Lessons Learned from 10 Years of Citizenship Education in Northern Ireland: A Critical Analysis of Curriculum Change

Abstract

Curriculum change is an intricate, lengthy process, requiring commitment, co-operation and compromise amongst the agencies and stakeholders involved; its development is more complex in divided societies, particularly when the subject content is open to contention. The addition of Local and Global Citizenship to the Northern Ireland curriculum in 2007 was intended to prepare students for life in a post-conflict and increasingly diverse society, and the precariousness of current events locally and globally have reinforced its relevance. Yet, the initial curricular aspirations underpinning citizenship education have been largely unfulfilled and its diminished status within the education system reflects the divergences that beset its development and implementation.

This paper employs Fullan's change model of implementation to critically reflect on the interplay of factors that informed and influenced the design and introduction of the Local and Global Citizenship curriculum in Northern Ireland. Using Fullan's framework as an analytic tool, interviews with key stakeholders directly involved in curriculum reform at the time illustrate how the complexity of change motivated and undermined in equal measure. Whilst the paper assesses the implications of a dislocated citizenship curriculum and identifies lessons learned for Northern Ireland, the findings have wide-ranging relevance for education systems generally.

Key words: curriculum change, citizenship education, Fullan model, Northern Ireland

Introduction

Curriculum change is part and parcel of education reform. Alternately perceived as an opportunity or restriction, its emphasis is determined by the interplay of structures, procedures and individuals involved in the process. Change theory or change knowledge (Fullan, 2006) provides an apt lens to examine the trajectory of curriculum development, enabling reflection on the causal factors that

predicate reform as well as the characteristics of change, local characteristics and external factors that influence its implementation (Fullan, 2013).

Understanding the role and purpose of curriculum is a pre-requisite for effective policy change. Its power to challenge and expand learning is a given, but its increasing *'cumulative and transformative'* potential to change *'perceptions and ways of being in the world'* has created a more holistic interpretation that places education at the heart of the social order (Jeffrey and Staeheli, 2015, p.483). Education has a strong moral dimension (see, for example, Freire, 1974; Dewey, 1938), particularly in relation to its democratic and transformative potential for reform. This philosophy, an essential precursor to an informed, critically aware citizenry, has been enacted through active, experiential and inquiry-based teaching and learning in new subject areas (Osler and Starkey, 2005). Of these, civics or citizenship education has acquired international prominence; acknowledged as a fluid concept, with varied interpretations, in modern democracies it is generally acknowledged as a subject area that *'aims to promote harmonious co-existence and foster the mutually beneficial development of individuals and the communities in which they live … [supporting] students in becoming active, informed and responsible citizens'* (De Coster et al., 2017, p.3). However, education is inseparable from, and influenced by, dominant political, social and economic discourses (Biesta, 2007); the scale of input from these diverse standpoints provides a yardstick for systemic rigor but also generates divergent opinions, complicated further by the change capacity at systemic levels, stakeholder buy-in and competing priorities. As a process, then, curriculum change is *'technically simple but socially complex'* (Fullan, 2016, p.67). Arguably, this is more visible when new subject matter is introduced to an already busy curriculum, and particularly so when the subject matter is contentious. It assumes added

complexity in post-conflict societies, where the legacy of political strife, enduring social divisions, and differing constructs of identity have far-reaching influence on the character of the education system and the curriculum within it.

Using Northern Ireland (NI) as a case study, this paper critically explores the development and implementation of a citizenship curriculum in a society emerging from conflict. Local and Global Citizenship (LGC) was introduced in a revised curriculum in 2007; devised at a time of optimal political change, the distinction between its initial formulation and final conceptualisation vividly demonstrates the paradoxes and possibilities of curriculum change. Using Fullan's (2013) change model of implementation (Figure 1) as an analytic framework to interrogate qualitative interview data gathered from a range of key stakeholders directly involved in the design and delivery of the citizenship curriculum, we examine the explicit and implicit *characteristics of change*, *local characteristics* and *external factors* that underpinned its inception and how the shifting emphasis of these impacted its evolution and eventual position in schools. Applying this 360-degree lens, we conclude by identifying the steps that could be realistically taken to reformulate its status within schools.
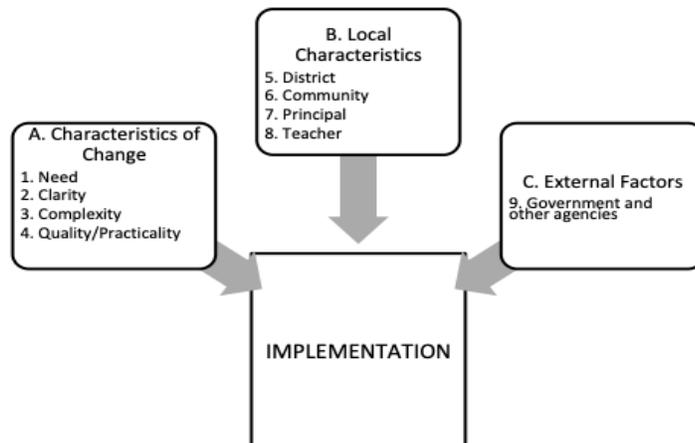
B. Local Characteristics
5. District
6. Community
7. Principal
8. Teacher

A. Characteristics of Change
1. Need
2. Clarity
3. Complexity
4. Quality/Practicality

C. External Factors
9. Government and other agencies

IMPLEMENTATION

Figure 1 Source: Adapted from Fullan, 2013, Chapter 8: Educational change: Implementation and continuation. In: Wise et al. (eds) Leading professional practice in education. Sage.

Background

Since the 1990's, citizenship or civics education has been a feature of educational policy and reform nationally and internationally. Its visibility in the curriculum of many countries reflected governments' social capital agenda of democratization, socialization and reconciliation (Heggart, 2015). Based on common values of pluralism, tolerance and non-discrimination, it was apparent that, in divided societies emerging from conflict, notions of identity and nationhood were profoundly problematic, necessitating a conceptual interpretation of citizenship grounded in wider universal principles (Niens et al., 2013). As a tool to foster democratic engagement, citizenship education holds particular relevance during times of political and social transition (Worden and Smith, 2017). In these circumstances, the need for a critically informed, politically literate citizenry is integral to genuine social cohesion where '... *the teaching of citizenship needs to be*

supplemented with a more in-depth understanding of the ways in which young people actually learn in the communities and practices that make up their everyday lives' (Pontes et al., 2019, p. 17). Yet at a time of utmost relevance, evidence suggests sustained patterns of dwindling civic participation and marginalisation of the citizenship curriculum across many regions (Burton and May, 2015). The pattern has been replicated in Northern Ireland where, in spite of initial substantial financial investment, the profile and status of LGC has diminished considerably. This decline is all the more poignant when considered against the backdrop of the region's current political stagnation.

Northern Ireland's recent history, commonly defined as 'The Troubles' spanned over 40 years and resulted in more than 3,600 deaths and 30,000 injuries. The signing of the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement in 1998 and creation of a devolved government (Northern Ireland Assembly) with its own legislative powers was intended to a create a stable, co-existence and shared future (OFMDFM, 2005). The formal roots of citizenship education began in the 1980's, with the cross-curricular themes of Education for Mutual Understanding (EMU) and Cultural Heritage (CH); although these provided opportunities to develop intercultural understanding in the divided society of Northern Ireland, it was also clear that important social, political and cultural issues were not addressed (Smith and Robinson, 1996) and it was within this context that citizenship education subsequently evolved. In the intervening years, the influences of a pilot curriculum development programme on Social, Civic and Political Education (2004) and a recommendation from the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) (2006) for a radical new curriculum combined to *'... create a broadly conducive climate for the development of a citizenship education policy'* (McEvoy, 2007, p.140). The statutory introduction of Local and

Global Citizenship (CCEA, 2007) represented a pioneering policy commitment to fostering bonds and bridges in a post-conflict divided society, notably in an education system where over 95% of students are segregated by religion, academic ability, and social class. Intended to be introduced as a discrete subject area within a new curriculum, significant financial investment of £25 million was directed towards an ambitious and innovative preparatory initiative. Between 2002 and 2007, dedicated training officers were appointed in each of the five regional Education and Library Boards (ELBs), up to five teachers from all post-primary schools across Northern Ireland had the opportunity to access experiential professional development, and a supplementary resource file collaboratively developed by a curriculum planners, academics and NGOs was created. These teachers would ultimately represent a cohort of expertise within schools and cascade their knowledge and skills in an on-going capacity-building exercise. However, twenty years after the Good Friday Agreement, over ten years since the introduction of the new curriculum and over two years since the collapse of the power-sharing NI Assembly, the diminishment of LGC in schools has created a critical curriculum gap in developing the civic and political literacy of young people. It is therefore a timely opportunity to critically reflect on the introduction and implementation of citizenship education in Northern Ireland – its past, present and possible future.

Curriculum Development and Change

Curriculum development is a fluctuating phenomenon. Characterised either as top-down navigation of educational priorities and stakeholder interests, or localised bottom-up ownership, it has generated policy paradoxes that have alternately strengthened or undermined its design and implementation (Goren and Yemini, 2017). In contrast, the conflation of both offers a dynamic

model that purposefully utilises multiple stakeholders, networks and resources for more coherent curriculum reform (Pietarinen et al., 2017). Yet, the continued regulation of education systems points to prevailing reductive risk-averse curricula that do not fully meet the needs of students (Willemse et al., 2015). For example, education policy reform by successive governments in the UK exposed teachers and students to a degree of repetitive and contradictory curriculum change; more specifically, the consequential character of much mandated change is packaged in punitive language of accountability, assessment and formulaic funding that engendered professional cynicism, mistrust and demoralisation (Biesta, 2015).

It is also apparent that the structure and management of education change is context specific and indicative of localised social and political goals (Shanks, 2016). In divided societies, education reform is imbued with additional distinctive challenges. Reform in Northern Ireland can be seen as both a reaction to, and a reflection of, the fragility of a post-conflict society. The contextual significance of an entrenched political landscape, socially and educationally segregated demography pre- and post the Good Friday Agreement imposed an ideological constraint that could not be overlooked in the development of the LGC curriculum. Yet, the peace process simultaneously created an opportunity for a radical education policy vision. Most notably, evocative opinions around identity and nationhood prevailed in NI, so whilst the citizenship curriculum in the UK and elsewhere developed around liberal and patriotic models, its conceptualisation at a local level required more circumspect consideration (Kerr et al., 2002).

The Citizenship Curriculum and Educational Change in Divided Societies

Educational change assumes a distinct trajectory in post-conflict divided societies and is affected by the confluence of contextual characteristics, external factors and embedded local influences. Reinforcement of state controlled ideologies (Shanks, 2016); the omission of alternative narratives (Pinson, 2007); reliance on generalized norms (Al-Haj, 2002); and regulated teacher employment (Milliken et al., 2019) have illustrated the inherent social, cultural and political complexity of educational change. In these environments, reform that is subject to the capricious influence of dominant ideologies acquires intriguing and provocative status, particularly when they determine the scope of curriculum policy, the nature of its content and how it is transferred to school and classroom settings. The potential for education to *'yield significant influence through curriculum content'* (Shanks, 2016, p.422) aptly applies to citizenship education. Nonetheless, its evolution as a curriculum subject is inevitably exposed to external characteristics of change that dictate the wider pace and scope of education reform. Amongst these, over-arching political perspectives are primordial indicators of '*conditions of power and influence that affect the credibility and desirability of change initiatives, as well as the empowerment or disempowerment of those they affect'* (Hargreaves, 2004, p.305). Often, the impetus to develop a citizenship curriculum in post-conflict divided societies is initiated as part of a wider socio-political dialogue to create a new democratic narrative. In NI, the political will of the late 1990's coincided with policy momentum towards a revision of the curriculum reminiscent of wider values-based education reform elsewhere. Such transitions cannot be taken for granted, particularly where social divisions and polarised identities persist; policy reservations about potentially problematic curriculum development have necessitated careful and inclusive negotiation that acknowledge alternative

narratives around citizenship (Pinson, 2007). In the case of NI, this distinction required a conceptual interpretation that, if palatable at political and policy levels, was more likely to be endorsed at community, school and individual levels.

The goal of citizenship education to introduce young people to potentially disruptive knowledge means that *'... the practices and consequences of learning citizenship mirror and embody the precarious and contingent nature of political life in diverse locations'* (Jeffrey and Staeheli, 2015, p.484). Transferal of curriculum ownership within localised contexts requires reciprocal engagement with school leaders and teachers, not least since professional investment in education reform is strengthened if the motivation for change is clarified in terms of relevance and need (Viennet and Beatriz, 2017). Citizenship content that is externally mandated by political, societal and cultural dogmas may not easily align with educational objectives, resulting in a mismatch between design and implementation that can be difficult to rectify. In conflict-affected, localised change can be destabilised further by the socio-political influence of separate school systems that protect identities and reinforce differences. In these circumstances, the extent to which the more provocative content of the citizenship curriculum is taught, particularly sensitive and controversial issues, can be a challenging prospect for teachers. The desire, in modern democracies, for informed and critically engaged citizens raises an expectation that educators will develop these skills in students (Kello, 2016), yet efforts to encourage inquiry-based, experiential learning have not been easy. Teacher uncertainty and lack of confidence addressing controversial and sensitive issues is well reported in societies divided by religious, cultural or ethnic divisions (Niens et al., 2013); furthermore, many teachers remain risk-averse to politicising local or global subject matter

and continue to rely on pre-defined – and therefore 'safe' - material and resources (Zembylas and Kambani, 2012).

Methodology

Participants and Design

A qualitative research design was employed for this study in order to capture the reflective focus of the research questions. The researchers applied a purposive sampling approach in order to identify a representative list of key stakeholders from across policy, curriculum development, education and research sectors, all of whom who were directly involved, albeit in different ways, in the initial development, planning, implementation of LGC in Northern Ireland. From this list, a total of ten stakeholders agreed to participate in a semi-structured one-to-one interview (of the other initial names, some had retired, others did not reply to the request to interview or could not be located during the time frame for data collection). All participants were contacted initially by email with a follow-up phone call; an information letter outlining the purpose of the research, expectations of participation, and the timeframe for data collection was distributed. The semi-structured interview schedule was developed to address three intersecting themes: (1) reflection on the impetus behind the inception of the citizenship curriculum (2) reflection on the change factors that determined its implementation and (3) reflection on the change factors necessary for an improved citizenship curriculum. The schedule was flexibly designed to allow participants to describe their individual experiences within their professional context and as part of a wider socio-political dialogue.

Procedure

Interviews were conducted over a five-month period from June to October 2018, at a time and venue convenient for participants. Each interview lasted between 40-60 minutes and, with participants' permission, were digitally recorded and supplemented with field notes; in order to preserve confidentiality, each interviewee was given a pseudonym. Interviews were transcribed verbatim and, using NVIVO software, were categorised according to Fullan's three areas of implementation (Characteristics of change, Local characteristics, External factors). An instructive distinction was added to the coding to classify the retrospective/past, current/present and forward-looking/future perspectives of stakeholders. Supplementary content analysis enabled the researchers to make further important distinctions, specifically to identify which emphases emerged in each of the three areas of implementation. Measures to ensure trustworthiness of the data were implemented; confirmability and dependability were enhanced by three independent researchers analysing and reviewing the transcripts, whilst credibility was assured by the triangulation of data sources (policy leaders, academic staff, statutory training officers) across a range of educational organisations thereby increasing the variety of perspectives. Ethical approval was obtained from Ulster University prior to data collection.

Findings

Analysis of the data highlighted the key determinants of the change process that surrounded introduction of the citizenship curriculum in Northern Ireland. Retrospective reflections on how LGC evolved and was implemented dominated the interviews, underlining not just the intricacies

of its origins but how these have influenced its curriculum position in subsequent years. Using Fullan's (2013) model, the interplay between the legacy of curriculum reform, and the current status of LGC is addressed in the following sections, where factors that facilitated as well as constrained curriculum change also provide important signposts for discussion around future planning.

The Characteristics of Change

The *need* for a citizenship curriculum in Northern Ireland was abundantly clear throughout all interviews, with stakeholders positioning it at the intersection of larger educational, social and political forces. Its steady position in terms of retrospective, current and forward-looking perspectives is illustrative of relevance in a society still in transition. Patrick, who was appointed to help develop and deliver the teacher training observed:

> *Basically, we had come through 30-40 years of conflict. There was a dire need for civics literacy, political education within schools ... It was something to do with the fact that there was a need for reconciliation at that particular time, ... we were digging into things like sectarianism, racism, dealing with difference, reconciliation, all those things. It was extremely timely at that point but you could argue the case that it's even more timely now given the state where politically the country has never been more divided ... maybe over slightly different issues but again things go down those kind of similar lines.*

Although the peace process boosted the momentum for innovative curriculum reform, stakeholders unanimously acknowledged the challenge of what was proposed. When speaking about the early days of curriculum development, the *complexity* of the change process underlined the careful

negotiation required at the time, particularly since the pedagogical ambitions of LGC drew comparisons with the limited curricular success of previous initiatives. Nancy, who held a key policy position in the design and roll out of LGC recalled these initial challenges:

> *… of course the issue is of conservatism, you know teachers being very much wedded to their subject and their subject time and no time for anything else … there was a sort of intransigence in the subjects and indeed my experience of the curriculum review was very stressful dealing with subject officers and subject lobbies and inspectors and resistors all the way. So, at one stage, I had this vision of being in a corner of a room, being kicked by everyone because you were the bogie person who wanted to destroy their subject.*

Agreement on a conceptual framework to underpin the LGC curriculum testified to the intricacies involved. By focusing on enduring universal concepts of diversity/inclusion, equality/social justice, democracy/active participation and rights/responsibilities, curriculum developers sought to sidestep the provocation of a nationalistic stance adopted in other jurisdictions. Mary, who was closely involved in the development of the conceptual framework described:

> *I can remember long discussions and debates internally and externally about what that would be like and why NI really needed its own bespoke vision of citizenship education because of the contested idea of the state of NI. So, a lot of the stuff that was being suggested or practiced in England and what it meant to be a citizen in England would have created challenges here, a lot of difficulties here. So, we spent a lot of time … rather than loyalty and all of those concepts, we talked a lot about the importance of inclusion and diversity as opposed to allegiance to a greater power.*

However, the level of attention given to the conceptual design was not matched with a sufficiently robust knowledge base. This inconsistency was attributed to an overall lack of *clarity* in defining citizenship education, a shortfall that ultimately affected teachers' ability and/or willingness to critically engage with the enquiry-based underpinnings of the subject. There was overall agreement this had created a void that prevailed in current iterations of LGC, as Brian, a teacher at the time reflected:

> *... a big mistake in the curriculum ... because nobody there, even now I think, knows exactly what the key thing of citizenship is and what it leads to is a very superficial understanding of what citizenship is about and that, for me, also means it wouldn't have the impact that it could have and that leads to some schools taking the option of looking at you know, it's all about building relationships as opposed to looking at the overarching thing.*

Arguably, the clarity of LGC was further undermined by structural issues relating to its position in an already crowded curriculum. The *practicality* of securing discrete timetable was quickly lost; LGC became subsumed within the broader learning area of Learning for Life and Work[1], a decision that all stakeholders agreed instantly undermined its *quality*. More specifically, when combined with a deficit knowledge base, its potential to meaningfully address ongoing locally sensitive or controversial issues was gradually eroded, a point elaborated by Joanne, a university lecturer and former teacher:

> *I keep coming back to where it sits in the curriculum ... where it sits within Learning for Life and Work ... I think that starts to water things down ... I think in terms of the context*

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[1] This has four strands: Local and Global Citizenship, Home Economics, Employability and Personal Development. See:
http://ccea.org.uk/sites/default/files/docs/curriculum/area_of_learning/learning_life_work/ks3_llw_guidance.pdf

now … we've moved into that lazy peace area now so I don't think people actually

believe that there's a real need for it anymore because everything's fine in NI isn't it?

(Laughs) everything's fine here so, you know, but sure everybody's getting on so that's

okay, when actually really it's not, everybody's not getting on.

Examination and assessment was a recurring conundrum for all interviewees, some of whom held definite viewpoints on the current exam culture whilst others continued to ponder how best to reconcile innovation with academic credibility. Robert, an academic researcher with over two decades of teaching post-primary pupils, painted a pessimistic view on the influence of a prevalent exam culture:

I think it's got to a point now where not just teachers but young people and parents are

measuring schools entirely through exams. So, I think those enriching experiences that

schools can offer are probably diminishing. When young people themselves are saying

'there's no point in doing citizenship, you can't get a such and such in it', that's not

particularly healthy.

In contrast, Nancy implied there were possibilities for improved forms of assessment:

I believe that if you tackle assessment and examinations you win anything. So if you assess and

examine what you intend, you change teaching so that's a major disconnect … what I'm aware of

internationally, you know PISA is definitely changing and I wonder if PISA can shift the balance.

They've now got the curriculum for global citizenship and they're testing for global citizenship

which includes critical thinking and all of that, so you wonder will there be a shift there.

Yet, stakeholders' believed the *Need* for citizenship based on *Quality/Practicality* was as compelling as ever. How this is achieved in a standards-driven environment is an enduring conundrum. Restoring the academic credibility of LGC whilst maintaining its innovative learning profile is not without challenges, and pragmatic consideration presented several incremental options. Stephen, who was directly involved in the pilot and subsequent roll out of citizenship, has monitored the effects of implementation and offered a few solutions:

I would go for something modest and achievable, whether it's a module around political literacy developed, piloted around this idea of … the kinds of skills that we need our young people to have … to at least have thought across the reach of it.

I think unless it has some kind of more dedicated time and some specialist support within schools it will certainly be very unpredictable and eclectic … I would like to see it, reviewing it in terms of a bit of a sharper focus on where are our young people have an opportunity to develop what you might call a political literacy … we're simply relying on experiences outside the school to influence the development of young people's political thinking.

Local Characteristics

The local context in which LGC was implemented in Northern Ireland, in particular, the role assumed by statutory *education bodies*[2] at the time, is essential to understand how the change process evolved as it did. The exploratory origins of citizenship were rooted in pilot work,

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[2] In this research, District as identified by Fullan is interpreted at bureaucratic/departmental level.

undertaken by Ulster University researchers, that aligned with education policy momentum in England and Europe. Re-location of the work to the statutory Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) secured curriculum presence as well as access to a substantial funding stream, although this transition heralded a series of compromises that re-defined the character of the LGC curriculum. Stephen recalled:

> *… our name for the pilot, which was mirroring much more the approach in the Republic of Ireland which was called 'Civic, Social and Political education' and we were kind of looking [to] the active learning kind of dimensions to it … although I do think that we should maybe have taken more cognisance of the prominence to political literacy which Bernard [Crick] had been advocating through the English curriculum … there was a name change and it became Local and Global Citizenship … that was partly … trying to reconcile the lobby from the International development groups who wanted Global education featured within the curriculum.*

Stakeholders noted with a certain irony that whilst access to funding was pivotal to implementation, its fixed-term availability along with stagnation in the overall roll-out of the curriculum meant that the design and execution of LGC happened at a scale and pace that, in hindsight, was not sustainable and did not allow the gradual implementation originally envisaged. There was unanimous agreement that these combined factors had immediate detrimental impact, constraining the scope of LGC; the envisaged cascade of training and establishment of a citizenship team in schools did not take place, compromising the status of the subject before it had time to fully embed as Robert conceded:

> *… the curriculum got slowed down … about 2004-2005, I think, and by the time the curriculum actually became statutory in 2007 a lot of that good training had been*

dissipated, teachers who came on it found their way into other things, got promotion or

whatever. So, the full force of that wasn't applied.

In spite of the significant financial investment in LGC, a lack of accountability by the Department of Education (DE) meant that schools were not scrutinized in their implementation; this omission, reinforced further by negligible statutory inspection, continued to undermine academic credibility as Louise pointed out:

ETI didn't come in on the back of it and say right we're going to be looking at this in our

inspections, like it was years before there was ever mention of inspecting Citizenship …

and also, I think the Department of Education did not hold [schools] to account for the

fact that they'd been offered all this training … that was a sizeable amount of money and

people like myself being brought in and paid for … and yet they never actually said right

we want to see what's happening in schools and we want to see what's happened as a

result of those number of teachers having come out and that made it difficult for teachers

as well.

Echoing previous reservations about the quality of the subject area, this statutory shortfall ultimately facilitated a culture of discontinuity in schools from the outset, with implications for those *teachers* delivering LGC. Emphasis on the *teachers* was very much in the majority of local characteristics, underlining the pivotal position that stakeholders perceived they occupied in the implementation process. All stakeholders acknowledged the bottom-up dimension of developing LGC conferred a unique responsibility on teachers, with the expectation that they would be sufficiently empowered in a new pedagogy. David, a citizenship curriculum specialist from another jurisdiction advising on implementation at the time recalled:

... we were asking people to change their practice and so there was some resistance.
Some people were actually delighted because it freed them in a sense to be the teachers
they wanted to be, not the chalk and talk teachers. Some of them needed an awful lot of
help and support through that phase but we were very lucky in that we met them fairly
frequently so we were able to jolly them along and give them opportunities to talk about
how things were going or not going and what interventions they could make along the
way ... the really interesting thing was that those people who grasped it all in many ways
changed their own practice in their other teaching so that was significant.

Although a widely offered professional development opportunity, institutional and individual obstacles quickly emerged that constrained its potential benefits. Not all schools chose to release five teachers for training, attendance rates were mixed and the eclectic profile of participants gave an early indication of how the implementation of LGC might manifest in schools. Whilst cohorts of willing teachers transposed experiential learning into their classrooms, the corrosive impact of conscripted participants and failure by schools to adequately establish a cadre of citizenship staff led to highly variable implementation and practice as teachers alternately struggled to maintain a foothold in competitive timetable space, disengaged with the subject, or simply diluted content to its most nebulous form. David said:

Definitely the mistake we made here was we didn't invest more in teams in schools. We
had the one or two teachers that would come out and bring the good news back but you
know well that the good news doesn't always travel because people would go back into
their silos and ... they change their practice but they don't often influence others in the
system in their own school.

Acknowledgement of teachers as agents for curricular change was identified as a key determinant in revitalising the citizenship curriculum, with teacher training institutes having a distinct contribution. Thus far, there has been limited opportunity to engage with LGC in Initial Teacher Education (ITE) yet it was agreed, as illustrated by Tom, a curriculum development officer, that, with support from statutory education bodies this represented the best opportunity to restore curriculum presence and academic credibility:

> *I think revisiting the overarching curriculum framework might lead DE to move on towards requiring the citizenship PGCE … if you look at [university A], I don't know about [university B] but [university A] no longer offers a module in citizenship as part of the Master's programmes and it's partly just because of the reduced status of the subject. So, I think DE and CCEA … they really need to take a lead in this and mark it out as being significant.*

Whilst the initial roll-out of professional development sought to optimize a skilled citizenship team in schools, securing the buy-in of *principals* was identified as a major omission in planning and implementation. It was agreed the legacy of this oversight reinforced a strategic institutional gap that would have to be redressed in any reformulation of citizenship provision, a requisite that Louise, a training officer, conceded:

> *… we didn't start at leadership level and therefore you had principals who were agreeing to have these teachers go out into training--it was an opportunity because we would have had CPD. But for them to actually come back and implement it as part of Learning for Life and Work, was really, really difficult. And I mean it wasn't easy and so therefore there were lots of hurdles not only in terms of us, probably because we didn't have that control at leadership level. . .. we should have started with training for principals first.*

External Factors

The role of *government* occupied a lesser but steady influence in all of the conversations. The early days of curriculum reform were described as a heady time, where the establishment of a new power sharing governing Assembly suggested educational possibilities that hitherto had been marginalized from the discourse of a divided society. Stakeholders' rueful contrast between government then and now exemplified how the intransigent policy gap dominating local politics in recent years belied the optimism at the time. Mary described how early momentum had led to an unprecedented meeting that was unlikely in the partisan governance of today:

> *I can remember one really significant meeting that we had at the time … Everybody and anybody who was involved in education in Northern Ireland at that time was there. . . . [X] lined up everybody in the room that needed to be there, right from senior civil servants to senior Department of Education officials. We had also the opportunity to speak to the then Minister of Education Martin McGuinness. So, I mean all of the kind of groundwork was done. And [from] that meeting, the plan came together which I was lucky enough to be a part of.*

The stop-start nature of NI politics has seen devolved power suspended on five occasions, with the current suspension ongoing at two and a half years. The fall-out of an absent government for over half of the lifespan of the new curriculum has meant that major decisions on education have not been approved. The impact of this was framed in an interpretation that the acrimonious nature of local politics had re-asserted social and educational divisions; yet Stephen also noted there was a growing sense that wider frustration with politicians could re-invigorate a degree of political buy-in:

I do think there might be a case to be made that with the crisis with our political structures and possibility of a border poll … some sort of working group of practitioners primarily, I mean, I don't think it's a job for politicians. For educationalists and practitioners to anticipate the kinds of questions we hope our young people might be able to engage with … I think there's maybe the political support and will for that across many different parties because I think they are all fearful of what might happen if a non-prepared population were to vote in a referendum at the minute.

In the current political stalemate, it was also surmised that conformity with educational standardization could easily become a convenient technique to avoid uncomfortable or difficult subjects, particularly with the added justification that, in getting pupils through exams, teachers were doing what education policy expected of them. Stephen, a university educator and longtime community activist, echoed Robert's pessimism in thinking about the future of citizenship education in light of an exams:

I am not widely optimistic that [citizenship education] is going to transform the education system because its operating within an educational system which has it's other constraints and constrictors. The examination system, the selective system of education we have, all these kinds of things, there are a lot of structural constraints.

Discussion

The innovation of Local and Global Citizenship signaled a new approach to education in Northern Ireland. Dovetailing with larger social and political movements for a more peaceful shared future, the impetus for change was enhanced by a surge of support and interest from policy makers and

educators supplemented with liberal mainstream funding. Stakeholders' long view of the development of the LGC curriculum has provided critical insights into the change processes that shaped not only its inception, but also its subsequent impact and legacy. Representing the zeitgeist of post-Good Friday Agreement optimism, its implementation should have been a curricular success yet, just over a decade later, it is clear that its introduction was flawed, its curriculum position is uncertain and, in the current policy environment, radical change is unlikely. It is not possible to interrogate all dimensions of change implementation in the confines of this paper, but the nexus of Fullan's model enables clearer consideration of a forward-looking agenda.

Integral to any change process for Local and Global Citizenship is a renewed clarity around its construct and purpose and the practicality of attaining this in a complex policy environment. The *external* influence of government involvement in education in regions emerging from conflict can be open to criticism, particularly if it is seen to promote a partisan agenda (Mihr, 2017). In this study, the perceived absence of political manipulation contrasted strikingly with the overt interference more commonly experienced in conflict-affected societies. Such a 'soft touch' was, arguably, influenced by a citizenship curriculum that eschewed what Smith (2003, p.24) described as a 'patriotic' model defined in terms of national identity. In its place, a framework based on rights and responsibilities addressed concepts of citizenship in a way that transcended political and cultural boundaries whilst also fulfilling a key aspiration of the Good Friday Agreement. The flexibility afforded by political non-interference undoubtedly bolstered the educational policy goal to develop a citizenship curriculum that rescinded the minimalist approach of previous initiatives (McCully and Emerson, 2014; O'Connor, 2012). Consistency within government is a key facilitator for educational change, particularly in divided societies where there is a moral as much

as a policy imperative to harness the transformative potential of education (Smith, 2003). It is worth noting that successive Education Ministers from opposing political parties have alternately promoted and rescinded decisions on the character of education in NI which, arguably, have impacted wider curriculum delivery.

Any aspiration that a post-conflict context would accommodate the *characteristics of change* has not been overtly fulfilled in curricular terms; instead the prevailing message from the data was more generically indicative of the complexity of education systems and school infrastructures that have conformed to global trends, as curriculum priorities are negotiated alongside quantifiable (and thereby rank-able) outputs, where school league tables, exam results and parental choice trump innovation (Viennet and Beatriz, 2017; Priestley and Miller, 2012). In this climate, it is difficult to separate the shrinking profile of the LGC curriculum from prevailing asymmetric education that privileges a conventional interpretation of the academic. Progressive approaches are habitually at variance with populist preferences and the reality of standardized teaching and assessment is unlikely to change in the near future so the challenge is is how the LGC curriculum can maintain its innovative profile and regain an academic foothold without resorting to perfunctory measures of learning. That it has not undergone the same rigor of statutory inspection as other subject areas is counterintuitive to the aptitudes and skills that the citizenship curriculum sought to develop and also negates the original substantial financial investment. Stakeholders' pragmatic consideration of how to realistically effect curriculum change in a more meaningful and enduring way illustrated the conundrum of implementing and monitoring a transformative subject area within a conventionally accountable framework. There is increasing recognition that appropriately applied evaluation tools can effectively assess citizenship, reinforcing its status and

position in the curriculum (CoE, 2017). The range of options posited - including a more defined modular approach in the early years of secondary schooling, closer links to History and Geography and stronger alignment with Politics at exam level – has acknowledged benefits and limitations that could potentially meet academic needs whilst retaining an assessable critical dimension. This has implications at *local* level. In the short-term, there is understandable wariness that such changes could prompt reversion to a content-based, risk-averse curriculum, leading to mechanistic forms of assessment that disproportionately measure students' levels of knowledge and critical analysis (Kerr, 2002). In the medium-term, it is a quality assurance intervention that could raise academic credibility by focusing minds in terms of relevant curriculum content, delivery and creative assessment, thereby creating space in the longer term to cultivate a re-branded curriculum presence. In the longer term, consistent top down political investment is required to garner bottom up school buy-in. Advocacy for investment in the teaching workforce (Wurzburg, 2010) recognises that teachers' and principals' willingness to engage in implementing educational change is fundamentally premised on the extent to which they understand the policy intent, share its meaning and have the capacity and skill set for implementation (Roulston and Hansson, 2019; Wurzburg, 2010). Committed leadership is a well-established determinant of educational change and can be defined by the diverse contextual circumstances within which school principals operate (Clarke and O'Donoghue, 2017). As a perceived critical oversight in the implementation of LGC, there is scope to refine the directive and advocacy role of the principal and senior management in advancing curriculum innovation in collaboration with teachers through, for example, appointment of specialist teachers or revitalizing the originally planned citizenship teams in schools. In furthering this, teacher training institutions have a strategic role, occupying a shared space between systemic and school forces. In the absence of the original substantial financial investment, ITE institutions

have potential to revitalize training of teachers to deliver the Local and Global Citizenship curriculum and begin to revitalize capacity building in schools.

Conclusion

In this paper, Fullan's model has provided a valuable synchronized framework to navigate the complexities of curriculum change. Its component parts are of particular benefit within the segregated environment of a divided society, where alignment between educational reform and contextual boundaries, assumes significant influence on the implementation process. The change model highlighted the consequences of educational compromise on the development and delivery of Local and Global Citizenship, but its construct also provided a lucid base to critically consider its future potential. Going forward, this original and timely work lays a strong foundation to inform and shape the citizenship curriculum in Northern Ireland.

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