aspects of the Citizenship implementation plan were too flexible from the outset. For example, firstly, the allocation of training places was left to the discretion of individual schools, with the result that those teachers who were trained included a mix of willing ‘volunteers’ and reluctant ‘conscripts’ from many different subject backgrounds.<sup>45</sup> Secondly, school leaders were also given the autonomy to decide how Citizenship would be provided for within the curriculum at their school. As a result of this flexibility, Citizenship has been taught in a range of ways across different schools.<sup>46</sup> While some teach it as a stand-alone subject with dedicated timetable space the majority of schools offer a modular approach within LLW.

Early evaluations of the implementation of Citizenship in schools were generally positive, greatly aided by the CCEA and the ELB’s high-quality training programme,<sup>47</sup> which increased the confidence and capacity of teachers to, for example, use active teaching strategies and teach controversial issues as they began to implement the Citizenship curriculum.<sup>48</sup> An independent evaluation of the development and implementation of Citizenship in 2009 also found it to be “a good example of carefully crafted, conceptually sound, evidence-based curriculum development and the effective management of change”.<sup>49</sup> However, evaluation reports also identified “ongoing concerns”, particularly regarding “sustainability”,<sup>50</sup> and research undertaken a decade later concluded that:

**“In spite of initial substantial financial investment, the profile and status of LGC has diminished considerably”.**<sup>51</sup>

It would seem that while Citizenship education had been introduced into the school curriculum, it was neither deeply embedded nor, in many cases, valued.

<sup>38</sup> Arlow, M. (2004) ‘Citizenship Education in a Divided Society’, in S. Tawil and A. Harley (Eds) *Education, Conflict and Social Cohesion*, pp 255-313. Geneva: UNESCO International Bureau of Education. p. 285.

<sup>39</sup> CCEA (2015) Local and Global Citizenship Resource [http://www.nicurriculum.org.uk/curriculum\\_microsite/local\\_global\\_citizenship/units\\_123.asp](http://www.nicurriculum.org.uk/curriculum_microsite/local_global_citizenship/units_123.asp)

<sup>40</sup> See Boler’s work on ‘Pedagogy of Discomfort’ in Boler, M. (1999) *Feeling Power: Emotions and Education*. New York: Routledge.

<sup>41</sup> Hess, D. (2009) *Controversy in the Classroom. The Democratic Power of Discussion*. New York/London: Routledge.

<sup>42</sup> McCully, A. (2012) ‘History Teaching, Conflict and the Legacy of the Past’, *Education, Citizenship and Social Justice*, 7(2), pp. 145-159.

<sup>43</sup> Zembylas, M. (2013) ‘Critical Pedagogy and Emotion: Working Through ‘Troubled Knowledge’ in Posttraumatic Contexts’, *Critical Studies in Education*, 54(2), pp. 176-189, p. 178.

<sup>44</sup> O’Connor, U., Anderson Worden, E., Bates, J., and Gstrein, V. (2019) ‘Lessons Learned from 10 years of Citizenship Education in Northern Ireland: A Critical Analysis of Curriculum Change’, *Curriculum Journal*, 31(3), pp. 479-494.

<sup>45</sup> O’Connor et al. (2019).

<sup>46</sup> Schulz, W., Ainley, J., Fraillon, J., Losito, B., Agrusti, G., Friedman, T. (2017) *Becoming Citizens in a Changing World: IEA International Civic and Citizenship Education Study 2016 International Report* (November 2017)

<https://www.iea.nl/publications/study-reports/international-reports-iea-studies/becoming-citizens-changing-world> Research on ICCS countries indicate that different approaches to Citizenship education coexist in many education systems.

<sup>47</sup> Education and Training Inspectorate (2006) *Report on the Introduction of Local and Global Citizenship at Key Stage 3 in a Sample of Post-Primary Schools*. Bangor: ETI.

<sup>48</sup> Niens, U. and O’Connor, U. (2006) *Local and Global Citizenship at Key Stage 3: Preliminary Evaluation Findings*. Belfast: CCEA.

<sup>49</sup> Niens et al. (2009) p. 13.

<sup>50</sup> Niens et al. (2009) p. 13.

<sup>51</sup> O’Connor et al. (2019) p. 481.

## 5. The problems facing Citizenship education today

Why has Citizenship education, on which so much time and money was spent and which initially held out such high hopes for transformation, ended up in such a poor state? The fact that multiple, valid reasons can be offered is, in itself, testament to the 'state of play' of Citizenship education in many schools today. 'Problem areas' have been categorised under two main headings, however, there is considerable interplay between these areas illustrating the complexity of Citizenship education in Northern Ireland.

### 5.1 The teaching of Citizenship is itself a controversial issue

Issues are considered controversial if they elicit strong differences in opinions,<sup>52</sup> therefore, there is the potential to investigate controversial issues in almost all subjects. In Religious Education, for example, issues which cause controversy may include discussions related to abortion, end of life, same sex marriage and women clergy; in Geography, issues may relate to aid and trade, migration and the intensification of agriculture, while in Science, evolution and creationism are topics which can be found under the banner of 'controversial issues'.

It follows that *all* teachers must be able to create the conditions which encourage young people to share their own views and positions - even if they are unpalatable to some. This is particularly important in Citizenship as young people have repeatedly said that they want to learn about conflict-related issues at school<sup>53</sup> - such as equality, sectarianism, politics, cultural identities, parading, unresolved legacy issues and commemorations. Teachers must also expose students to alternative views and opinions (particularly those which they may not hear outside the classroom), encourage reflection on how they view others, challenge them to think why 'others' in society hold different views and build respect for 'them'. The Citizenship classroom needs to be about "frank discussion" rather than "promoting political correctness".<sup>54</sup> It is not about changing minds; it is about opening minds and nurturing the next generation of young people to be empowered and confident in who they are and their positions while respecting and understanding difference.

In view of the contested nature of Northern Ireland - where the crux of controversy often lies with issues that run deep and help to define 'who you are' and which are inextricably linked with a sense of belonging<sup>55</sup> based on loyalties and allegiances - it is understandable and natural that these issues have the potential to evoke powerful emotional responses. It is this emotional element which distinguishes 'local' controversial issues from other sensitive, contemporary controversial matters.

Even for experienced teachers, the teaching of controversial issues is challenging.<sup>56</sup> Despite Education Authority (EA) support for teacher professional learning on sensitive and controversial issues for teachers involved in Shared Education Partnerships, and also of wider Community Relations Equality and Diversity support, a recent report by the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) noted that teachers "did not have the confidence and skills needed to handle sensitive and controversial issues".<sup>57</sup>

#### Teacher avoidance

As reflected in the subject title, both 'local' and 'global' dimensions of the Citizenship curriculum are meant to be given comparable attention. However, the flexibility provided in the curriculum for teachers to decide what to teach has created a 'local' loophole to avoid potentially controversial conflict-related issues, in favour of the safer 'global' landscape. This preference for avoiding potentially contentious local issues is borne out by feedback from young people surveyed about a range of citizenship-related topics explored in school. The highest outcome of 77% was given to learning about "global poverty".<sup>58</sup> Whilst it is important that poverty and global citizenship-related issues are explored it should not be at the expense of helping young people understand 'local' aspects of the Citizenship curriculum, such as "how and why conflict, including prejudice, stereotyping, sectarianism and racism may arise in the community" and provide opportunities for young people to investigate ways of managing conflict and promoting community relations, [and] reconciliation".<sup>59</sup>

#### Social silence

Seamus Heaney's poem, 'whatever you say, say nothing'<sup>60</sup> captures the long-embedded culture of avoidance in Northern Ireland when it comes to talking (or, in this case, not talking) about anything conflict-related. Regardless of the peace process, many people have grown up during the conflict and, in its wake, still find it difficult to discuss issues related to division and difference - teachers are no exception.

<sup>52</sup> Stradling, R. (1985) 'Controversial Issues in the Curriculum', *Bulletin of Environmental Education*, 170, pp. 9-13.

<sup>53</sup> See for example McGill, C., Smith, A., and Hamber, B. (2009) *The Role of Education in Reconciliation: The Perspectives of Children and Young People in Bosnia and Herzegovina and NI*. Coleraine: UNESCO Centre, School of Education, University of Ulster; Bell, J., Hansson, U., and McCaffery, N. (2010) *The Troubles Aren't History Yet - Young People's Understanding of the Past*. Belfast, NI: Community Relations Council; NICCY (2018) <https://www.niccy.org/about-us/our-current-work/statement-on-childrens-rights-in-ni-2/statement-on-childrens-rights-in-northern-ireland/>

<sup>54</sup> Arlow, M. (2004) p. 285.

<sup>55</sup> Oulton, C, Dillon, J and Grace, M. M. (2004) 'Reconceptualising the Teaching of Controversial Issues', *International Journal of Science Education*, 26 (4):pp. 411-423.

<sup>56</sup> Wasserman, J. (2011) 'Learning About Controversial Issues in School History: The Experiences of Learners in KwaZulu-Natal School', *Journal of Natal and Zulu History*, 29, pp131-157.

<sup>57</sup> Education and Training Inspectorate (2018) *The Shared Education Signature Project Evaluation Report*. Bangor: ETI <https://www.eti.gov.uk/sites/etini.gov.uk/files/publications/shared-education-signature-project-evaluation-report.pdf>

<sup>58</sup> Smith, A., O'Connor, U., Bates, J., and Milliken, M. (2019)

<sup>59</sup> CCEA <https://ccea.org.uk/downloads/docs/ccea-asset/Curriculum/Statutory%20Requirements%20for%20Local%20and%20Global%20Citizenship%20at%20Key%20Stage%203.pdf>

<sup>60</sup> Heaney, S (2001) *Whatever You Say, Say Nothing*. North London: Faber and Faber.



### Fear from within the classroom

In spite of the potentially transformative rewards for pupils and society through engaging with the social and emotional dimensions of learning, the natural default position for many teachers in the Citizenship classroom is to avoid controversy and 'keep the peace'. For these teachers (who would not intentionally introduce a controversial issue of this nature into the classroom) the response is often to stonewall students; they shut down the conversation for fear that it might get out of control<sup>61</sup> rather than use it as a teaching/learning moment. This avoidance of controversial issues in the classroom means that learning opportunities "to discuss and make sense of 'the past' are limited".<sup>62</sup>

### Fear from beyond the classroom

Often the teaching of controversial issues related to Northern Ireland's past can be constrained by fears and worries that emanate from beyond the classroom. The oft quoted "no man is an island" also applies to schools, as they cannot and should not be separated from the wider community within which they are situated.<sup>63</sup> Teachers are often concerned about how parents and the wider community may react to what topics are (or are not) being taught and the teaching approaches and resources used. These fears can weigh heavily on teacher decision-making, influencing both what they choose to teach and how they teach it, often resulting in avoidance of certain issues or, at the very least, a more tentative approach. It is for this reason that teachers who continue to put their head above the parapet despite such pressures are deemed to be "risk takers".<sup>64</sup>

### Fear of possible pupil resistance

Exploring difference is difficult but it is particularly so in a divided society like Northern Ireland that experienced 30 years of violent conflict and community trauma. Whilst Northern Ireland has been coined a post-conflict society, young people are growing up in what continues to be a deeply fractured society and are often exposed to division through "transgenerational legacies"<sup>65</sup> and community-based narratives within which "much of what young people know and think about 'the Troubles' is established prior to any formal learning".<sup>66</sup> The segregation of housing, communities and the education system itself means that many young people remain steeped in the 'us-and-them' discourse of division. It is in this context that the transmission of stereotypical conceptions, biases and myths to younger generations keeps 'the past' still very much part of the present. This ensures that pupils do not enter the classroom as "blank slates"<sup>67</sup> but rather as a mosaic of pre-conditioned influences and unquestioned views. This informal learning outside the classroom can pose problems in the classroom and "there may be strong pupil resistance to any attempts to encourage them to view their world through a different lens"<sup>68</sup> - for many, their young minds are made up, regardless of the classroom experience.

As one teacher explains:

**"The reality for a lot of my pupils is [that] they are so in the mould of their parents and their communities before their formative years, before they are 12, 13, 14 and it's very hard to try and bring them back".<sup>69</sup>**

### Teachers' background

Teacher background and biography can also prove a challenging factor in how, or if, s/he engages with controversial issues linked to the conflict.<sup>70</sup> Just as pupils do not enter the classroom as 'blank slates', neither do teachers. Many teachers have themselves grown up with division and their own views and values, as well as their identities and allegiances, have been moulded by the very same societal divisions and experiences which continue to shape the lives of their pupils. Teaching controversial issues can prove "challenging for teachers who have not received adequate training or for whom discussions of the past could act as a trigger, particularly if they have not dealt with their own related issues".<sup>71</sup>

### 'Leave the past in the past'

One of the most significant challenges of teaching conflict-related issues at present is the view that the conflict is over and there is a need to move forward, rather than dwelling on the past.<sup>72</sup> However, this positioning fails to recognise the reality of Northern Ireland as a divided society with legacies of the conflict continuing to impact on peoples' lives today or it reflects a tacit acceptance that sectarianism and division are a normal part of everyday life in Northern Ireland.<sup>73</sup> Neither view, however, is constructive in addressing the deep fault lines which underpin life in Northern Ireland.

Whilst a future-orientated approach is a welcome and necessary part of a transitioning society, a 'future only' outlook, which would also provide a way not to tackle the difficult issues related to the contested past, leaves the deep-rooted causes of conflict and division untouched, views of difference unexplored and fails to support young people as they navigate living with difference and division in their everyday lives.

<sup>61</sup> Weinstein, H.M., Freedman, S.W., Hughson, H. (2007) 'School Voices', *Education, Citizenship and Social Justice*, 2(1), pp. 41-47.

<sup>62</sup> McAllister, S., Corr, M.-L., Dwyer, C., Drummond, O. and Fargas-Malet, M. (2021) *It didn't End in 1998: Examining the Impacts of Conflict Legacy Across Generations*. QUB and Commission for Victims and Survivors Northern Ireland, p. 9. <https://www.qub.ac.uk/research-centres/CentreforChildrensRights/CCRFFilestore/Fileupload/1224476.en.pdf>

<sup>63</sup> Levy, G. (2014) 'Is There a Place for Peace Education? Political Education and Citizenship Activism in Israeli Schools', *Journal of Peace Education*, 11(1), pp. 101-119.

<sup>64</sup> Kitson, A. and McCully, A. (2005) 'You Hear About it for Real in School: Avoiding, Containing and Risk-Taking in the History Classroom', *Teaching History*, 120, *Diversity and Divisions Edition*, pp. 32-37.

<sup>65</sup> McAllister et al. (2021) p. 6.

<sup>66</sup> McAllister et al. (2021) p. 8. See also the work of Keith C. Barton and Alan McCully (2005) *History, Identity, and the School Curriculum in Northern Ireland: an empirical study of secondary students' ideas and perspectives*, *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 37(1), pp. 85-116.

<sup>67</sup> Bush, K., and Saltarelli, D. (2000) p. 3.

<sup>68</sup> McAuley, C. (2021) "Who your teacher is does matter": The Lived Experiences of History and Citizenship Teachers in NI and the Consequences for Pedagogical Practice. *EdD Thesis* QUB, 2021, p. 35.

<sup>69</sup> McAuley, C. (2021) p. 134.

<sup>70</sup> McAuley, C. (2021).

<sup>71</sup> McAuley, C. (2021).

<sup>72</sup> Donnelly, C., McAuley, C., Blaylock Danielle., and Hughes, J. (2021) 'Teaching about the Past in Northern Ireland: Avoidance, Neutrality, and Criticality', *Irish Educational Studies*, 40(1), pp. 3-18.

<sup>73</sup> Morrow, D. (2019) *Sectarianism in Northern Ireland: A Review*. Ulster University.

## School settings

In Northern Ireland, over 90% of children, from the age of three, go to schools that are mainly attended by one community or the other.<sup>74</sup> In the post-primary sector, 4.6% of pupils attending controlled schools identify as Catholic whilst 1.8% of pupils attending maintained schools identify as Protestant.<sup>75</sup> This 'schools' statistic sums up the extent of the division which endures, yet the findings of one study of pupil identity in different school settings revealed that "no one school setting has supremacy in promoting social cohesion".<sup>76</sup>

It has been argued that young peoples' learning is stifled in a segregated classroom setting since "pupils do not experience shared learning and the perspective of the 'other'",<sup>77</sup> thus contributing to a sense of 'otherness' between the two main communities.

An alternative interpretation is that learning about difference and controversial issues in segregated schools, where there is often a range of different and competing views even from within the *same* community background<sup>78</sup> and where young people get to explore who they are as individuals, can be an important first step on the journey of learning to live with others. In addition, segregated classrooms can also provide a supportive setting to discuss difference.<sup>79</sup> In such situations the role of the teacher in 'bringing in difference' through resources which offer other views and interpretations is crucial. Such a scenario could, however, be regarded as an artificially manufactured and abstract approach to exploring difference, by comparison to an integrated setting where young people from diverse backgrounds learn together and from each other.

## 5.2 Citizenship – The poor relation in the Northern Ireland Curriculum

### Limited curriculum space

It is fair to say that Citizenship should have a curriculum inferiority complex in view of the lack of curriculum space and credibility which it is afforded in comparison to traditional 'academic' subjects and there is no doubt that a 'levelling up' of Citizenship with other curriculum components is required.

Traditional subjects still dominate the curriculum throughout the United Kingdom and there is three-fold resistance to:

1. The addition of new subjects that may diminish curriculum time for existing subjects
2. The amalgamation of subjects into broader areas of shared study
3. The broadening of subjects to take on responsibility for wider issues

The initial proposal for the revised NIC, that each subject should expand its remit to cater for areas of 21st century concern, was roundly resisted by traditional subject lobbyists. To appease these interests a statutory 'hybrid' modular subject evolved which sought to cater for neglected areas of concern, including Citizenship education. As a result, unlike traditional subjects, a revolving timetable of LLW (of which Citizenship is a component), adds to the perception that Citizenship is not a proper subject, but rather, "an afterthought"<sup>80</sup> and therefore, tends not to be taken seriously.

As one teacher explains:

**"I have to fight very, very hard to keep curriculum time at the minute ... this is the reason why Citizenship is failing ... it is failing because schools are not willing to give it curriculum time".<sup>81</sup>**

### Limited expertise

In 2015, the ETI reported that "... one-third of citizenship lessons ... in post-primary schools were considered not to be effective".<sup>82</sup> Three factors may have contributed to this conclusion. Firstly, unlike traditional subjects, where most teachers are 'qualified' via an Initial Teacher Education (ITE) course to teach their subject in schools, there is no formal qualification or mandatory training to teach Citizenship in Northern Ireland.

Secondly, research has shown that many teachers in Northern Ireland follow a 'culturally encapsulated' career path through segregated schools and a largely community consistent pattern of local ITE, where they are unlikely to have had meaningful encounters across the community divide.<sup>83</sup> In this context a teacher's own deeply held perspectives and biases may have been unexplored and unchallenged. There is consequently a very real risk that teachers may unconsciously perpetuate societal division.<sup>84</sup>

Thirdly, the "culture of discontinuity"<sup>85</sup> about who teaches Citizenship in schools has suppressed the development of pedagogic expertise and a sound knowledge base amongst teachers.

<sup>74</sup> Roulston, S. (2020) Pre-school Education in Northern Ireland, *Transforming Education Briefing Paper #06*.

<sup>75</sup> <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/school-enrolments-northern-ireland-summary-data>

<sup>76</sup> A. Furey, Donnelly, C., Hughes, J., and Blaylock, D. (2017) 'Interpretations of National Identity in Post-Conflict Northern Ireland: A Comparison of Different School Settings', *Research Papers in Education*, 32(2), pp. 137-150.

<sup>77</sup> Niens, U., O'Connor, U., and Smith, A. (2012) 'Citizenship Education in Divided Societies: Teachers' Perspectives in Northern Ireland', *Citizenship Studies*, pp. 1-14.

<sup>78</sup> McGlynn, C. (2011) 'Negotiating Difference in Post-Conflict Northern Ireland: An Analysis of Approaches to Integrated Education', *Multicultural Perspectives*, 13(1), pp. 16-22.

<sup>79</sup> Donnelly, C., and Burns, S. (2017) 'Teaching Citizenship in the Faith School: Qualitative Evidence from Separate Schools in Northern Ireland', *Irish Educational Studies*, pp. 471-487.

<sup>80</sup> Northern Ireland Executive (2021) *Commission on Flags, Identity, Culture and Tradition Final Report* <https://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/execoffice/commission-on-fict-final-report.pdf> Section 5.24.

<sup>81</sup> McAuley, C. (2021).

<sup>82</sup> Education and Training Inspectorate (2015) *An Evaluation of the Community Relations, Equality and Diversity (CRED) Policy in Schools and Youth Organisations*. Bangor: ETI. <https://www.etini.gov.uk/sites/etini.gov.uk/files/publications/%5Bcurrent-domain%3Amachine-name%5D/an-evaluation-of-the-impact-of-the-cred-policy-in-schools-and-youth-organisations.pdf>

<sup>83</sup> Milliken, M., Bates, J. & Smith, A. (2020) 'Education Policies and Teacher Deployment in Northern Ireland: Ethnic Separation, Cultural Encapsulation and Community Cross-over', *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 68(2), pp. 139-160.

<sup>84</sup> Weinstein et al., (2007).

<sup>85</sup> O'Connor et al., (2019) p. 488.



## Examination and accountability culture

The ETI has reported that an “assessment and examination culture”<sup>86</sup> exists within many post-primary schools in Northern Ireland. Stark findings from CCEA’s Curriculum Monitoring Programme also reported that “curriculum provision is being impacted by external assessment... and external qualifications...”; and that “[teacher] planning is often based on content of [examination] specifications”<sup>87</sup> with the acknowledgement that the consequence of these actions “may be a narrowing of pupils’ curriculum experience at post-primary” level<sup>88</sup> – a sentiment confirmed by one teacher:

**“Education has got mixed up with assessment and how education impacts on young people has become secondary. The system does not allow all the emotional and active skills-based teaching, it’s about the formula needed for exams”.**<sup>89</sup>

The reality of this testing and accountability culture in schools means teachers focus on what the ‘system’ values, that is, examination grades. And whilst this is an important outcome in itself, the pervasive testing culture is devaluing Citizenship’s place within the curriculum, limiting the social and emotional dimensions of learning and stifling its transformative potential.

## 6. Discussion and considerations

In Northern Ireland, the Citizenship classroom is intended to create a space where ‘the past’ connects with ‘the present’ to shape ‘the future’. Whilst there is a general recognition among teachers of Citizenship that teaching controversial and contentious issues should be explored, even after many years of relative peace and power-sharing politics, research has shown that the more ‘controversial’ or potentially polarising the issue is deemed, the less teachers are willing to engage.<sup>90,91</sup>

A recent report by the Commission on Flags, Identity, Culture and Tradition once again raised concerns over teacher “capacity and readiness ... to cover difficult subject matter such as the recent history of the conflict, culture, identity and citizenship”<sup>92</sup>. As a result Citizenship education is perhaps the weakest link in the NIC. 15 years after its implementation, Citizenship has so far failed to live up to its expectations. What follows is a number of proposed ‘priorities for progress’ to improve Citizenship provision, which is ultimately an investment in a peaceful, stable future for Northern Ireland.

### The need for renewed political commitment

The political commitment which underpinned the introduction of Citizenship education in Northern Ireland has not been sustained, allowing Citizenship to languish in the absence of accountability. Action and leadership are urgently required at the highest level of political influence including the Executive Office, Committee for Education and DE. The following considerations are recommended to stem further decline.

In recognition of the complexity of problems, **a system-wide multi-levelled solution is required to prioritise and reset the path of Citizenship education.** Policy makers and politicians need to show that they care about Citizenship education and that it is worth investing time and resources in, even at a time when budgets are lean.

### Evaluation of current provision

No substantial evaluation of Citizenship education has been conducted by the ETI since Citizenship was introduced as a statutory subject.<sup>93</sup>

**An ETI system-wide survey** is needed to ascertain how Citizenship is being taught, what is being taught, and who is teaching it. The survey could also garner examples of best practice in active citizenship engagement in schools as a starting point to improve the profile and provision of this crucially important subject. Survey findings would provide DE with the necessary baseline evidence to develop a robust, long term sustainable 21st century Citizenship education strategy. It is not enough that Citizenship is part of the NIC – it must be having an impact on pupil outcomes by nurturing and developing the knowledge, attitudes and dispositions of young people towards understanding how they can make a difference both locally and globally.

<sup>86</sup> Education and Training Inspectorate (2018)

<sup>87</sup> CCEA (2020) CCEA Curriculum Monitoring Programme 2018-19 Report. CCEA. Belfast. p. 5c. <https://ceea.org.uk/downloads/docs/ceea-asset/Curriculum/Curriculum%20Monitoring%20Programme%20Report%202018-19.pdf>

<sup>88</sup> CCEA (2020) CCEA Curriculum Monitoring Programme 2018-19 Report. CCEA. Belfast. p. 12. <https://ceea.org.uk/downloads/docs/ceea-asset/Curriculum/Curriculum%20Monitoring%20Programme%20Report%202018-19.pdf>

<sup>89</sup> McAuley, C. (2021) p. 148.

<sup>90</sup> Hanna, H. (2016) ‘Dealing with Difference in the Divided Educational Context: Balancing Freedom of Expression and Non-Discrimination in Northern Ireland and Israel’, *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*, pp 1-15, p. 12.

<sup>91</sup> Kitson, A. and McCully, A. (2005) pp. 32-37.

<sup>92</sup> Northern Ireland Executive (2021) Section 5.23, p. 44.

<sup>93</sup> In 2006, the ETI published a report on the Introduction of Local and Global Citizenship at Key Stage 3 in a Sample of Post-Primary Schools, however, this report predated statutory implementation.

## Curriculum and examination reset

School leaders and Boards of Governors have a statutory responsibility to implement the NIC, however, the design of a curriculum programme rests with each individual school.

There is a need to **revisit the debate about curriculum space and re-assess existing subject responsibilities** for a 21st century context. For example, given the climate crisis and a growing international consensus that education for sustainability needs to be addressed as a compulsory component of the school curriculum<sup>94</sup> it is likely that this responsibility may require Geography and Science to re-focus their remit in response to this need. In the same vein, History as a school subject could adjust its remit to embrace political education and citizenship at Key Stage 3. Extensive research within Northern Ireland confirms that pupils want to study the history of 'the Troubles' but that, even though it is compulsory within the Key Stage 3 curriculum, many teachers avoid the requirement to consider in more detail its impact on society today. It is suggested that, if History teachers, who are well versed in multi-perspective pedagogy, were required to address the Citizenship curriculum, both the History and Citizenship requirements of the NIC are likely to be addressed more effectively.

## 'New' qualifications

The Northern Ireland education system privileges academic learning and outcomes.<sup>95</sup> Pupils, teachers and schools therefore need to feel that it is worth investing their time and energy in Citizenship education in the face of competing demands and pressures.

**The potential for a GCSE qualification in Citizenship** might be explored separate from the current GCSE qualification in LLW.<sup>96 97</sup> In addition to providing recognition for learning, a qualification promoting an enquiry-based approach to local issues could encourage schools, teachers and pupils to engage with the nature of cultural transmission within and across communities and provide the opportunity for young people to generate ideas as to how polarisation could be addressed through active citizenship projects. A double-award qualification in both History and Citizenship may also be an attractive proposition for young people interested in pursuing a career in the social, political and cultural sphere.

## High quality teacher professional learning

The Citizenship education journey so far highlights the need for specialist trained teachers.

**Pre-service training of a specified number of Citizenship teachers** each year is needed, in line with the practice for all other subjects. To meet this requirement ITE providers, working together, need to be commissioned to design a sustained programme for Citizenship to ensure that student teachers develop a shared understanding of the purpose of Citizenship education and solid conceptual knowledge. In addition, an appropriate skills set is fundamentally important in facilitating and supporting pupils in critical reflection, exploring multiple perspectives, respecting different opinions, developing empathy with others.

Consideration should be given to the introduction of **a compulsory critical self-reflection module for all post-primary ITE programmes** where all student teachers are provided with the time and space to reflect on their 'identity baggage' shaped by their formative experiences of growing up in Northern Ireland, which they may unconsciously carry with them into the "professional arena".<sup>98</sup> In the absence of an 'integrated' approach to ITE in Northern Ireland<sup>99</sup>, opportunities could be explicitly created for pre-service teachers across the four ITE institutions to "engage with and hear stories of teachers from 'across the divide'".<sup>100</sup> This would provide "important first steps" in preparing teachers to teach in a divided society.<sup>101</sup>

For those teachers already 'in the system' teaching Citizenship education, **bespoke training opportunities** are required to provide support, increase teacher confidence in teaching conflict-related issues and build a professional learning community for Citizenship teachers. The EA and CCEA could be commissioned to design and deliver Teacher Professional Learning workshops to engage teachers in deep dialogue related to the teaching of difference, share classroom experiences, and enhance pedagogical expertise through practical activities.

<sup>94</sup> <https://en.unesco.org/themes/education2030-sdg4>

<sup>95</sup> McAuley, C. (2021)

<sup>96</sup> In 2017, CCEA introduced a GCSE in Government and Politics – this qualification is optional and numbers taking this GCSE are very small (request has been sent to CCEA)

<sup>97</sup> Discrete GCSE in Citizenship is available from OCR, Edexcel and AQA examination (awarding) bodies in England.

<sup>98</sup> Samuel, S. and Stephens, D. (2000) 'Critical dialogues with self: Developing teacher identities and roles

– A case study of South African student teachers', *International Journal of Educational Research*, 33(5), pp 475-491 (p. 488)

<sup>99</sup> See Transforming Education's Briefing Paper 07 for a detailed examination of "Community Division and Student Separation in Initial Teacher Education"

<sup>100</sup> McAuley, C. (2021) p. 176.

<sup>101</sup> McAuley, C. (2021) p. 176.

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## Consultation with schools, parents and the wider community

Research from other conflict-affected countries<sup>102</sup> has shown that building strong connections between schools, parents and the local community can have positive outcomes in diminishing teacher fears and parental/community concerns related to the teaching of contentious conflict and legacy related issues.

**Establishing school/parent/community consultative forums** as reciprocal learning spaces to promote a shared vision and understanding of the needs of young people is one potential way to address fears and concerns. These educational learning forums would provide a space for, amongst other things, building relationships between the school, the home and the community; sharing information on the teaching of potentially controversial conflict-related issues in Citizenship education including when the issues will be taught, which issues will be explored and the teaching approaches that will be used; listening to the fears and concerns of parents which, in turn, may serve to build teacher confidence and to 'open up' the classroom to controversial discussions with the support of (rather than fear of) parents and the wider community. Another potentially fruitful approach could be the co-design of parent/community educational outreach workshops to allow them to experience 'first hand' the teaching approaches used.

It has been said that "in education not everything that counts can be counted and not everything that can be counted counts".<sup>103</sup> Surely, it is young people who count and it is they who deserve a rounded and relevant education in local and global citizenship. In the post-Brexit era, and at a time when a referendum on the constitutional status of Northern Ireland may be looming, the future direction of our society will rest in the hands of young people as the next generation of the electorate. In that context, education in Citizenship cannot be left to chance or be seen as an 'add on'. Young people need, deserve and are entitled to be properly prepared to participate as active, informed citizens, equipped with the skills to engage with the challenges and opportunities which lie ahead in a diverse society.

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<sup>102</sup> See, for example, the work of Z. Bekerman in Israel and Palestine

<sup>103</sup> Cameron, W.B. (1963) *Informal Sociology: A Casual Introduction to Sociological Thinking*. New York: Random House, p 13.

**Table 2 Considerations to improve the status and provision of Citizenship education**

Priority Areas	Responsibility Leads	Considerations
<b>Commitment of politicians and policy makers</b>	Education Minister The Executive Office Education Committee DE ETI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review commitment to Citizenship agenda within education</li> <li>• ETI to conduct a system-wide survey to find out the 'state of play' of Citizenship education in schools</li> <li>• ETI to showcase best practice of Citizenship provision in schools including democratic structures and active Citizenship engagement</li> <li>• DE to define requirements, provide advice and resources to CCEA, EA, ITE institutions and school leaders to support the actioning of priority areas outlined below:</li> </ul>
<b>Curriculum and Examinations</b>	DE CCEA School leaders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review the appropriateness of LLW</li> <li>• Explore traditional subjects, for example, History and Geography, taking on wider responsibility for teaching Citizenship</li> <li>• Consider the amalgamation of subjects into broader areas of shared study</li> <li>• CCEA to develop a discrete GCSE in Citizenship</li> <li>• CCEA to develop a joint History and Citizenship GCSE</li> </ul>
<b>High quality teacher professional learning</b>	DE ITE Institutions EA CCEA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Train a specified number of Citizenship teachers each year</li> <li>• ITE providers, working together, design a teacher education programme for Citizenship</li> <li>• A mandatory critical self-reflection module for all ITE students to reflect on 'who they are' and their formative experiences</li> <li>• Design Teacher Professional Learning workshops to engage teachers in deep dialogue related to the teaching of difference, share classroom experiences and enhance pedagogical expertise through practical activities</li> </ul>
<b>Engagement between schools and parents/ community</b>	School leaders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish school/parent/community consultative forums</li> <li>• Create consultative forums as reciprocal learning spaces to help diminish teacher fears and parental/community concerns related to the teaching of controversial conflict-related issues</li> <li>• The co-design of parent/community educational outreach workshops to allow them to experience 'first hand' the teaching approaches used.</li> </ul>



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Citizenship education in Northern Ireland –  
An opportunity not yet realised?



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