



Civic Education and Local Government

A Literature Review



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The findings and recommendations in this report are those of the consultant authors and do not necessarily represent the views or proposed policies of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

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Preface

This literature review has been produced as part of the ODPM research project *Civic Education: good practice guidance for local government*. For the purposes of this research, we have defined 'civic education' as educational, learning or promotional activities carried out in a local context by or on behalf of local councils, to enable people to become more involved in democratic processes. This is one aspect of wider government efforts to encourage the development of active citizenship. The focus of the study lies outside the schools-based Citizenship Education programme that is part of the National Curriculum, though activities supporting and extending the curriculum do fall within its remit.

Subsequent stages of the research involve surveys of local government experience in promoting effective citizenship and detailed case studies of interesting practices. The main output from the study is to produce guidance for a wide range of audiences, especially local authorities, on how the delivery of civic education activities may be improved.

This literature review applies the available evidence from within and beyond the UK to UK policy debates about citizenship and local decision-making. It begins by describing the theoretical and policy context surrounding the goal of effective citizenship, outlining recent educative or empowerment initiatives designed to encourage its development. Empirical evidence on the outcomes, practice and purposes of initiatives to promote citizenship is then explored, before prospects for civic education and the future support of effective citizenship are hypothesised.

The research team would be delighted to receive comments on both this review and also on approaches to civic education that are being adopted by local authorities. Please contact Richard Cowell (cowellrj@cardiff.ac.uk 029 2087 6684) or Rhys Andrews (andrewsr@cardiff.ac.uk)

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CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	5
CHAPTER 1	8
Introduction	
CHAPTER 2	10
Theoretical Context	
2.1 Concepts of citizenship	10
2.2 Modes of civic education	11
CHAPTER 3	13
Citizenship Education in Schools	
3.1 The 2000 Citizenship orders	13
3.2 The wider role of local government	14
CHAPTER 4	16
Other Initiatives to Support Effective Citizenship	
CHAPTER 5	18
What are the impacts?	
5.1 Social capital and effective citizenship	18
5.2 Impacts on young people	18
5.3 Government intervention and social responses	20
CHAPTER 6	25
Key types of initiative	
6.1 Citizenship education for adults	25
6.2 Empowerment Initiatives	26
6.3 Capacity-building initiatives	26
6.4 Citizens' juries, dialogues and referendums	27
CHAPTER 7	29
Barriers to Civic Education	
CHAPTER 8	31
Conclusions	
REFERENCES	34

Executive summary

- In the UK, the widely observed disengagement of many citizens from political processes coupled with increasing anti-social behaviour have suggested that support for civic culture and democratic political institutions is deteriorating. To address these problems, policy-makers have taken an increasing interest in encouraging people to reconnect with their communities and with government – an agenda captured in the ideal of ‘active citizenship’. Civic education at the local level could make an important contribution to this task. For the purposes of this research, we have defined ‘civic education’ as educational, learning or promotional activities carried out in a local context, by or on behalf of local councils, to enable people to become more involved in democratic processes.
- The concept of citizenship has a venerable tradition in Western political thought but current UK policy debates centre on the ideal of ‘active citizenship’ which emphasises the need for citizens to fulfil social and political obligations. The content of these obligations remains subject to intense debate, conducted principally between civic-individualists (helping people to become volunteers and informed consumers), civic-republicans (emphasising direct political participation) and civic-pluralists (building a diverse but cohesive civic culture). Although civic republicanism is most strongly associated with current government policy, each of these interpretations is pertinent to the array of practices through which local government might support civic education.
- The recent introduction of citizenship education in English schools offers pointers to the wider development of civic education provided by local government. In particular there is an important role for local authorities in supporting class-based learning, by fostering links to council activities, councillors and the wider community. Current research indicates that opportunities for pupils to connect the education they receive in school with participation in the community are weakly developed at present, and often hampered by the prejudice of adults. Youth cabinets and youth parliaments provide just one set of vehicles for this task.
- Various studies suggest that young people with higher levels of civic knowledge are more confident of participating effectively in politics as adults, more likely to undertake voluntary action, and more willing to vote. These effects are enhanced in learning environments that exhibit democratic practices themselves, by promoting an open climate for discussing issues and encouraging students to take part in shaping school life. The impacts of increasing *adult* political knowledge appear to vary between countries: in Australia it increased political literacy and competence but not participation, whereas in the Dominican Republic and South Africa, civic education led to people becoming more participatory at local level. But improvements in participation were dependent on the provision of training that could overcome the resource disparities that exist for political participation, such as education, political interest and gender.

- Studies that focus on young people suggest that policies to promote effective citizenship must be embedded in people's local concerns, and sensitive to the willingness of citizens to become engaged. The importance of tacit (rather than forced) learning of effective citizenship is well recognised – involvement in service activities and political events can provide raw material in the form of knowledge, models, and reflective matter.
- Evidence from both sides of the Atlantic suggests that social capital (taken here as comprising the resources found within the 'relations among persons', which can generate social action such as obligations and expectations, information channels and social norms) has a positive relationship with political action and civic efficacy. Civic education can help to reinforce this reciprocity. However, perceived opportunities for citizens to influence decisions are at least as important as personal aptitude in encouraging political engagement. Research has suggested that institutional design within local governance can play a large role in shaping the development of communal social capital, notably by improving relationships with the voluntary sector, opportunities for public participation, the responsiveness of decision-making, and arrangements for democratic leadership and social inclusion. Being asked to participate also makes it more likely that people will do so.
- A number of analysts have hypothesised connections between aspects of citizenship/social capital – including levels of trust, civic engagement and volunteering – and government performance. Quantitative studies from the US provide some support for this hypothesis, and research also demonstrates a positive relationship between higher social capital and perceptions of local government. Establishing the direction of cause and effect between performance and citizenship activity is more complex, however, suggesting that policy-makers and practitioners must be sharply attuned to the varying attitudes of different groups of citizens, and the context in which they are working.
- There is evidence that public administrators can influence civic culture in various ways. US studies have shown that local government strategies centring on information, participation and reputation can reduce public cynicism about politics and encourage, *inter alia*, citizens to participate in community affairs. Public servants themselves, acting outside their jobs, are also important contributors to civic culture. In the UK, supporting public participation initiatives with elements of civic education – including capacity building, developing a civic infrastructure of social groups, enabling citizens to shape the terms of involvement, providing feedback – has improved social outcomes.
- There is evidence that initiatives which empower communities have positive impacts, in terms of fostering solutions to problems which are drawn from local peoples' knowledge and experience, in delivering greater accountability to local citizens, and – in some instances – in helping to revitalise democracy by bringing policy making closer to the average citizen. However, ensuring the sustainability of 'bottom up' initiatives remains a thorn in the side of capacity-building and empowerment activities.

- Positive evidence that involving the public in decision-making can have wider impacts on their sense of citizenship is available from analyses of citizens' juries and similar practices. Not only do jurors bring relevant local knowledge and commitment to bear on decision-making that is usually carried out by "experts" but some jurors became more civically active as a result, and all parties gain new skills, knowledge and learning.
- Existing research also highlights some clear barriers to the extent to which civic education type activities will have the desired result. The first challenge is to understand the exclusionary processes that may constrain different groups of people from becoming more effective citizens, to ensure that initiatives do not end up reinforcing existing patterns of disadvantage. Thus different methods are necessary to reach different citizen groups, with particular efforts required to empower the resource-poor by building their capacity for civic engagement. There are also significant resource issues: for the public, these issues are bound up with practical barriers, such as childcare; for local authorities, discretionary, cross-sectoral activities often fair poorly in the pursuit of efficiency savings. Furthermore, more fundamental questions will always remain about the desirability and scope of *government* intervention to establish genuine *citizen-centred* government.
- Drawing a more cohesive picture of what makes for successful civic education is hampered by the various ways in which the successfulness of civic education initiatives is interpreted (knowledge, virtues, behavioural changes etc) and the importance of context in framing the impact of interventions. Nevertheless, local authorities seeking to support effective citizenship will have to address the demand for citizenship initiatives, the sustainability of those initiatives, to tailor them to the social groups concerned, to reinforce effective citizenship with best practices in participation, to achieve greater joined-up working, to think critically about the model of democracy they are promoting, and to evaluate what they do.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Supporting and encouraging citizenship has become an important preoccupation for many Western democracies. In the UK, the widely observed disengagement of many citizens from political processes and declining electoral turnouts, coupled with increasing anti-social behaviour, have suggested that support for civic culture and democratic political institutions is deteriorating (McLaughlin, 2000, 54). These developments have led to concerns that the fabric of social responsibility and obligation upon which citizenship depends is now under serious threat. As a result, civic education is increasingly being seen as essential for British citizens and democracy (Frazer, 2000, 96).

Civic education involves the promotion of the rights and responsibilities associated with the practice of citizenship. This can be delivered in various ways by the state, for example, within schools, through community empowerment initiatives or through public service broadcasting. It can also be delivered by voluntary organisations or political parties. Where the promotion of citizenship in Britain was once regarded as a dangerous ideological minefield for policy-makers (Barber ed., 1996, 16), a range of proposals, initiatives and organisations for encouraging effective citizenship have emerged during the past two decades, from across the political spectrum, to revitalise the civic culture of the UK. These proposals have reflected the sometimes very different aspirations of its supporters, in particular, the ideal of citizenship that underpins their aims.

Typically, ideals of citizenship associated with civic education focus on the notion of 'active citizenship', that is, the idea that citizens should be directly involved in different aspects of politics and society. However, this notion is subject to diverse interpretation: some commentators have seen active citizenship as an alternative to state-funded public services (Fukuyama, 1995), others as an integral feature of living well in a democracy (Barber, 1994; Dagger, 1996), and some regard it as necessary to generate greater cultural cohesion between different social groups (Rosenblum, 1994; Young, 1990). In this literature review, citizenship is understood as 'effective citizenship', implying engagement with the politics, society and culture of local communities through interest or involvement in local decision-making, service delivery or political campaigns. Civic education is thus viewed as embracing a host of communication, capacity and culture-building activities which can support the practice of effective citizenship.

Support for effective citizenship has influenced the policy-making of the Labour government in the UK. Since 1997, it has introduced citizenship education in schools, active learning for active citizenship through the Home Office's Civil Renewal Unit, and a requirement for local authorities to alert

'young people to the working of social and public life... and the means at their disposal for influencing local policies' as part of councils' wider duty to promote 'effective community engagement' (DTLR, 2001, 20). Such an obligation to deliver civic education, thus construed, marks an important restatement of the public domain's 'responsibility of constituting a community or society as a political community' (Ranson and Stewart, 1989, 9). It is also a development which affects other tiers of government. At international level, the EU has sponsored a series of projects on Education for Democratic Citizenship, with the Council of Europe proclaiming 2005 as 'European Year of Citizenship Through Education'. A concern with citizenship also helps to return local democracy to its roots as a forum for local decision-making. The nature of support for effective citizenship within local councils is therefore an important area of interest for researchers and policy-makers.

This literature review describes the theoretical and policy context surrounding civic education. It reflects on state support for citizenship and some of its contemporary theorists, describing citizenship education in secondary schools and other related educative initiatives. Empirical evidence on the social context and the outcomes, practice and purposes of these initiatives to promote citizenship is then examined, before future prospects and key messages for the delivery of civic education are summarised.

CHAPTER 2

Theoretical Context

2.1 Concepts of citizenship

Falling turnouts in general elections in many Western democracies have sparked concerns about support for democratic political processes and the ability of governments to stay in touch with the people. It has also been argued that they have undermined the principle of representative democracy that those who govern should be elected to represent the majority interests of the population. It has been claimed that low voter turnout spells 'unequal turnout that is systematically biased against less well-to-do citizens' leading to 'unequal political influence' (Lijphart, 1997, 1). This is a serious problem in many countries, but has recently become especially so in the UK, where only 59% of the population voted in the 2001 general election, the lowest figure for eighty years. Furthermore, turnout in UK local elections is considerably lower than in other West European democracies and is decreasing still further. Since 1995 it has fallen to an average of 35%, while turnout in France, Germany and Italy has yet to fall below 70% (Martin, 2003, 190). The causes of the particularly low turnout in the UK are unclear. Many believe that it reflects a perception among voters that the powers of local government have declined, although recent evidence to the Balance of Funding review would dispute this. Whatever the reasons, there is little doubt that it has serious implications for political culture in Britain.

The disquiet caused by disturbingly low turnout figures and the decline of civic engagement in many areas has led to a renewed focus on encouraging effective citizenship within local communities (Tam, 1998). This concern has therefore been added to increased stress on citizen satisfaction, user involvement and customer responsiveness in the Local Government Modernisation Agenda (DTLR, 2001). From this perspective, local government is well-placed to play a role in cultivating citizenship, because central government is 'too remote from the communities out of which citizens develop' (Oliver 1991, 90).

Although support for citizenship is a growing contemporary policy concern, proposals to encourage citizenship have a venerable history within Western political thought. The Ancient Greeks believed the promotion of effective citizenship was essential, because political systems were dependent on the 'characters of the community's inhabitants' (Plato, 1994, 100). Likewise Aristotle argued that education for citizenship would deepen citizens' commitment to contribute towards the welfare of their fellows (Aristotle 1962). In the nineteenth century, John Stuart Mill claimed that liberal democracies should help citizens to 'operate with the greatest effect on public affairs', 'by opening to all classes of private citizens... the widest participation in the details of judicial and administration business... and above all by the utmost publicity and liberty of discussions' (Mill, 1991, 229, 286).

In more recent times T.H.Marshall (1992) proposed that 'active citizenship' was the benchmark for the democratic aspirations of a developed democracy such as the UK: an interpretation which emphasises the need for citizens to fulfil social and political obligations. However, the content of the obligations of active citizenship remains subject to intense debate. This debate is principally conducted between civic-individualists, civic-republicans and civic-pluralists.

Civic-individualists have argued that active citizenship is associated with voluntary work, the exercise of consumer rights and social entrepreneurship. Efforts to support this type of citizenship therefore focus on promoting self-reliance, by decreasing dependence on state welfare and inculcating the skills citizens need to become informed consumers of public services. By contrast, civic-republicans propose an ideal of active citizenship that is associated with direct political participation. Support for active citizenship should therefore equip citizens to contribute directly to local communities by participating and deliberating in local and national democratic political processes. Civic-pluralists focus on the need to encourage the participation of underrepresented, disaffected or disengaged social groups in democratic politics. Support for active citizenship here involves the inculcation of the attitudes necessary to build a diverse civic culture.

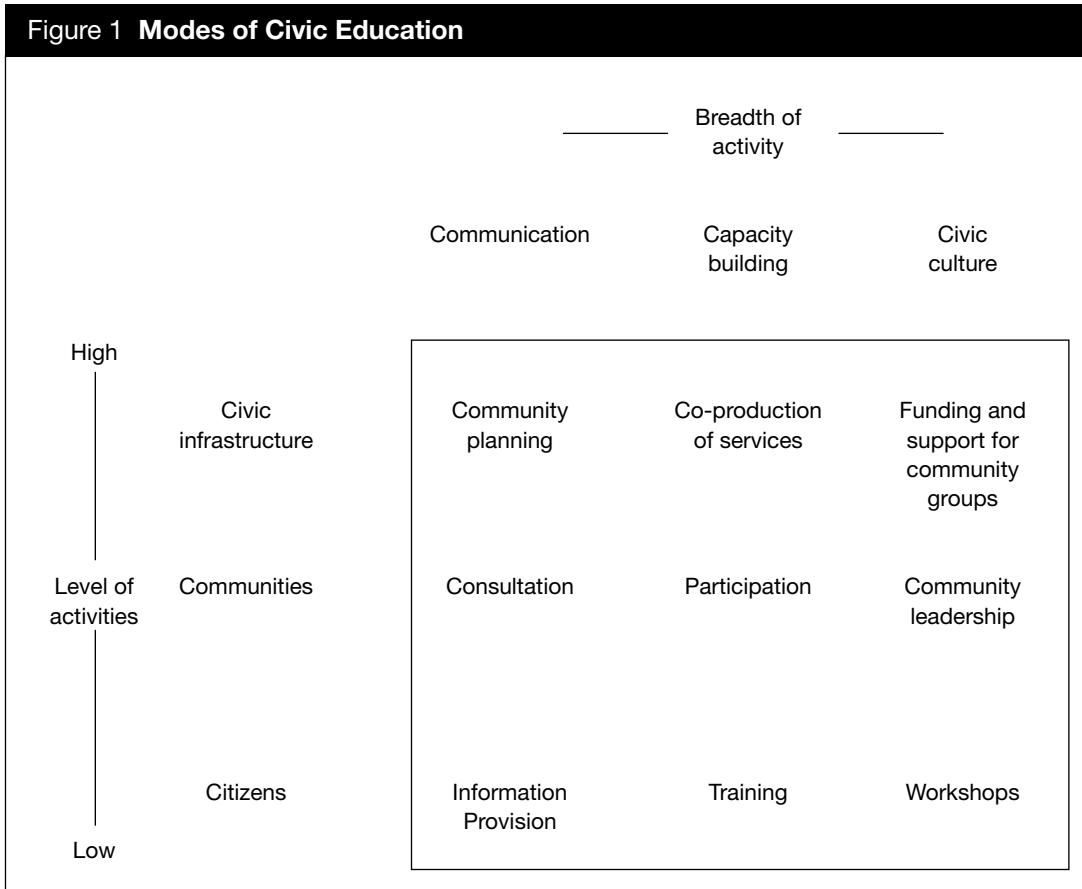
Civic-republicans (Crick in QCA, 1998; Dagger, 1996) communitarians (Delanty, 2003; Etzioni, 1995; Tam, 1998) and radical democrats (Barber, 1984) have gradually begun to influence the policy-making of the Labour government. These theorists have argued that to encourage active citizenship citizens must be given opportunities and the capacity to participate in democratic decision-making. Within policy-making circles, proposals for participation within democratic deliberations have also been supplemented by a focus on increasing citizen involvement in service delivery decisions through user boards, consultation procedures and satisfaction surveys. Although these have emerged from civic-individualist perspectives, such procedures have not been neglected because to do so 'would be to exclude or downgrade attempts directly to consult consumers themselves' (Pollitt, 1988, 82). And, the government recently reaffirmed that it is 'concerned with a comprehensive revitalisation of the ethos of democracy, the strength of civil society, the citizen-orientation of public services, and the vibrancy of community life itself' (Civil Renewal Unit, 2003, 6).

2.2 Modes of Civic Education

Hence, a wide variety of activities can be adopted to facilitate civic education for citizens and communities, ranging from those which require very little input from government, to others which might require significant legal and cultural change. We have systematised these in the figure below.

The figure indicates that the level of civic education activities ranges from those involving only individual citizens to those involving the entire civic infrastructure within a local authority. It also highlights that the breadth of civic education activities ranges from communication arrangements to the building of a civic culture. Consequently, the specific types of activity

Figure 1 Modes of Civic Education



Source: Adapted from (Martin, 2003)

identified span from information provision in the bottom left of the figure to government funding for community groups in the top right of the figure.

The diversity of these modes of civic education led us to approach this review through the concept of 'effective' rather than active citizenship. We believe that 'effectiveness' more readily captures the notion that citizenship does not always require significant action, for example, it may entail being able to understand or access information about local politics and democracy as well as actively participating in decision-making or community groups. Equally, effectiveness can embrace the making of discriminating decisions about how and whether to get involved, rather than a presumption in favour of action *per se*.

CHAPTER 3

Citizenship Education in Schools

Within the theoretical framework outlined above, policies to promote effective citizenship at the local level can be seen as seeking to bring together a wide variety of perspectives on good citizenship. The recent introduction of citizenship education in English schools provides a particularly important example of how philosophical debates about encouraging citizenship have translated into policy implications. In addition, the school curriculum offers pointers to the potential content of civic education provided by local government more widely.

Sir Bernard Crick once argued that any ‘worthwhile education must include some explanation ... that men both do and should want different things that are only obtainable by means or by leave of the public power, and that they can both study and control, in varying degrees, the means by which they reconcile or manage conflicts of interests and ideals’ (Crick 1971, 184). His commitment to this principle bore fruit in 2002 when citizenship education became a statutory foundation subject on the National Curriculum for secondary school pupils in England. Its aim, as stated in the final report of the Citizenship Advisory Group (chaired by Bernard Crick), was to effect ‘no less than a change in the political culture of this country both nationally and locally’ (QCA, 1998). A brief description of the skills and capacities prescribed in the secondary school curriculum orders follows.

3.1 The 2000 Citizenship orders

The learning objectives for *Citizenship* at Key Stage 3 (11-14 year olds) are based around three key skills: ‘Knowledge and understanding about becoming informed citizens’; ‘Developing skills of enquiry and communication’; and ‘Developing skills of participation’. Specific objectives include: establishing ground rules for discussion; understanding democratic community and change; understanding criminal offences and responsibility; understanding rights and responsibilities; understanding different identities; learning how issues are debated in parliament; understanding voting and elections; learning to influence change; and improving communication (QCA, 2000). When pursuing these objectives pupils should ‘think creatively and critically about hypothetical situations and relate hypothetical conclusions to real-life situations’. They should also appreciate ‘some of the possible consequences of low turnout’ and be able to ‘identify and evaluate a range of ways in which decisions are made’ (QCA, 2000, 4-5).

The *Citizenship* orders indicate that 'pupils are more likely to become active citizens if their learning experiences have enabled them to take responsibility for their learning'. The learning environment for Citizenship should therefore support pupils in 'discussing views which may be contrary to their own' by 'promoting appreciation, courtesy, concern, respect, responsibility and understanding'. Moreover, pupils themselves are expected (with guidance) to 'establish ground rules that will enable them to work effectively together' (QCA, 2000, 35).

Citizenship at Key Stage 4 (14-16 year olds) centres on the institutional means by which political solutions are implemented. Pupils are expected to be able to 'discuss difficult issues' and 'know who to go to for help and advice if they feel their rights have been breached'. Consequently, 'active participation is the key to citizenship at this important stage' (QCA, 2001, 3-11). Education for active participation is both social and political. Participation in community work and volunteering is encouraged, with stress also laid on opportunities for pupils to participate in simulated political decision-making procedures (such as mock council debates) and actual school decision-making processes. These activities are expected to be supplemented by peer-group mentoring and tutoring, awareness-raising days, environmental projects and a wide range of community projects. A range of methods for encouraging active participation at Key Stage 4 are described in more detail in *Staying involved: extending opportunities for pupil participation* (QCA, 2000).

3.2 The wider role of local government

As an activity delivered (primarily) through local education authorities, local government is already deeply implicated in citizenship education. Moreover, aspects of the KS4 curriculum indicate that there is a potentially important role for local authorities in supporting school-based learning, by fostering links to council activities, councillors themselves and the wider community. The Citizenship Education Longitudinal Study has revealed that while '95 per cent of school leaders [headteachers and governors] felt that there were good relationships between their school and the wider community', 'students believed that they had little opportunity to participate within the wider community through the school and their sense of belonging to this community was limited' (Kerr, 2004, 10). Overall, the study found that opportunities to participate had been limited to 'discrete events such as clearing a local woodland, visiting a local hospice or taking part in a musical event for old people' (Kerr, 2004, 10). It also highlighted that 'wide ranging catchment areas' and a low 'level of commitment given to the community-school interface' impacted 'negatively upon the development of good relationships between the school and the local community'. Young people were also concerned that better community relations were often hampered by the prejudice of adults' (Kerr, 2004, 12-3).

This evidence suggests that schools have a lot more work to do in developing links with the community and that local authorities can and should play a more active role in supporting and promoting civic education for young people. The fact that many councils (for example, West Sussex and Medway) have established and supported youth cabinets and youth parliaments (Audit

Commission, 2003, 5) provides one set of vehicles for this task. And local authorities are just one of many players connected with the DfES post-16 citizenship programme, with its emphasis on young people learning about civic engagement from actually getting involved in effecting change.

Alongside the schools-based activity and the important 'Active Learning for Active Citizenship' programme being developed by the Home Office, there is a wide range of other initiatives currently supporting the development of effective citizenship in the UK. These initiatives are summarised in the next section, before a broad selection of evidence on the nature of citizenship and social capital is examined.

CHAPTER 4

Other Initiatives to Support Effective Citizenship

Table 1 below shows education-related initiatives designed to support effective citizenship in the UK. The table highlights that there are a vast array of different government, voluntary sector and community agencies involved in promoting and supporting citizenship. Research into the impact and outcomes of these initiatives is in its infancy. The following section will discuss existing research on the context of support for effective citizenship, before evidence on current practice is reviewed.

Table 1 **Citizenship Initiatives**

Agency	Initiatives
Age Concern	Councils for Older People
Audit Commission	'Community Involvement and Empowerment: A Literature Review for the Audit Commission'
Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network	Certificate in Community Volunteering
Black Police Association	Voice of the Youth and Genuine Empowerment
Centre for Creative Communities	Cross-sector collaboration
Charter 88	Promotes active citizenship training
Chartered Institute of Housing	National Certificates in Tenant Participation and Sustainable Communities
Citizen Organising Foundation	US links
Citizenship Foundation	Involvement with schools and the voluntary sector
Common Purpose	Leadership training programmes
Community Development Foundation	Training courses
Community Education Development Centre	Citizenship in schools
Community Initiatives in Citizenship Education Regionally Orientated	Community Leadership Training
Community Service Volunteers	' <i>Provision of Citizenship Training for Community Leaders across Central Government Departments</i> ' (2002)
Connexions	Youth engagement
Council of Europe	Education for Democratic Citizenship 2005 – The European Year of Citizenship Through Education

Table 1 **Citizenship Initiatives (continued)**

Agency	Initiatives
DEFRA	Sustainable Development Education
DfES	Citizenship education in schools Citizen for 16-19 year olds Lifelong Learning Neighbourhood Learning Centres Adult and Community Learning Team
DoH Community Health Councils	The Learning Pathway Patient Forums
Federation for Community Development Learning	National Occupational Standards in Community Development Work
Housing Corporation	Communities in Control
Home Office Active Community Unit; Civil Renewal Unit)	Active Learning for Active Citizenship; Civic Pioneers; Active Citizenship Centre
Improvement and Development Agency	Liason with local authorities
Institute for Community Development and Learning (Middlesex University)	Neighbourhood Renewal, Citizenship and Community Leadership Unit
Institute for Public Policy Research	Citizens' Juries
Joseph Rowntree Foundation	Investors in Communities
Learn Direct	Skills for Life – Citizen UK
Learning and Skills Council	Sustainable Development Education
National Consumer Council	Stronger Voices
National Institute for Adult and Continuing Education	Active Citizenship
National Youth Agency	Getting Connected, Hear by Right, Community Cohesion
ODPM (Neighbourhood Renewal Unit; Social Exclusion Unit)	Skills and Knowledge Programme: The Learning Curve Local Strategic Partnerships
Race on the Agenda	Promotes citizenship classes
Regional Community Development Networks	Links with regional government offices
Stonewall	'Get Involved: A guide to active citizenship for Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual (LGBT) people'
Trafford Hall	Social Action Summer School Young Movers Programme
Worker's Education Association	Community Action Planning
UK Coalition Against Poverty	Supports the UK anti-poverty network to help people experiencing poverty be involved in decision-making
UK Youth Parliament	Yvote? Ynot? Involved with Local Learning Partnerships

CHAPTER 5

What are the impacts?

5.1 Social capital and effective citizenship

Programmes to encourage effective citizenship will require especially careful evaluation because they are characterised by a range of aspirational aims and objectives that are not especially amenable to direct measurement. In particular, it will be important to recognise that effective citizenship itself is a contested concept and that local citizens 'may choose for themselves how to make their views known' (Docherty *et al.* 2001, 2246). This section explores a range of evidence about the context for the development of effective citizenship and its promotion by government, starting with the relationship between social capital, citizenship and political institutions.

One particularly influential way in which policies to support citizenship have been understood in the relevant literature is through the concept of social capital. Social capital is broadly defined as the range of resources found within the 'relations among persons' which can generate social action (Coleman, 1988). It therefore comprises resources within a society, such as obligations and expectations, information channels and social norms, which have direct relevance for the practice of citizenship.

The decline of social capital is a common theme in scholarly and policy-making debates about the nature of society in Western democracies. As Putnam (1993) stated in his study of civic traditions in Italy, 'stocks of social capital, such as trust, norms, and networks, tend to be self-reinforcing and cumulative' leading to a virtuous circle of civic engagement, interpersonal trust and confidence in government. By contrast, 'distrust, shirking, exploitation, isolation, disorder, and stagnation intensify one another in a suffocating miasma of vicious circles' (177). This apparent decline of social capital has meant that the renewal of civic culture and democratic processes has become a key policy aim for many Western governments. But does research show that there is a link between social capital, civic culture and positive citizenship behaviours? And, what evidence is there to support the efficacy of policies (such as, civic education) to revitalise commitment to mainstream politics and society?

5.2 Impacts on young people

There is a growing body of research into political attitudes, abilities and participation, particularly amongst young people. One recent study has shown that children and young people are 'interested in current affairs, with TV, newspapers and radio all being cited as sources of information'. However,

it is also apparent that 'cynicism and lack of trust in formal politics and politicians' can lead to disaffection with conventional political participation (Hine *et al.* 2004, 5). Although there has been a rise in support for non-conventional political participation amongst young people, there remains widespread concern that civic engagement in the UK has 'shifted from organizations dedicated to the public interest in favour of those that serve more narrow individual purposes' (Hall, 1999, 450). These issues illustrate that civic education is an important preoccupation for researchers and policy-makers seeking to promote effective citizenship amongst young people.

The DfES suggested in its recent publication, *Working Together - Giving Children and Young People a Say* (DfES 2004/0134), that school pupils should be encouraged to:

- Participate in creating, building and improving services to make them more responsive to their needs and those of the wider community;
- Make a difference in their schools, neighbourhoods and communities;
- Contribute to a cohesive community (DfES, 2004, 1.1).

This is being promoted partly in response to the increased awareness of the rights of children as recognised in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child – Article 12. But it is also part of the government's overall drive to address educational failure, anti-social behaviour and the well-being of young people (DfES, 2003). So what evidence is there to suggest that promoting and supporting citizenship may prove effective in meeting such a diverse range of policy aims?

The IEA (International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement) Civic Education study of 80,000 14 year olds in 26 countries, including England, has suggested that young people with higher levels of civic knowledge are more confident of participating effectively in politics as adults. In particular, 'the more students know about fundamental democratic processes and institutions, the more likely they are to expect to vote as adults' (Kerr *et al.*, 2002, 4). A survey conducted in Hertfordshire schools has indicated that there was a 'positive and significant influence of citizenship education programmes' on voluntary action, trust, political efficacy and willingness to vote (John *et al.*, 2003). Research has also shown that schools that best modelled democratic practices, by promoting 'an open climate for discussing issues and inviting students to take part in shaping school life', scored higher in tests evaluating civic knowledge and participation. Moreover, pupils in such schools were 'more likely to expect to vote as adults than other students' (Torney-Porta *et al.*, 2001, 8). Such positive outcomes, when put together over a longer period of time, may justify renewed attention being paid to the reduction of voting age in the UK (ICM 2004). And there is wide-ranging evidence from the UK and beyond which links education and attitudes to political participation and social capital.

Many studies that focus on young people offer wider pointers on how civic education may best be delivered. Research in the UK has indicated that young people's perceptions of citizenship may be more strongly shaped by the idea

of community membership than by the idea of political participation (Lister *et al*, 2003, 251). This suggests that policies to promote effective citizenship amongst young people must be embedded in their local concerns.

Furthermore, Australian research (Warburton and Smith, 2003) has shown that compulsory programmes of participation for young people can weaken positive citizenship behaviours, highlighting that support for citizenship must be sensitive to the willingness of citizens to become engaged. The role of the Youth Service work in providing such a focal-point for the tacit (rather than forced) learning of effective citizenship is well recognised (Hall *et al*, 2000; Williamson, 1997). Indeed, service learning initiatives for young people and adults can provide experience and accreditation for the development of effective citizenship (Annette, 2003). Schools, 'service activities, and involvement in political events provide raw material – knowledge, models, and reflective matter – and various forms of feedback, but it is ultimately youth themselves who synthesise this material, individually and collaboratively, in ways that make sense to them' (Youniss *et al*. 2002, 133). This sensitivity to the autonomy of young people also applies to civic education programmes for adults.

5.3 Government intervention and social responses

One survey of the published research on the links between education and politics in the UK (Emler and Frazer, 1999) has highlighted that a range of factors associated with education, such as cognitive abilities, personality, socio-economic status, opportunities and network position have a positive impact on participatory outcomes. And, evidence from the 2000/2001 General Household Survey suggests that social capital (at least in terms of supportive attitudes to political engagement, involvement in associations and positive perceptions of neighbourhood) had a positive relationship with political action and civic efficacy (Fahmy, 2004, 12-19). This analysis found that 'perceived opportunities for citizens to influence decisions could be at least as important as personal 'political competency' in encouraging political engagement' (Fahmy, 2004, 9). These types of finding have also emerged from large-scale studies conducted in the US during the past three decades.

Analysis of data from the 1990-92 National Election Study in the United States revealed that public-minded citizens showed a 7-8 per cent 'greater likelihood of working on community problems and giving to charity' (Funk, 1998, 606). Furthermore, those 'who placed a greater priority on benefiting the collective appeared to practice what they preach', suggesting that 'appeals for greater civic engagement are more effective when they "activate"' public interest (610-1). Results from a US Citizen Participation Study conducted in 1989, indicated that, in addition to time, money and political interest, civic-skills were 'powerful predictors of political participation in America' (Brady *et al*, 1994, 285). Increased attendance at planning or decision-making meetings, letter-writing and making presentations or speeches led to statistically significant increases in voting, 'working in a campaign, contacting government officials, protesting, engaging in informal community activity, serving on a local governing board or attending board

meetings'. Moreover, 'involvement in high school government' led to an increase in political participation (Brady *et al*, 1994, 282-3). This type of picture appears to hold over time. Research based on US General Social Surveys from 1972 to 1994 has shown that there is a 'tight reciprocal relationship between civic engagement and interpersonal trust', with the causal effect of the former on the latter 'much stronger than the reverse effect' (Brehm and Rahn, 1997, 1017). Government policies to increase effective citizenship can therefore 'stave off unabated declines in social capital' (Brehm and Rahn, 1997, 1014-5).

There is some evidence that the development of effective citizenship is dependent on civic-minded citizens and a civic-minded government, although contextual conditions have to be carefully considered. Research in Scotland has shown that although residents in poorer areas have 'a stronger sense of community and belonging', they are 'less trustful of local community groups and political institutions' (Docherty *et al*, 2001, 2244). Another study indicated that the development of 'communal' social capital at the neighbourhood level is less susceptible to strategic direction by community leaders than 'collaborative' social capital across neighbourhoods (Purdue, 2001). Nevertheless, wider research has suggested that institutional design within local governance can play a large role in shaping the development of communal social capital. For example, through 'relationships with the voluntary sector; opportunities for public participation; the responsiveness of decision-making; and arrangements for democratic leadership and social inclusion' (Lowndes and Wilson, 2001, 633). Again, this shows the connections between 'external' behaviour by the public and 'internal' behaviour by local government, suggesting a range of policy instruments, sensitively applied by councils, can facilitate the development of local citizenship, including the careful design of participation opportunities.

Analysis of the UK Citizen Audit Survey has shown that 'being asked to participate makes it more likely people will participate. And political engagement matters too: the more interested people are in politics, the more likely they are to engage in all types of civic activism' (Pattie *et al*, 2003, 465). Further analysis of the survey also showed that increased interpersonal trust had a positive effect on electoral turnout and satisfaction with democracy. In addition, attachment to the neighbourhood was associated with more political protesting, greater active membership of voluntary groups and improvements on some measures of social services and education performance (Barnes *et al*, 2004, 9-11). This highlights that there may be a relationship between social capital, civic-education policies and government performance.

Boix and Posner (1998) hypothesise five ways in which increased social capital can contribute to better government performance. First, 'citizens will be able to overcome the collective action dilemmas' that are associated with influencing government policy. Second, government will be relieved of the 'burden of enforcing compliance' with legislation. Third, citizens will be more supportive of future-orientated investments, rather than 'short-term consumption-orientated expenditures'. Fourth, increased trust within public organisations will lead to greater bureaucratic efficiency and effectiveness. Fifth, a surplus of social capital within different social groups can make inter-

group cooperation more likely (Boix and Posner, 1998, 690-3). But is there evidence to support these hypotheses?

Regression analysis of 'hard' quantitative performance measures for the 50 US states has shown that aspects of social capital identified with 'generalised reciprocity' (such as volunteering, census response and social trust) are associated with better overall state government performance (Knack, 2002, 782). Even when controlling for other potential determinants of performance (e.g. income and education), volunteering, census response and social trust are associated with better performance for state governments. In particular, volunteering had a statistically significant positive effect on measures of financial and capital management and use of ICT, while social trust had a similar effect on measures of human resource management and use of ICT (Knack, 2002, 782-4).

Further research in the US (Rice, 2001), which used 'soft' qualitative measures of government performance based on citizens' perceptions, found that areas high in social capital tended to view local government more positively. Regression analysis showed that when controlling for socio-economic differences, the values associated with social capital, such as trust, political equality and civic engagement, had a large statistically significant impact on perceptions of performance (383-6). Civic engagement at a community level was also strongly correlated with perceptions of responsiveness and effectiveness (381). The authors concluded that 'it does not take much variation in social capital to significantly influence the performance of democratic governments' (387). And a comparative study of the performance of German local governments has shown that 'governments in communities with high social capital do a better job in satisfying their citizens than do those in communities where social capital is low' (Cusack, 1999, 19). Evidence is also emerging in England that better local government performance is associated with higher levels of electoral approval (Mulholland, 2004). By contrast, 'poor performance by government can initiate downward spirals in social capital by first undermining trust, and then feeding into the reciprocal cycle' (Brehm and Rahn, 1997, 1014-5). But to what extent are social capital and civic participation the cause or effect of good government?

Research conducted in Israel has suggested that citizens 'may become active only when some of their essential needs are not satisfied by public authorities. Despite feelings of high citizenry influence, motivation to take active part in state-level politics or in community activities diminishes when there is no obvious need for action' (Vigoda, 2002, 267). These findings about the non-participation of satisfied citizens appear consistent with a 'culture of contentment' (Galbraith, 1993) with public services which stands in contrast to the disaffection which is often associated with local councils (MORI, 2003). And research into political attitudes in Western Europe has also produced evidence which suggests that higher levels of social capital contribute to 'higher levels of subjective political interest and lower levels of political saliency simultaneously' (Van Deth, 2000, 138). Hence, public administrators committed to civic education and support for citizenship must be sharply attuned to the varying attitudes of different groups of citizens, and the context in which they are working.

A review of recent public opinion surveys in the UK has shown that trust in British public institutions has declined, 'in some cases quite significantly' (MORI, 2003, 5). Although trust in public sector professionals was high, ranging from 64-91 per cent, trust in local government, and local politicians ranged from 16-40 per cent (MORI, 2003, 12-14). The research also found that trust in public institutions could be enhanced through better service delivery and by improving communication and openness (MORI, 2003, 6-7). However, the British public currently view local councils as comparatively poor communicators in relation to other organisations (MORI, 2003, 36; ODPM, 2004) suggesting that there is large scope for communication-based civic education activities.

A study in the US (Berman, 1997) has shown that public cynicism about politics can be reduced by local government through a range of different municipal strategies centring on information, participation and reputation. In particular, statistically significant reductions in public cynicism were associated with increased information about what government does, service performance, and, how government fairly balances different interests. They were also associated with certain types of participation strategy, in particular, citizen panels for controversial issues, voter referenda and ballots, and campaigns to portray local government in a positive light (Berman, 1997, 107). This research showed that municipal strategies were most effective in reducing cynicism where cynicism was already high (108). Using more municipal participation strategies was also 'significantly associated with trust after controlling for economic and social conditions'. Specific policy objectives significantly associated with such strategies included: 'getting citizens to abide by the law'; 'getting citizens to participate in community affairs'; 'getting citizens to be supportive of local government'; and 'getting citizens to accept new regulations'. It is therefore clear that public administrators can have an impact on civic culture (111).

A survey of social capital in Britain (Hall, 1999) has stressed the important role of government support for voluntary organisations. This study argues that social capital is more resilient in Britain than other countries because voluntary participation in social services delivery has been 'accompanied by large public expenditures, via grants and fees for services, to the kinds of associations that mobilize voluntary action at the local level'. Furthermore, it was found that 'public officials provided the impetus' for creating more voluntary associations than 'any other source' (Hall, 1999, 443). Additional evidence from the US (Brewer, 2003) has shown that public employment is a significant predictor of civic participation, even when controlling for age, education, income, social altruism and commitment to equality. Public servants who were highly active in civic affairs were strongly involved in the building of social capital more generally through a variety of 'extra-role behaviours' (Brewer, 2003, 16-20).

The factors affecting participation and effective citizenship which are susceptible to government influence have been modelled by Lowndes *et al* (2002). Their model is illustrated in Table 2 overleaf.

Table 2 Citizenship Initiatives

Factors promoting participation: it's CLEAR		
Factor affecting participation	How it works	Associated Policy Target
Can do	The individual resources that people have to mobilise and organise (speaking, writing and technical skills, as well as the confidence to use them)	Capacity Building
Like to	To commit to participation requires a sense of involvement with the public entity that is the focus of engagement	Sense of community, civic engagement, social capital and citizenship
Enabled to	The civic infrastructure of groups and umbrella organisations makes a difference because it creates or blocks an opportunity structure for participation	To build the civic infrastructure so that there are groups and organisations around which channel and facilitate participation
Asked to	Mobilising people into participation by asking for their input can make a big difference	Public participation schemes that are diverse and reflexive
Responded to	When asked people say they will participate if they are listened to, not necessarily agreed with, but able to see a response	A public policy system that can show a capacity to respond

The table highlights that the factors which improve the level and quality of participation are closely connected with the goals of civic education. In particular, civic capacity and culture-building activities are likely to figure in policies to promote participation, social capital and civic education. Of the range of strategies open to local councils in the UK, however, citizens have expressed a preference for one-stop shops, questionnaires, face-to-face interviews and on-going forums. There is also some enthusiasm 'for forms of citizen education which explained how the council worked and what opportunities there were for participation' (Lowndes et al, 2001b, 449). Nevertheless, these positive findings need to be treated with caution because local citizens may give their approval for more participation in principle, without wishing to actually become more involved.

CHAPTER 6

Key types of initiative

We have examined so far a range of evidence which explores how far social capital and effective citizenship are related to each other and to government policy-making and performance. This section focuses on different types of initiative to support citizenship in the UK and beyond, highlighting their outcomes, effectiveness and any lessons learned, where evidence is available.

6.1 Citizenship education for adults

The Active Learning for Active Citizenship Initiative being delivered by the Home Office Civil Renewal Unit involves the setting up of regional 'Active Learning Hubs' to coordinate a range of voluntary sector and community activity. The government will assess the sustainability of these learning partnerships to ascertain their progress in sharing learning opportunities and providing a national framework of support for active citizenship. The steering group managing this process liaises with the newly formed Active Citizenship Centre to 'develop advice and examples of citizenship skills that local groups can use' (Home Office, 2004, 6). This work will also overlap with the development of Neighbourhood Learning Centres by the DfES, as well as the good practice guidance to be produced from this study, prompting questions about the need for "joined-up government" in delivering successful citizenship education for adults. So what evidence is there that these processes will have a lasting impact on citizens?

Research in Australia has suggested that increased adult political knowledge increases political literacy and competence but not participation (McAllister, 1998, 8). However, research into the impact of adult civic education programmes provided by NGOs in the Dominican Republic and in South Africa (Finkel, 2002) suggests that they can have a meaningful effect on local-level participation. In the Dominican Republic, 'individuals who were exposed to civic education... were roughly twice as participatory as individuals in the control group, with the largest effects being seen for community problem-solving participation and attendance at local municipal meetings'. Similar results were found for two out of three programmes of civic education studied in South Africa (Finkel, 2002, 1006-10). Improvements in participation were dependent on frequent training with 'active, participatory methodologies', to overcome 'the resource disparities that exist for political participation', such as education, political interest and gender (Finkel, 2002, 1012-7). This suggests that civic education in Western democracies, too, needs to focus on enhancing the participatory capacity of the resource-poor to a greater extent than the resource-rich. Such an outcome is the objective of community empowerment initiatives.

6.2 Empowerment Initiatives

Community empowerment initiatives may take a variety of forms, requiring a greater or lesser degree of commitment from local citizens. Highly participative community empowerment or involvement initiatives mean that 'people engage with the issues and probably with each other, quite intensively over a long period of time' (Steele and Seargent, 1999, 10). They are therefore thought to be highly effective in developing the sort of mutual understanding and shared concerns which communities require in order to make democratic decisions for themselves (Phillips, 1996, 22-3). Indeed, they may rejuvenate the democratic process (Norris, 1999, 76).

One study confirms the widely accepted view that where local ownership of policy debates was fostered the solutions which emerged had 'more chance of working because they are drawn from local peoples' knowledge and experience' (Young, 2000, 183-4). Another study has indicated that community-based decision making organisations also deliver improved accountability to local citizens, because they are 'open to the influence, in practice not just in principle, to most of the people they serve' (Clapham *et al*, 2000). Citizen control of the provision of local care for the elderly in some areas of Japan has 'helped revitalise democracy' there 'through activating the political process and bringing policymaking closer to the average citizen' (Eto, 2001, 33).

One government-sponsored neighbourhood association in Toulouse, France evolved from an 'informal network of radicals into a formal political entity' that directly transmitted 'the interests of the associative sector to the local political society' (Nicholls, 2003, 363). Research into local environmental policy delivery in the UK has also indicated that 'the institutional role of the state is fundamental' to efforts to utilise social capital as 'a way of securing effective policy delivery' (Pennington and Rydin, 2000, 247-8).

6.3 Capacity-building initiatives

In the early 1990's Chicago introduced a wide range of initiatives to build citizen capacity and mobilise communities to become more involved in education and policing. These were coordinated by the Illinois Legislature and the Police Department and involved hiring 'community organisers and trainers to rove throughout the neighbourhoods teaching group problem-solving skills' (Fung and Wright, 2001, 9-10). The municipal government in Porto Alegre, Brazil introduced 'participatory budgeting' in the late 1980s by devolving and delegating financial decisions to new budget councils comprising elected neighbourhood representatives. City agencies 'offer courses and seminars on budgeting for Council delegates as well as for interested participants from the regional assemblies'. 8 per cent of the adult population, some 100,000 people, participated in the 1996 budgetary process from the regional assemblies to the budget council (Fung and Wright, 2001, 14).

In India the state of West Bengal has sought to democratise the village governance system in the area by devolving greater responsibilities and

finance to village assemblies. The subsequent explosion of village planning was led by 'volunteer technical committees' comprising retired professionals to assist local assemblies in carrying out their new responsibilities effectively (Fung and Wright, 2001, 14-16). Participatory budgeting has also been used by a range of organisations and local authorities across the UK, notably by the organisation Community Pride, which helps marginalised groups in getting involved in working with local authorities in north-west England (www.communitypride.org.uk). Local anti-poverty strategies in Rotterdam have also adopted a wide range of devices to facilitate capacity-building, such as 'conference activities and publicity campaigns' (Beaumont, 2003, 200).

In the UK, community empowerment initiatives in Walsall associated with the Single Regeneration Budget Scheme 1996-2003 were supplemented by a range of capacity-building exercises. Council staff and other stakeholders involved in the initiatives attended 'Real Time Strategic Change' events which coordinated and facilitated debate on and development of appropriate approaches to maximising involvement at the local level (Gaster and Sullivan, 1998, 46). Neighbourhood Committees were set up and project officers, consultants and facilitators worked with communities to make these committees capable of exercising devolved authority. The council supported strategic direction of these developments and action learning successfully built local capacity, but concerns remain about the bottom-up activity needed to sustain such initiatives (Gaster and Sullivan, 1998). This illustrates that there is a close connection between civic education and community empowerment.

6.4 Citizens' Juries, Dialogues and Referendums

As we noted above, many approaches to involving the public in decision-making can have wider impacts on their sense of citizenship, especially – but not exclusively – those which seek to foster the virtues of deliberative democracy. Citizens' juries have proved a popular means for promoting effective citizenship across the globe. Indeed, research has shown that the public at large is more willing to trust the decisions of public jurors than those of elected representatives (Bromley *et al*, 1999, 66). In the UK, the Institute of Public Policy Research (IPPR), the Local Government Management Board and others have sponsored pilot projects in citizen's juries (Smith and Wales, 2000, 56). Research on citizen's juries has shown that jurors bring relevant local knowledge and commitment to bear on decision-making that is usually carried out by "experts" (Woodward, 2000, 237). Moreover, jurors' attitudes change as they become more involved with the issues (Crosby, 1994).

The use of citizen's juries in healthcare decisions has indicated that 'given enough time and information, the public are willing and able to engage in debates about the allocation of finite resources' (Lenaghan, 1999, 60). In particular, they enable the public to affirm what values should guide decision-making, 'in their capacity as citizens, rather than individual users' (Lenaghan, 1999, 60). Other surveys conducted in the UK suggest that jurors became

more civically active as a result (McIver, 1997, 58-9), and that jurors, members and officers involved in citizens' juries all gain new skills, knowledge and learning (Lowndes *et al*, 2001). The enthusiasm and commitment of participants in one citizens' jury led researchers to suggest that the prospects for engagement with local politics may be less bleak than for engagement with party politics (Woodward, 2000, 236).

Another variant of the citizens' jury is the community dialogue. A study conducted in the USA (Weeks, 2000) has found that large-scale experiments with questionnaires and community workshops for a large sample of the population enabled local government to generate sufficient political will to address intractable local issues. Community dialogue appeared to improve council communication with the public, raise the level of local political debate and generate inclusiveness through random selection for participation (Weeks, 2000, 370-371).

In the UK, a small number of local referenda have been used in English councils to poll local feeling about particular local issues. For instance, Bristol, Croydon and Milton Keynes have used referenda to 'test public opinion about council tax levels and associated packages of service spending' (ODPM, 2002). To help local citizens make informed decisions, ballot papers for local government referenda are typically supplemented with a fact sheet (LGA, 1999b), which exemplifies a commitment to, at least, a minimum of civic education. These modes of promoting effective citizenship may become more influential still as consultation and communication becomes more important, especially via the internet. Indeed, local authorities in England are now undertaking an array of internet-based civic engagement projects, such as community web-sites, local issues polls and webcast council meetings (LGA, 2001, 14-15).

In addition, to these consultative devices there are now moves towards encouraging greater citizen choice of local services as a process of 'delegated decision-making' (Lent and Arend, 2004, 6). This will clearly have an impact on the development of effective citizenship, and there is some evidence from the US which suggests that choice in the public sector has beneficial effects for social capital (Schneider *et al*, 1997). In particular, 'the act of school choice seems to stimulate parents to become more involved in a wide-range of school-related activities that build social capital', such as membership of voluntary organisations (Schneider *et al*, 91). Nevertheless, it is important to stress again that the evidence reviewed here highlights that different types of support for effective engagement are required for different social groups, especially those which are resource-poor or socially excluded.

CHAPTER 7

Barriers to Civic Education

UK research has shown that citizens' perceptions of local government and their political involvement vary widely. Many are unaware of the 'limitations of local authority responsibilities' and of what opportunities for participation already exist, only getting involved in local issues that directly affect them (Lowndes *et al*, 2001b, 447-52). Broad concerns have been raised that introducing state-support for citizenship could increase alienation from politics amongst those that it desperately needs to re-engage with democratic processes by failing to convince them of the efficacy of their participation. Many researchers therefore stress that it is crucial to understand the exclusionary processes that may constrain involvement in empowerment initiatives (Barnes *et al*, 2003).

One study noted that it is often 'difficult to draw lower-income groups and young people into the participation programmes' implemented by councils (Young, 2000, 189). Other research has suggested that innovations in Youth Forums are often limited to "youth-specific" issues and not fully integrated with the wider democratic process (Fitzpatrick *et al*, 1998). Crucially, some participatory strategies can damage the equity of local decision-making, because the skills required for successful participation privilege those sections of the community which already possess the best access to political and economic resources (Murdoch *et al*, 2000, 198-214). Equally, the involvement of powerful interest groups may seriously skew the overall orientation of community involvement structures (Raco, 2000). Because participation initiatives can reinforce existing patterns of social exclusion and disadvantage, 'different participation methods are necessary to reach different citizen groups' (Lowndes *et al*, 2001b, 453); as, indeed, are different 'consultation techniques' (ODPM, 2002). This again highlights the importance of initiatives to empower the resource-poor by building their capacity for citizenship and civic engagement.

There are other resource issues, both for the public and for councils. For the public, these may be bound up with practical barriers, such as childcare, transport and so on which would need to be addressed for local authorities to successfully implement programmes to encourage effective citizenship. For local authorities, evidence shows that participatory strategies often cannot be sustained in the face of 'pressure for efficiency gains' (Martin and Boaz, 2000, 48-52). In New Zealand, attempts to introduce citizen juries in local government have been criticised because they were 'complex, costly and time-consuming'. Despite, their value for developing social capital and educating citizens, it was felt that they should be used only where local issues have reached 'a threshold of citizen awareness' (Cheyne and Comrie, 2002, 481).

The sustainability of policy initiatives for citizenship is clearly an enduring problem. A recent survey of initiatives relating to effective citizenship in English councils revealed a growing number and diversity of participation initiatives, but also that collaboration between different agencies is difficult to sustain, due to legal and cost constraints, social exclusion issues, 'ad hoc' adoption of techniques, and little formal evaluation of initiatives (LGA, 1999a). One review of community involvement initiatives found that community engagement tends to 'evaporate again when programmes are implemented' (Channon, 2003).

Aside from these issues of implementation, more fundamental questions will always remain about the desirability and scope of government intervention to establish genuine "citizen-centred" government (Marinetto, 2003). For example, some observers are concerned that state-sponsored activities may render citizens unable to participate in the 'active, collective engagement that was part and parcel of involvement in autonomously organised grassroots community associations' (Chandler, 2000, 1). For Nablusi (2004), such common purpose, does not 'emanate from above, from bureaucrats or technocrats, from the minds of political theorists or commentators', but rather 'customary practice in the public sphere, especially through organised resistance to undemocratic rule'. Others fear that citizenship initiatives mean that 'the realm of political possibilities open to movements has shrunk', with participants 'having to agree to a dialogue the terms and boundaries of which are defined in advance' (Fillieule, 2003, 325).

CHAPTER 8

Conclusions

We have surveyed a wide range of evidence on the context and nature of support for effective citizenship through education and other activities sponsored by government. This section summarises the outcomes of civic education activities, describes future prospects for effective citizenship in the UK and proposes criteria for delivering successful civic education.

From the research as a whole, we wish to highlight the following key messages:

- Opportunities for school pupils to connect school-based learning with participation in the community are weakly developed at present, and often hampered by the prejudice of adults. This indicates an important role for local authorities in supporting class-based learning, by fostering links to council activities, councillors and the wider community.
- Young people with higher levels of civic knowledge are more confident of participating effectively in politics as adults, more likely to undertake voluntary action, and more willing to vote. These effects are enhanced where learning environments are democratic in themselves, are embedded in people's local concerns, and sensitive to the willingness of citizens to become engaged. The importance of tacit (rather than forced) learning of effective citizenship is well recognised.
- While levels of social capital have a positive relationship with political action and civic efficacy, institutional design within local governance can play a large role in shaping the development of communal social capital, by improving relationships with the voluntary sector, opportunities for public participation, the responsiveness of decision-making, and arrangements for democratic leadership and social inclusion. Positive statistical relationships have been identified between parameters of social capital and government performance. Establishing the direction of cause and effect between performance and citizenship activity is more complex, however.
- There is evidence that local government strategies centring on information, participation and reputation can reduce public cynicism about politics and encourage, *inter alia*, citizens to participate in community affairs. Supporting public participation initiatives with elements of civic education – including capacity building, developing a civic infrastructure of social groups, enabling citizens to shape the terms of involvement, providing feedback – also improves social outcomes. Thus the mode and process of delivery can have as significant an effect on outcomes as the substantive content.

- There is evidence that initiatives which empower communities have positive impacts, in terms of fostering solutions to problems which are drawn from local peoples' knowledge and experience, in delivering greater accountability to local citizens, and – in some instances – in helping to revitalise democracy by bringing policymaking closer to the average citizen.

Drawing a more cohesive picture from the available data is difficult. For starters, it is clear that the 'successfulness' of civic education initiatives can be interpreted in different ways, depending on the dominant objectives, the definition of 'the problem' to be solved, and whether one is speaking to government, the voluntary sector, or particular sectors of the public. Effective citizenship itself is a contested concept and local citizens 'may choose for themselves how to make their views known' (Docherty *et al*, 2001, 2246). 'Success' has been interpreted in the available literature:

- in terms of the **knowledge** that it imparts, about the opportunities for democratic participation and about the best way of using them.
- in terms of the **virtues** it inculcates in participants, such as promoting appreciation, courtesy, respect, responsibility and self-confidence.
- in terms of the **behavioural changes** that it triggers, in terms of the willingness and ability of people to participate in a wide range of decision-making settings including – but certainly not restricted to – turning out to vote in local elections.
- in terms of **access** to meeting space, ICT and presentational materials, funding and dedicated staff

Policy-makers also have to acknowledge that social context can make a significant difference to the impacts of their interventions, and that different types of initiative are typically associated with different types of outcome. Nevertheless, the literature review has confirmed the key areas which local authorities seeking to support effective citizenship will have to address:

- **Sustainability:** the future direction and evolution of initiatives: reflecting the evidence that support for citizenship is often difficult to sustain
- **Demand:** the types of initiatives that citizens want (Foley and Martin, 2000): reflecting the evidence that involving the active participation of local citizens in the design of initiatives can make them more effective
- **Tailoring:** different approaches to assist different, and especially marginalised citizen groups: reflecting the evidence that different types of initiatives should be used to support different communities (of locality, identity or interest) (Barnes *et al*, 2003)
- **Best practice participation:** integrating initiatives within the council decision-making process and improving feedback on outcomes (Lowndes *et al*, 2001b, 453); reflecting the evidence that opportunities for

participation must be seen to be meaningful and susceptible to citizen influence

- **Joined-up working:** integrating initiatives with other related programmes: reflecting the need to overcome the proliferation and *ad hoc* nature of many initiatives
- **Models of democracy:** the type of democratic processes that initiatives should support: reflecting the evidence that empowerment initiatives have differing implications for local democracy itself (Andrews and Turner, 2003), pushing it in more consumerist or public interest directions.
- **Evidence:** measuring civic education outcomes (Chanan, 2002): reflecting recent work to develop measures of community involvement, and the general paucity of evaluation in this field.

Overall, the existing evidence base for what delivers success is useful but not extensive, and there is relatively little research that has examined directly the efficacy of civic education delivered by local government outwith the schools curriculum. Nevertheless, local government is well placed to play a full role in supporting effective citizenship and enabling local communities to participate and deliberate in democratic decisions. Although existing research has shown how broad social characteristics significantly influence citizenship activity, it is also true that local institutions can generate increased social capital and civic engagement. Central government has already begun implementing a wide range of initiatives to support citizenship. The diversity of these projects and strategies, and the evidence from the Citizenship Education Longitudinal Study, beg important questions about joined up working amongst institutions at national and local levels. Future research on civic education will help practitioners, policy-makers and theorists to clarify the contribution that local government can make to nation-wide efforts to develop the capacity for effective citizenship.

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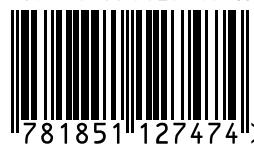
This literature review has been produced as part of an ODPM research project, *Civic education: good practice guidance for local government*, which aims to support local authorities in their efforts to enable and encourage more people to become involved in local democracy.

The review looks at evidence from within and beyond the UK relevant to national policy debates about citizenship and local decision making. After discussing the theoretical and policy context surrounding the goal of effective citizenship, it outlines recent educative and empowerment initiatives designed to encourage its development, including citizenship education for young people. It then looks at research on the relationship between local government, 'social capital' and democratic participation, as well as at the barriers to promoting effective citizenship. Although relatively little research has been published on local authority civic education as such, the review was able to draw on the literature available to pull together the key issues which local authorities will need to address in developing initiatives to support effective community engagement, and to propose the criteria by which the success of such initiatives could be measured.

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