

REPORT 3 UPDATE:

Citizenship, technology and learning – a review of recent literature

A report for Futurelab
Neil Selwyn, London Knowledge Lab, UK












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This report updates Futurelab's 2003 Literature Review of Citizenship, Technology and Learning and should be read in conjunction with that report. This can be found at www.futurelab.org.uk/litreviews

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report updates and extends the 2003 Futurelab 'Literature Review in Citizenship, Technology and Learning'. It responds to the increasing significance being attached to citizenship education in light of the perceived disconnection between young people and formal politics. This area has also enjoyed considerable policy significance since the 2002 introduction of citizenship as a subject into the National Curriculum. The report therefore aims to add to the ongoing debate amongst government and other civic and political stakeholders on the social engineering of young citizens through the formal education system.

Despite its official standing, citizenship education has assumed a marginal and ineffective place in schools' practice and provision. A succession of official reports and reviews have criticised the generally ineffective delivery of citizenship education since 2002, highlighting issues of restrained pupil participation, and teaching styles which inhibit students' agency, reinforce stereotypes and are hampered by limited institutional support and resourcing. Questions have also been raised over the restricted ideology which underpins the citizenship National Curriculum, in particular its diminishing relevance to young people and society in the early 21st century.

From this background many commentators continue to argue for the potential of information and communication technologies (ICTs) to successfully reinvigorate the standing of citizenship education in schools. In part these assumptions derive from the part that new media now play in political, democratic

and civic practices in contemporary society. ICTs are also seen as offering ready solutions to the pedagogic and institutional shortcomings which currently restrict the teaching of citizenship in schools.

To date, efforts to implement technology-based citizenship education in schools have largely centred around the use of ICT as: (i) a source of citizenship information; and (ii) a means of taking part in citizenship discussion and debate. Perhaps the most prominent use has been the presentation of citizenship information via websites, with an ongoing creation of bespoke citizenship content for schools and young people by government departments, non-governmental organisations, commercial companies and other interest groups. ICT-based simulations of social situations with the aim of stimulating citizenship-related discussion amongst learners also continue to be used, especially in primary school teaching.

Since 2003 the use of ICTs to support networked communities of learners and promote citizenship-related discussion and interaction has continued to grow. Inter-school projects using e-mail and video-conferencing have now been running for over a decade, with some evidence that schools are now comfortable with using these established ICT applications. Nevertheless, there is rising interest in the citizenship education potential of newer forms of 'social software' such as blogging, MySpace and other 'Web 2.0' applications. Similarly, the growing use of learning platforms and personalised e-portfolios are also felt to engender some potential citizenship learning opportunities. The classroom application

of these ICT uses has attracted recent praise from academic sources, although there has been little empirical scrutiny of their effectiveness in promoting citizenship education. Similarly, the use of ICT as a means of learners producing citizenship content has also expanded over recent years. Alongside the creation of citizenship-related websites and computer games, there is growing interest in the production of 'youth media' such as school online radio and TV stations, e-zines, video-casts and podcasts.

There is a collection of small-scale, case study evaluations which purport to confirm the educational effectiveness of some of these citizenship applications of ICTs in schools. It is suggested, for example, that pupils of all ages are particularly engaged by ICT-based citizenship learning, leading to a range of reflexive, dialogic and empathetic learning outcomes. ICTs are reported as proving especially useful in developing students' global as well as local understandings of citizenship. Similarly, teachers are reported to benefit from collaboration with their students in the joint production of citizenship content and the 'pedagogies of collegiality' which ensue.

Aside from the case studies of specific good practice offered by some researchers, the general academic literature on citizenship education suggests that ICTs are doing little to alter the inconsistent and ineffectual teaching of citizenship in most schools. It would seem that ICTs are largely used in schools to simply represent rather than extend existing knowledge, practices and pedagogies. Some studies have suggested that young people may hold less enthusiasm for technology-based citizenship education than for traditional

teaching methods such as pen-pals and role-playing. The learning outcomes and overall educational effectiveness of 'newer' technological applications such as computer games and blogging has also been challenged. Above all, general evaluations of citizenship provision find ICT-based citizenship education to face many of the logistical and organisational issues faced by educational technology in general.

There is a sense within the academic literature that continuing to concentrate on the development of ICT resources to support formal citizenship education in schools may fail to make the fullest use of the civic and political potential of new media. This assertion stems from the observation that current generations of young people are tending to engage in 'life politics' or 'sub-politics' rather than formal politics, and are more involved in social movements, civil associations and single issue groups. Moreover, young people's notions of 'community' are not necessarily based around geographic proximity. In this respect it can be argued that the forms of citizenship education currently being delivered in schools, as well as the forms of technology-based practices used to encourage it, are sometimes mismatched with young people's actual citizenship understandings and practices. Stakeholders interested in facilitating technology-based citizenship learning may be better advised to develop provision which reflects the new forms of citizenship and civic engagement of young people outside of the school environment and outside of formal political and civic arenas. This can be seen as involving informal forms of citizenship education rather than the National Curriculum-led notion of citizenship education.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Young people's informal uses of ICTs are felt to involve some distinct citizenship qualities. Academic literature in the social and political sciences highlights the development of distinct online youth civic cultures expressed through internet-based volunteering, campaigning, donating and lobbying. Also of note are young people's fast-evolving uses of ICTs to participate and interact with news media and the public sphere. The political and civic value of young people's leisure-based ICT use has also been explored by academics working in media and communications studies, in particular engagement with multi-player computer games, weblogs and other social software sites such as MySpace, Facebook, Habbo and Bebo. In all these cases, notions and understandings of citizenship are seen to be developed through the construction of reflexive narratives and interaction with other users of these applications.

This enthusiasm notwithstanding, research evidence for the actual citizenship benefits of such informal uses of ICT is again mixed. A growing number of studies point towards the tendency for young people's informal use of new media outside of schools to reinforce rather than transform existing citizenship behaviours and attitudes. It is argued that young people are no more a homogenous group of online citizens than they are in offline contexts. Whilst some young people can be classified as activists or even parliamentary-orientated, others are more individualistic or disengaged. Crucially these patterns appear to be exacerbated rather than altered when young people's online political participation is examined.

From this background the review identifies a number of issues currently facing the

citizenship education and education technology communities, ie:

For schools and teachers – attempts to 'import' young people's current popular ICT uses from the home into the classroom should be carefully thought through. It is possible that attempts to directly import software such as MySpace, Facebook, multi-player online games and other 'popular' ICT applications into the teaching of citizenship will be perceived by young people to be forced and limited – with the school environment not allowing young people the more immersed and unstructured engagement with such applications that they are used to when at home. Whilst schools should not be discouraged from educating their students through applications such as MySpace, Facebook and so on, there may well be an opportunity (and even a need) for schools to also educate their students about the use of such applications. An important role clearly remains for schools, parents and communities to support and guide the ICT-based informal citizenship practices of young people – not least in supporting the critical 'media education' of those students who are currently not engaging with ICTs in these ways.

For curriculum developers – significant improvement in the teaching of citizenship in schools will require serious reconsideration of the nature of the citizenship curriculum, in particular the reorientation of the present curriculum orders towards more fluid and individualised forms of contemporary citizenship. Within the ongoing reforms of the secondary-level curriculum there are obvious ways in which the scope of citizenship education can be broadened beyond the concerns of the formal political

establishment in line with the changing nature of young people and contemporary society and citizenship. Rather than starting from the interests and agendas of the formal political establishment, effective citizenship education should incorporate or start from that which is already important to the majority of young people. Without such curricular changes, the potential of ICT-based citizenship education in the classroom will continue to be compromised.

For content producers – producers should continue to move beyond the passive presentation of citizenship material, information and facts, and continue to develop the production of software and content which engenders citizenship discussion. This can include the production of citizenship-specific ‘social simulations’ with the aim of stimulating discussion amongst learners, and packages which help learners produce citizenship materials. Since the initial Futurelab review, there has been less progress than might have been expected the production of applications which support the school-wide or class-wide democratic practices and activities. Similarly, producers of civic and political websites, especially where the producer is not necessarily a youth-focused organisation, also need to continue to produce content which is not perceived by young people to be dull, as well as providing genuinely ‘interactive’ environments in which young people’s contributions are responded to appropriately, and offer clear benefits. Given the staid nature of the citizenship education in schools, it could be that content producers can best fulfil a citizenship role through exploring the informal citizenship education opportunities within commercial software

produced for the leisure/domestic market - not least in terms of online and multi-player gaming.

For the political community – at the heart of increasing the effectiveness of citizenship education in schools is making politics itself more engaging to young people. Educationalists and politicians should avoid the assumption that increased access to citizenship information and resources via new media will somehow lead to increased levels of citizenship. Efforts should be made instead to address the serious shortcomings of the political system. This is, of course, not an easy task but it would seem essential to extend our notion of ‘politics’ beyond the orthodox political agendas which currently hold little resonance with today’s young people.

For the academic research community – the evidence base for the effectiveness (or otherwise) of young people’s ‘citizenship’ uses of ICTs remains woefully inadequate. The enthusiastic and expectant discourses which continue to surround the technology-based development of young citizens has been subjected to little, if any, high-calibre research or evaluation. Whilst the literature reviewed in this report provides some suggestion of the potential of ICTs and citizenship education, the evidence base is by no means robust or rigorous enough to draw any firm conclusions. There is a pressing need for the academic research community to empirically engage with this area of education provision in a systematic and considered manner – conducting rigorous and generalisable studies of young people’s citizenship learning, and utilising a full range of methods and research designs.

BACKGROUND TO THE REVIEW



1 BACKGROUND TO THE REVIEW

This review of recent academic literature in the area of citizenship, technology and learning updates and extends the 2003 Futurelab 'Literature Review in Citizenship, Technology and Learning' (Selwyn 2003). The years leading up to the first review were an expectant period for citizenship education in the UK. The inclusion of citizenship as a statutory component of the secondary school curriculum in 2002 (with a corresponding non-statutory presence in the primary curriculum) had prompted an interest amongst educationalists in extending ways of providing citizenship education to young people. As outlined in the first Futurelab review, even by the time of the 2002 curriculum changes there was a range of citizenship teaching and learning taking place in schools using websites, CD-Roms, simulation software and other ICT applications, albeit in a rather haphazard manner and with very few rigorous empirical studies of its effectiveness.

This report presents an overview of the academic literature published since the first review in 2003. Although there has been growing interest and activity in the area, the continued lack of empirical research on technology and formal citizenship education is striking. As we shall go on to discuss, this paucity of research mirrors the ambiguous and sometimes weakened nature of citizenship education as it is being implemented in UK schools. This lack of empirical evidence notwithstanding, the present review offers a comprehensive overview of the academic literature in the general field of citizenship education, thus allowing for consideration of the place of technology in the citizenship

curriculum and the roles that technology can play in citizenship teaching and learning in formal and informal educational settings.

Whilst offering few fresh insights into the development of school-based citizenship teaching and learning, the recent literature does highlight a heightened awareness of informal citizenship activity by young people, with ICTs appearing to play a central role in this. Although much of the academic literature in this area could not be said to provide robust or rigorous analyses of the nature of this informal learning, it does offer an intriguing and important way forward for those stakeholders seeking to enhance young people's notions of citizenship, political and civic engagement. From this basis the review is therefore able to suggest a number of areas of interest for future work in the area.

AIMS OF THE REVIEW

The remainder of this paper therefore intends to provide:

- a sound theoretical and empirically informed basis for informing policy on teaching and learning citizenship with ICT
- a basis for communication between the educational research community and the commercial sector on the subject of teaching and learning citizenship with ICT
- a sound theoretical and empirically informed basis for development of digital learning resources to support citizenship teaching and learning.

THE CONTINUED IMPORTANCE OF CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION



2 THE CONTINUED IMPORTANCE OF CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

The perceived need for citizenship education continues to grow as the 21st century progresses. Aside from calls from organisations such as UNESCO, OECD and the EU for the development of global and globalised forms of citizenship education in the light of recent world events (Mahdi 2004; Pigozzi 2006), a growing disquiet is being felt in many developed countries such as the UK over continuing social fragmentation and moral decline amongst young people. The perceived disconnection between young people and society is seen to be especially pronounced in the area of politics and polity, with concerns continuing to be raised over an apparent decline of the public sphere and accompanying 'hollowing-out' of citizenship at the expense of self-interest and consumerism (Marquand 2004; Kenny 2005). In the face of a steady decline in electoral turnout (especially in local government and European elections), the modest impact of devolved governance in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, falling membership of political parties and the recent growth of support for extremist groups such as the British National Party and radical Islam, it is argued that the UK's status as a democratic country runs the risk of being compromised by escalating levels of political apathy and even alienation amongst the young. As one large-scale survey of young people in England and Scotland concluded:

"While young people are interested in social and political issues they do not focus their concerns on engagement with formal political systems. Many hold negative views about politics, such as

feeling that they have little control over what the government does." (Grundy and Jamieson 2004, p237)

As was outlined in the first Futurelab review of citizenship teaching and learning, these concerns prompted a concerted drive throughout the 1990s by state and civic stakeholders in the UK to seek to redress the apparent political and democratic deficit amongst young people. Most notably these efforts centred on the championing of a notion of 'citizenship' which drew ideological inspiration from the work of TH Marshall (1950). The widespread appropriation in the 1990s of Marshall's view of a rights-based citizenship was not surprising, chiming as it did with the social justice and communitarianism preoccupations of the incoming centre-left Labour administration and their advisory group on citizenship education led by the eminent political scientist Bernard Crick. Thus in UK policy circles the over-riding aim of fostering citizenship came to be seen in terms of instilling a civil sense of basic rights and protections, political rights (such as voting and public assembly), and rights to social citizenship (such as employment, housing, healthcare and other social-welfare benefits).

A principal strategy within the Labour government's citizenship project has been that of establishing a national framework of school-based citizenship education. In 2002 citizenship was formally introduced as a foundation subject of the National Curriculum in England for pupils aged 11 to 16 years, and part of a non-statutory framework alongside PSHE (personal social and health education) for pupils aged 5 to 11 years. These orders



THE CONTINUED IMPORTANCE OF CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION



formalised the expectation that young people would gain knowledge and understanding about becoming ‘informed’ citizens, develop skills of communication, participation, enquiry and what was termed ‘responsible’ action. As such the revised National Curriculum guidelines for citizenship closely followed the Crick Advisory Group’s (1998) identification of three inter-related components of education for citizenship, defined as:

- **social and moral responsibility:** young people learning self-confidence and socially and morally responsible behaviour both in and beyond the classroom, towards those in authority and towards each other
- **community involvement:** young people learning and becoming helpfully involved in the life and concerns of their neighbourhood and communities, including learning through community involvement and service to the community
- **political literacy:** young people learning about institutions, problems and practices of their democracy.

The years since this curricular change have seen the UK government continue to place considerable faith in the social engineering of young citizens through the formal education system (Kerr et al 2005). As Gordon Brown reflected recently:

“We must address what holds [Britain] back: low turnouts, youth disengagement, falling party membership and a long-term decline in trust – problems that owe more to our political system than our civic culture... how, by better citizenship courses in our schools, can we address disengagement among the young?”
[Brown 2006, p32]

Now many schools in England and Wales offer a cross-curricular provision of citizenship ‘through’ subjects such as history, English, RE or geography, whilst others allocate citizenship some ‘discrete’ time within the curriculum – often integrated into PSHE or careers education (Brett 2005). The assessment of citizenship education is also seen as a ‘key issue’ for schools (QCA 2006). From 2004, teachers have been required to make a teacher judgement about the citizenship attainment of pupils completing Year 9. A short course GCSE in citizenship studies has been available since 2003, and an NVQ Level 3 qualification in active citizenship studies is planned for post-16 learners.

RESEARCH ON THE GENERAL PROVISION OF CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS SINCE 2002



3 RESEARCH ON THE GENERAL PROVISION OF CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS SINCE 2002

Despite its heightened official standing and substantial supporting infrastructure, citizenship education remains a marginal and ineffective element of the actual practice and provision of UK schools – as is also the case in other countries in North America and mainland Europe (see Ruget 2006; Norberg 2006; Schweisfurth 2006; Davies et al 2004). Now that the novelty of the Crick report and the National Curriculum changes has faded, considerable concerns have been raised over the seemingly peripheral impact of the subject in UK schooling. A succession of reports from the Schools Inspectorate have characterised citizenship education as “marginalised”, “not well established”, “inadequate”, “the poor relation of more established subjects” and even the “worst taught subject in England” (eg Ofsted 2003, 2005; Bell 2005; Preston 2006; Meikle 2006). In particular these official judgements have highlighted a lack of effort on the part of schools to reach a “shared understanding... of what citizenship involves” (Ofsted 2003, p4). As Davies et al (2005a, p354) concluded after the first three years of citizenship education provision within the National Curriculum, “the Citizenship Education initiative in England is very new and somewhat fragile. Training for teachers is limited and school practice is relatively weak”. Alongside these official critiques, a similar set of constraining factors has been identified by the comprehensive reviews of citizenship education research conducted by the EPPI citizenship research review (Deakin-Crick 2004), DfES and NFER literature searches (Kerr and

Cleaver 2004; Whiteley 2005), the BERA professional user survey on citizenship education (Gearon 2003), and the BERA review of around 360 publications by Osler and Starkey (2005). All these reviews portray a generally ineffective delivery of citizenship education, highlighting constraining issues such as limited pupil participation, teaching styles which inhibit students’ agency and reinforce stereotypes, and the generally ineffective creation of new forms of young citizens (see also Piper and Garratt 2004; Maitles and Gilchrist 2006).

Much of the ‘blame’ for the modest showing of citizenship education has been attributed to schools and teaching staff, thus replicating long-standing antagonisms in UK education between those responsible for developing curriculum change and those responsible for delivering it. For many educationalists this ‘failure’ of provision since the 2002 curriculum changes is not wholly unexpected, as the teaching of citizenship has long been seen as a peripheral element of UK schooling (Dixon 2000). Studies directly before and after the National Curriculum changes reported a significant proportion of teachers to perceive citizenship education as a burden (Supple 1999; Holden 2004), a trend felt to have been exacerbated since the introduction of the citizenship National Curriculum by constraints in terms of resources, time and teacher confidence (Davies 2006, p5). These school-level issues, it is argued, have led “many teachers [to be] under-prepared and feel constrained in their ability to handle this aspect of their [citizenship] work” (Oulton et al 2004), leaving the majority of teaching staff feeling demoralised and restricted in their ability to deliver citizenship education

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(Schweisfurth 2006). This situation has not been helped by inconsistent parental support for the teaching of community involvement and political literacy (Holden 2004). Only a few years after its formal introduction, the UK citizenship education project can be seen to have run into significant school-based barriers to achieving its wider aims of reviving the civic and political fortunes of the country.

Aside from the shortcomings of schools and teachers, equally damning criticism has been directed towards the underlying ideology of the citizenship reforms in the UK, not least the concern that the content and approach of the citizenship National Curriculum lacks relevance to young people and society in the early 21st century. As Lawy and Biesta (2006, p36) have argued:

“The character and complexion of citizenship in Britain has undergone a profound and substantial transformation in the last 50 years. These changes have included the opening up of national borders and the increasing globalisation of the economy and of mass communications technologies. Despite these changes the Marshallian discourse of citizenship has continued to cast a long shadow over contemporary discussion about citizenship policy and practice.”

The notion of the citizenship National Curriculum continues to be criticised as too narrowly constructed around a passive view of ‘citizenship-as-achievement’ instead of a more contemporary notion of ‘citizenship-as-practice’. Academic commentators such as Lawy and Biesta have argued that citizenship education in the UK remains outmoded in its privileging of the delivery of information rather than

attempting to concentrate on the ‘lived experiences’ of citizenship-as-practice (a distinction that Pykett (2006) highlights in her difference between formal forms of citizenship education and informal citizenship education practices and activities). Some critics have, for example, bemoaned the narrow and often conservative ideological conception of citizenship that is embedded in many current efforts at citizenship teaching (Westheimer and Kahne 2004), leading to increasingly vocal calls for “a broader and bolder approach to citizenship education” (Faulks 2006, p123). This feeling of irrelevance has therefore compounded the lack of confidence within the educational profession towards citizenship education. If citizenship as a subject is beyond the means of schools and their teachers to deliver effectively, and if the citizenship curriculum is of profound irrelevance to the young people it is intended to transform, then fundamental changes are required if citizenship education is to ever achieve its ambitions of reviving the democratic and civic fortunes of the UK. There are some signs that these criticisms are being acted upon. In particular, the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority is due to soon complete its review of citizenship at Key Stage 3 in response, amongst other issues, to the concern that citizenship is perceived as a ‘content heavy’ subject by education providers.

THE CONTINUED TURN TOWARDS TECHNOLOGY AS A 'TECHNICAL FIX' FOR CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION



4 THE CONTINUED TURN TOWARDS TECHNOLOGY AS A 'TECHNICAL FIX' FOR CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

Throughout this general criticism there is an underlying sense that citizenship education and the 2002 National Curriculum reforms have been (mis)appropriated in ways which have allowed old educational agendas and practices to be re-packaged, rather than leading to a revitalisation or even transformation of teaching and learning. The conservatism of current provision of citizenship education is reflected, for example, in the continued prevalence of long-established teaching methods and mechanisms in current citizenship provision - such as letter writing and maintenance of pen-pals, role-playing, local community involvement and school councils (Maitles 2004; Waters 2005; Colucci-Gray 2004; Pilkington 2005; Gifford et al 2005). There has also been a noticeable trend for educationalists to use the National Curriculum orders as means to justify the renewed relevance and importance of otherwise marginalised subject areas. For instance, strong arguments continue to be made for the implicit citizenship components of subjects such as science education (Zembylas 2005; Walton 2005; Davies 2004; Barbosa et al 2004); geography (Zorn 2003; Haigh 2005); enterprise education (Deuchar 2004); sociology (Fobes 2005); economics (Davies 2006); religious education (Meijer 2004); and technology studies (Olson and Lang 2004). There is a sense that the citizenship education project is losing coherence and is in danger of becoming another peripheral element of the overburdened school curriculum, soon to be superseded by now more fashionable and pressing educational concerns.

It is from this background that hopes continue to be raised by some commentators in the potential of new technologies such as computers, the internet and video-conferencing to successfully reinvent and reinvigorate the standing of the citizenship curriculum in schools. In part this educational turn towards ICTs derives from wider perceptions that new media are substantively altering the ways in which individual citizens interact with the contemporary political, democratic and civic landscape. Yet ICTs are also seen as having the potential to offer ready solutions to many of the resourcing and pedagogic reasons seen to have thus far restricted the citizenship curriculum. For example, the ease with which ICTs allow teachers and their students to access ideas, information and people outside the immediate geographical and cultural surroundings of the school is seen by many educators to be reason enough to position them at the centre of the citizenship curriculum (eg Risinger 1997).



RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN TECHNOLOGY-BASED CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION PROVISION AND PRACTICE



5 RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN TECHNOLOGY-BASED CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION PROVISION AND PRACTICE

Much time, effort and funding has been devoted over the past decade to establishing technology-based citizenship education in the UK, most prominently centring around the use of ICT as:

- (i) a source of citizenship information; and
- (ii) a means of taking part in citizenship discussion and debate.

The first Futurelab report identified five main areas of technology-based provision and practice which persist four years later, albeit in slightly different forms. We shall therefore go on to present a re-evaluation of each of these areas of use.

The first prominent use is **the application of ICT as a source of citizenship information** – primarily the presentation of citizenship information via the world wide web and CD-Roms. There is a burgeoning creation of citizenship content for the world wide web, a use seen to fit readily with the National Curriculum requirement of helping young people develop “knowledge and understanding about becoming informed citizens”. Since 2003 government departments, non-governmental organisations, commercial companies and other interest groups have all contributed to the creation of a substantial online presence of citizenship information [see appendix]. In the UK the *citized.info* web resource has been developed since 2003 under the aegis of the Training and Development Agency for Schools, and now constitutes a comprehensive citizenship education resource bank for teacher educators and trainees. Services such as BBC Jam have made a significant number of citizenship-

related digital curriculum resources available online. Similarly, organisations as diverse as the British Council, Greenpeace, the Hansard Society, European Parliament and Amnesty International have all developed comprehensive online repositories of citizenship information and resources for teachers and young people.

The advantages of such online information have continued to be highlighted by academic researchers – including economies of time, cost and effort, as well as providing learners and teachers with access to a wide range of information, opinions and perspectives from around the world that would otherwise be inaccessible. In particular the global dimension of online information has been explored in several studies, with schools’ use of online news services seen as leading to the encouragement of a global sense of citizenship in UK secondary schools (Bell 2005; Bliss 2003; Titus 2005). From a more ‘grass-roots’ perspective, Goldfarb’s (2002) study of the development of online citizenship education curriculum resources for use by teachers in Russia and Canada based on local content also concluded that international exchanges could lead to the fostering of increased international understanding for both teachers and their students.

The 2003 Futurelab report also identified the application of **ICT as a means of taking part in citizenship discussion**, primarily through the development of ICT simulations of social situations with the aim of stimulating discussion amongst learners. Debate and discussion is seen as central to effective citizenship learning – ideally challenging and reforming the nature of citizenship as a subject. As Pykett (2004, p1) argues:

“Through debate, the purpose of Citizenship Education can be questioned by teachers, and eventually, pupils. If debate is practised in the classroom reciprocally, it can allow teachers and pupils to collaborate on more equal terms, giving them a sense of solidarity or joint stake in their education. This sense of anti-hierarchical teaching is, of course, much easier in theory than in practice.”

Typically such debate and discussion software involves the presentation of various scenarios, often in the form of ongoing narratives, with the learner(s) required to make decisions and judgements at regular intervals which then influence the course of the narrative. As with the provision of online citizenship information, recent academic evaluations of such resources have tended to be positive. For example, Wegerif and Dawes' (2004) case-study evaluation of the use of two standalone simulation packages (Bubble Dialogue and Thinking Together: Kate's Choice) concluded that “teachers have found it to be an effective resource, allowing children to think through and share ideas”, also noting the “obvious enthusiasm” of pupils to use such software. These evaluations led the researchers to conclude that “the evidence from the use of programmes such as Bubble Dialogue and Kate's Choice suggest that it is in the support and framing of peer discussions that computers have a distinctive role in the promotion of moral development” (p76).

Research into the Two Worlds simulation programme has also highlighted the enhancement of critical thinking by engaging users to explore a digital 'micro-world', participate in role-plays, and construct mind maps through and with

collaborative electronic tools (Shortridge and Sabo 2005). Moreover, in an online context, Futurelab's World Power League communal voting game was evaluated using small-scale case studies, concluding that “on the whole the resource was successful in engaging students' interest in some difficult ideas”, although also noting the difficulty in licensing images that would appeal to young people, and the need for site administration in order to maintain appropriate use (Futurelab 2006, p11). Another emerging area of note can be found in the ongoing work of Thorkild Hanghøj (2008) on the design and use of debate games. Hanghøj is exploring the role of an ICT-supported debate game on parliamentary election and political communication (the 'Power Game') where young people adopt specific roles within an election campaign and present and oppose the arguments of others. Whilst engaging the attention of students in the short term, Hanghøj is currently exploring how such games can be used to reach the longer-term educational outcome of enhancing student competence.

A third area of ICT-based citizenship education identified by the 2003 report was **the use of networked discussion and communities to engender citizenship education**. In 2003 the use of online and networked communication packages primarily took the form of e-mail, video-conferencing, internet forums and bulletin boards. Some studies since this time have extended academic scrutiny of these established computer mediated communication (CMC) applications in the classroom. For example, Maitles and Gilchrist's (2004) study of citizenship education practice in a Scottish secondary school found that the use of e-mail and video-conferencing links with schools in

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN TECHNOLOGY-BASED CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION PROVISION AND PRACTICE



Africa and Pakistan led to valuable exchanges of views between pupils and a degree of pupil engagement in different countries. Similar conclusions were reached in the repeated evaluations of a university-led project aiming to stimulate cross-national ICT-based collaboration between mainstream and special schools in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland (Abbott et al 2004; Austin 2006; Austin et al 2003). Working in north-south paired classes, pupils carried out joint tasks using video-conferencing and asynchronous computer conferencing, and with the researchers reporting students' development of cultural awareness of their distant peers. ICTs were reported to "particularly help less able and quieter pupils" (Austin et al 2003, p55) in mainstream schools and "all but the most dependent pupils" in special needs schools (Abbott et al 2004, p225). These researchers acknowledged that pupil ICT skills as well as teachers' technical training, enthusiasm and commitment were key factors underlying this success, with video-conferencing as opposed to asynchronous computer conferencing proving to be the preferred method of collaboration in the special schools.

These 'traditional' CMC applications notwithstanding, the years following on from the first Futurelab report have seen this area of citizenship activity substantially enhanced via the development of 'social software' such as blogging, MySpace, other 'Web 2.0' applications such as wikis. These new applications are augmented by the rise of learning platforms and 'e-portfolios'. To date use of these applications has formed the focus of a great deal of academic commentary with regards to their citizenship potential, although it has been

subject to little or no empirical scrutiny. In fact it could be argued that the academic literature in this area has been notably exploratory and acritical. In terms of the citizenship potential of learning platforms, Dalglish (2006) recently analysed student and staff use of the Blackboard learning management system; in particular its communication tools including chat, forums, blogs, project rooms, multi-user dimensions, object-oriented environments, teleconferencing and data conferencing.

Similarly Wall et al (2006) discussed the development of portfolios hosted by virtual learning environments, investigating how digital portfolios can facilitate pupil talk about learning. From a social software perspective, Beldarrain (2006) outlines the benefits of classroom use of wikis, blogs and podcasts to foster student interaction in online learning, a theme reiterated in Richardson's (2005) paper on the use of blogs as collaborative spaces where students, teachers, and guests can build content together (see also Goodwin-Jones 2003). Blogs in particular are currently the focus of much academic interest, celebrated as giving young people the opportunity to "exercise their voices in personal, informal ways" (Huffaker 2004). Such applications are beginning to be used in projects such as the 28-country EU eTwinning project which utilises e-mail, blogs, online forums and video-conferencing and currently involves over 1,400 UK schools.

The 2003 Futurelab report also highlighted the educational use of **ICT as a source of learner-produced citizenship activities** as an especially appropriate application of technology in the classroom. Growing interest has been shown in the creation of digital content in the classroom, such as

computer games and digital video, including preparation work away from the computer and students' involvement in developing narrative aspects of games (Reid et al 2002). Aside from the computer-based creation of software there has also been growing interest in schools' production of 'youth media' – ie media conceived, developed and produced under the auspices of the school, with the educational goals of developing "citizenship, personal expression, aesthetic innovation and social change" (Chavez and Soep 2005, p213 – see also Campbell et al 2001). There have been a number of moves to support and facilitate the production of school online radio and TV stations as forms of media production, alongside the production of school e-zines, newspapers, videos and podcasts. This work is typified at present in the Radiowaves project, an international network of online school radio stations created specifically for young people. In the UK, the Department of Constitutional Affairs is currently using Radiowaves as a means to engage young people in local issues and explore the democratic process.

In terms of academic research on the effectiveness of such projects, researchers have been tentatively optimistic. For example, Cheung's (2005, p371) study of campus radio stations in Hong Kong primary schools reported that an "overwhelming majority [of students] found their participation meaningful, [learning] more in terms of knowledge of media education... as well as working with others". This, the authors concluded, equipped participants "with the skills to acquire information related to civics from the mass media in an active, analytical manner. Furthermore, students were seen as participating as active democratic

citizens by producing their own media, voicing their own opinions, and monitoring the practice of the mass media in general" (p373). Similarly, Chavez and Soep's (2005) evaluation of an educational radio project in the San Francisco Bay area also highlighted citizenship learning gains. In particular, this study highlighted the importance of what they termed the 'pedagogy of collegiality' that the production of youth media entails – ie supporting "a context in which young people and adults mutually depend on one another's skills, perspectives and collaborative efforts to generate original, multi-textual, professional quality work for outside audiences" (Chavez and Soep 2005, p413). As Chavez and Soep point out, the sustained and genuinely collaborative participation of adults in such projects was crucial to its success:

"These contexts for learning and production go beyond the conceit of 'giving kids tape-recorders' (or cameras or computers) and 'setting them free' for unfettered expression. These undertakings are complex intellectually, creatively, technically, and politically, and they carry significant potential, as educational opportunities, for young people and adults." (ibid)

Finally, the 2003 Futurelab report highlighted **the role of ICT in facilitating citizenship education through the whole school**, primarily through the development of online councils and the flattening of hierarchies of school organisation. Although some school council and class voting systems have been commercially produced (see appendix), as in 2003 there has been very little, if any, research and evaluation of this particular application of

WIDER THEMES EMERGING FROM THE RESEARCH EVIDENCE IN SCHOOLS



ICT. One burgeoning area of interest can be found in the UK government's stated commitment to developing a more 'personalised' education system, with young people as 'partners in learning' rather than passive recipients (DfES 2004). In particular there has been an increased emphasis on the notion of facilitating 'learner voice' – ie allowing learners to enter into dialogue and bring about change with regards to schools and learning. Whilst learner voice is seen to be delivered through existing practices such as school councils and other forms of pupil governorship in schools (Hallgarten 2003), there has been recent enthusiasm for the use of new media in supporting learners in this way (see Rudd et al 2006). Social software in particular is seen to offer the opportunity for learners to set their own agendas and participate in the organisation and administration of their school life. As Stephen Heppell (2006) asserts, "in the twenty-first century we don't hear the students' voices through a representative student council, we hear it through the channels that technology has brought us: texts, podcasts, diaries and blogs". Nevertheless, there has been little empirical research of how effective such media is in developing a 'learner voice' culture within schools. Although "digital technologies potentially offer a compelling set of tools for empowering learners" (Rudd et al 2006, p26) and whilst there are examples of good practice in individual schools around the country, we know little about the relative success and strengths of such interventions.

6 WIDER THEMES EMERGING FROM THE RESEARCH EVIDENCE IN SCHOOLS

The examples of current practice highlighted in the academic research literature reflect the increasing amounts of time, funding and effort that are now being devoted to ICT-based citizenship education in the classroom in the hope that it can revitalise the ideals and aims of the government's citizenship project. In particular, the internet has become a highly symbolic element of the UK citizenship agenda, as well as ensuring that 'citizenship' has become a significant element of the multi-million pound schools 'digital content' marketplace. Given the amount of time, effort and funding now being directed towards ICT-based citizenship education, we would argue that time needs to be taken for some critical reflection as to whether these efforts are likely to be successful or not.

The potential of ICTs to enhance citizenship education in all the ways outlined above can be robustly challenged. In particular it is possible that ICTs may in fact do little to alter the inconsistent and ineffectual teaching of citizenship in schools. As Masters et al (2004, p17) contend, it could be the case that "merely providing online mechanisms is not enough to encourage active citizenship". For instance, within most of the aforementioned examples it is clear that most efforts in the UK have sought to use ICTs to reaffirm and augment official National Curriculum notions of citizenship education content and practice. In this way, ICTs have been largely appropriated to simply repackage and represent existing knowledge, practices and pedagogies in more convenient and palatable forms,

without addressing some of the fundamental problems faced by citizenship education. As Revell (2006, p20) concludes, in the UK at least there has been a tendency to date for citizenship software to be “worthy and content-rich but not awfully exciting”. At worst, it could be argued that these uses of ICT to technologically replicate the offline citizenship education may contribute to further deterioration of standards, “rarely engag[ing] students in anything more than an exchange of information” (Dixon 2000, p96), or else promoting ‘thinner’ forms of citizenship in which young people can become politically expressive without being substantively engaged (Howard 2005). Indeed, some of these ostensibly positive empirical classroom studies of ICT-based citizenship education highlight the limited nature of the ICT-based provision of citizenship issues in the classroom.

It may be that young people’s enthusiasm for the formal educational use of these technologies is less prevalent than some commentators would wish to imagine. For example, Maitles and Gilchrist’s (2004) study of citizenship education practice in a Scottish secondary school found the use of e-mail and video-conferencing links with schools in Africa and Pakistan to be rated as the least popular form of citizenship activity when compared to outside speakers, group presentations and letter-writing pen-pal schemes. ICT-based practices were particularly less likely to be recalled by female pupils, leading the researchers to conclude “that boys were keener than girls about [citizenship] learning through ICT” (Maitles and Gilchrist 2004). Similarly, the potential learning outcomes of ‘newer’ technological applications such as computer game use are less straightforward than is suggested

by those commentators who have extolled their educational potential. It has been argued, for example, that in terms of the educational benefits of computer games “evidence thus far points to rather limited success” (Carr et al 2006, p4).



RECOGNISING THE PLACE OF TECHNOLOGY IN YOUNG PEOPLE'S INFORMAL CITIZENSHIP PRACTICES



7 RECOGNISING THE PLACE OF TECHNOLOGY IN YOUNG PEOPLE'S INFORMAL CITIZENSHIP PRACTICES

The sense remains throughout the academic literature that despite its considerable potential, ICT has not altered the essential content or focus of citizenship education as it takes place in most classrooms and schools. For better or worse, it would seem that ICTs are currently being employed to deliver essentially the same citizenship curriculum albeit in a different form. By technologically repackaging the National Curriculum version of citizenship, it could be argued that most (if not all) of the ICT-based activity to date has failed to address underlying (ir)relevance of citizenship education to a 21st century society where citizenship is a more individualised and actively constructed process.

In particular the forms of citizenship education being offered currently through much ICT-based provision remain passive and top-down, often delivering a 'uniform standard' which is 'done to' young people rather than 'done by' them (Olssen 2004). This could be seen to lack concern with the full and complete lives of young people, especially the active conditions and processes through which they learn the values of citizenship. It could be contended that if the online citizenship curriculum retains a 20th century emphasis on the formal structures of citizenship rather than a more contemporarily-relevant notion of the individual young citizen, then ICT-based citizenship education looks set to retain a profound irrelevance to the young people it is intended to be engaging.

With these issues in mind, the last four years have seen a growing argument

evolve amongst some commentators that using ICTs only to support formal citizenship education fails to make the fullest use of the citizenship potential of new media. This assertion stems from the contention that current generations of young people are just as politically minded than those in previous decades, albeit in different ways. Young people are seen to be more involved in 'life politics' or 'sub-politics' rather than formal politics, and therefore tend to be involved in social movements, civil associations, single issue groups and discussion groups which cross the boundaries between politics, cultural values, civil values and identity processes (Bentivegna 2006). Rates of volunteering and charitable donation amongst young people are reported to be booming, and youth interest and involvement in non-formal causes is similarly high (Roker et al 1999). There have also been increases in young people's involvement in anti-corporate protest (Sadler 2004) and other single-issue causes such as the anti-war movement (Cunningham and Lavalette 2004). Similarly, the voluntary activities of youth are seen to be steadily growing, both informally and via organised youth voluntary associations (McFarland and Thomas 2006). There is, it would seem, a pronounced "willingness to become involved in campaigns if they are of [young people's] own, rather than others' choosing" (Thomson et al 2004, p220).

As such, it could be contended that young people are not disengaged from political and civic matters per se, but engaged in ways which are perhaps too informal, fragmented or individualised to contribute to the greater good of formal societal and political structures. It is beginning to be recognised by some commentators that the key challenge faced by the political and

educational establishment is not necessarily to politicise a wholly apathetic and apolitical body of young people, but to redirect and remould the young in ways “appropriate for a democratic and pluralistic society” (Davies et al 2005a, p352). This is seen to require the state and wider civic, political and educational communities to somehow increase young people’s sense of communitarianism, civic responsibility and obligation, as well as develop their willingness and interest in engaging with formal political and democratic processes.

In this respect it can be argued that the forms of citizenship education being delivered in schools, as well as the forms of technology-based practices used to encourage it, are mismatched with young people’s actual citizenship understandings and practices. There is an obvious contradiction in attempting what Pykett (2006) terms “making citizens in the classroom” when much of a young person’s sense of citizenship is “learnt prior to citizenship education policy, through the realities of living together in particular spaces and social contexts” (page ii). Thus it could be argued that much of the resistance to citizenship education stems from a reflexive (and often cynical) reception by young people who already consider themselves to be citizens.

The argument continues to be made that those stakeholders interested in facilitating technology-based citizenship learning should seek to develop provision which better reflects the new forms of citizenship that the 21st century dictates. For example, it has been persuasively argued that citizenship is now less determined by links to national identity and nationally determined sets of rights and duties than

structured through other local and global identities, the so-called process of ‘glocalisation’. Now one’s political identity and awareness can be rooted in a neighbourhood, a city, a region, a country, a continent, one’s sexuality or (as is prevalent in the lives of many young people) patterns of consumption. Many political and social scientists are beginning to argue that democratic citizenship now derives more from a ‘civic public’ rooted in ideas about the freedom to consume through the logic of privatisation (Lukose 2005).

It may well therefore be the case that a citizenship curriculum which recognises that citizenship for most young people may not equate with being citizen-workers or citizen-voters but perhaps citizen-consumers or citizen-lifestylers could achieve a genuine relevance and appeal to young people. At present, as Mitchell (2003, p387) asserts, the notion of citizenship and the citizen which is promoted through formal education policy is one which is directly linked to competitive advantage in the global economy. In particular, it is an economically globalised version of citizenship rather than a culturally or socially globalised version, based primarily on the creation of strategic cosmopolitan knowledge makers. As such it is individually focused rather than collective.

Yet if the content of the curriculum can be expanded to reflect the fact that citizenship is changing in these more informal ways, then citizenship education may achieve the relevance it has otherwise lacked to date. Kenway and Bullen (2007) point to the need for a ‘global corporate’ curriculum in schools which develops a sense of critical agency in the young that goes beyond that

RECOGNISING THE PLACE OF TECHNOLOGY IN YOUNG PEOPLE'S INFORMAL CITIZENSHIP PRACTICES



made available by consumer-media culture (see also Steinberg and Kincheloe 1997). This would see a citizenship curriculum covering the many social, ethical and political issues which surround corporate consumerism and helping students to understand the processes involved in “why they want what they want” (Walkerdine 1991, p89). This sense of the need for curricular change is furthered by the role of technologies such as the internet in leading to transformed, citizen-centred versions of political and civic engagement.

The importance of ICTs within these changes is felt by many commentators to be considerable. Within contemporary consumer culture, new technologies are seen to have altered issues of political identification, sovereign allegiance and notions of shared culture (Miller 2001), as well as providing new spaces for political and civic engagement. Many writers have described reconfigured forms of ‘digital citizenship’ (eg Black 1998; Shelley et al 2004) where ICTs have substantively changed the manner in which citizens can engage with democracy (Baddeley 1997; Jordan 1999). It is argued that conceptualisation of citizenship should be broadened to “include a wider range of media content and genres in relation to what has been called ‘cultural citizenship’... [recognising that] a broader domain of media content is feeding diverse citizenship practices” (Hermes 2006, p296).

Aside from these calls for changes to the citizenship curriculum in schools, these arguments also highlight the importance of the citizenship and civic engagement of young people outside of the school environment. New technologies have been promoted as a particularly ‘natural’ means

of allowing young people to play active roles in society (Garrett 2005) and as a free, unfettered ‘playground’ for political participation (della Porta and Mosca 2005, van de Donk et al 2004). For example, ICTs are seen as providing young people with increased participation and interaction with news media and the public sphere (Hermes 2006). Others have pointed towards the development of distinct online youth civic cultures expressed through internet-based volunteering, campaigning and the public exercise of voice. Prominent examples of such action can be seen in the growth in popularity of public action websites such as Pledgebank, Mysociety, Netaction and Timebank. All told, an “intrinsically equitable, decentralised and democratic world” (Graham 2002, p35) is anticipated, with young people technologically re-positioned at its core rather than periphery with “new-found power” (Montgomery et al 2004, p125) borne from technology and new media.

Growing attention has also been directed of late towards the political and civic value of young people’s leisure-based ICT use, and in particular computer games-playing. There has been growing interest in the citizenship learning potential of general computer games-playing, following the general current trend for researchers to point towards the need for “educators to pay closer attention to the nature of learning in apparently ‘non-educational’ games” (Carr et al 2006, p4; see also Charles and McAlister 2004). As Stuart (2006, p3) argues, “the videogame is a surprising but growing medium for political comment. Whether developed by small professional studios and made available through mainstream download sites, or by amateur coders and distributed virally, games with a socio-political agenda

are on the increase” (Stuart 2006, p3). Indeed Stuart highlights a range of citizenship and politically-orientated games currently available for free download, from *Darfur is Dying* and *Oil God* to the United Nations’ *Food Force*. These single issue-led games are complemented by the citizenship potential of the popular 3D virtual worlds and ‘massively multiplayer online role playing games’ (MMORPGs) such as *Second Life*, *World of Warcraft*, *Sims Online*, *Everquest* and *Habbo Hotel*.

Academic interest has also been directed towards young people’s autonomous and informal use outside of the school context of blogs and other social software sites such as *MySpace*, *Facebook*, *Habbo* and *Bebo*. The construction of reflexive narratives and interaction with other users is seen to entail citizenship education qualities. Attention continues to be paid to young people’s use of ICTs for the informal production of materials which carry citizenship and civic connotations. Kenway and Bullen (2007) point towards the production of online ‘e-zines’ such as the continuing trend for ‘cybergrrl’ websites which “provide a further opportunity of producing texts and of joining others who are doing various sorts of life politics online”. As these authors conclude:

“Culture produced by youth for youth is much more fun, feisty, colourful, subversive, celebratory – and, yes, political – than school newspapers produced as much for teachers as fellow students. These youthful cyber-activities are presented as bases of pedagogical approaches, not as these reviewers appear to assume, as negative judgements on the young people we teach.”

Whilst ICTs in schools are seen as able to serve “old-fashioned political citizenship goals”, many commentators contend that young people’s online contexts outside of school better provide them with opportunities and contexts to learn about and develop citizenship understandings and practices (Hermes 2006, p304). The argument is forcibly being made that citizenship educators should work together with young people rather than on young people, and recognise that young people’s actual practices of citizenship, and the ways in which these practices transform over time are educationally significant (Lawy and Biesta 2006). As Chavez and Soep (2005) continue:

“If educators are to harness [youth media’s] potential to promote learning, we must look within and beyond the non-profit organisations and grassroots projects in our communities. We must know something about how young people are creating media in their own personal spaces and peer groups, often outside the awareness of adults, and in some cases against the wishes of their parents.”

Yet if this is to be the case, there needs to be a closer consideration of the research evidence on young people’s actual uses of ICTs outside of the classroom, and the educative value of the informal citizenship practices and learning highlighted by the above authors.

RESEARCH EVIDENCE FOR THE ROLE OF TECHNOLOGY IN YOUNG PEOPLE'S INFORMAL CITIZENSHIP PRACTICES



8 RESEARCH EVIDENCE FOR THE ROLE OF TECHNOLOGY IN YOUNG PEOPLE'S INFORMAL CITIZENSHIP PRACTICES

The research evidence for the actual citizenship benefits of such informal use of ICT is, at best, mixed. Peter Dahlgren's (2007) ongoing 'Young Citizens, New Media and Learning' ethnographic research is analysing how the computer and internet serve as complementary tools for 16-19 year-olds in their roles and identities as citizens. The research output from this project to date suggests that whilst new media are positively facilitating the actions of 'online activists' who are attuned and able to adapt the net to one's purposes, these uses of the internet closely follow young people's 'offline' established political, extra-parliamentarian or non-political interests and identities. Moreover, Dahlgren's study highlights the continued significance of the traditional mass media as a part of a larger environment for learning and development for citizenship.

A growing body of research points towards the tendency for young people's informal use of new media to reinforce rather than transform existing citizenship behaviours and attitudes. For example, Calenda and Mosca's (2007) study of university students concluded that "the internet reinforces the political participation of people already [politically] engaged offline, [and] who spend most time online". In particular this data showed online political participation to be associated with pre-existing political orientation and motivation, thus leading to 'self-reinforcing trends' where the more a young person places him or herself at the extreme of the political spectrum, the more that they will take part in different forms of online political participation. For

example, the study found that online forums were mainly used by students with more radical political orientations and pre-existing, deep interests in globalisation issues. Online campaigning was similarly correlated with participation in voluntary or charitable organisations, NGOs, and religious groups, whilst offline participation in unconventional and radical actions was also reproduced online.

These findings are supported by a range of other studies with adults and young people. For example, Nisbet and Scheufele's (2004) study of US voter patterns confirmed the notion that exposure to online internet campaign material had a limited impact of widening political efficacy, political knowledge and campaign participation. Instead online resources were found to benefit most those internet users who were already engaged in offline contexts, with political discussion therefore amplifying the main effects of internet campaign exposure. Similarly, Shelley et al (2004) found technology as a source of informational power to be positively related to support for digital government. In a UK context, Livingstone and Bober (2004) found that among 12 to 19 year-olds who reported going online at least once a week, just over half had visited civic or political websites such as charity, government, environmental and human rights sites or sites for improving conditions at school or work. However, most had only visited one type of such site, with frequency and breadth of this online civic engagement influenced significantly by gender, age and social class, ie female, older and middle-class young people were found to be more likely to make such use of the internet. Livingstone and Bober's (2004, p17) study also highlighted some young people's

scepticism about the participatory nature of these online resources:

“For young people to become more engaged with the civic potential of the internet, greater efforts are needed from the producers of civic sites to ensure that young people get something back from these sites. Beyond receiving information, it is unclear what young people stand to gain from the opportunity to ‘have their say’ online. They wonder who is listening, what happens to their votes and what will follow from their engagement. Young people certainly feel pessimistic about this.”

Similarly, data from the recent Oxford Internet Survey portrays a mixed picture of young people’s enthusiasm for civic or politically orientated use of the internet. Here, di Gennaro and Dutton (2006) report that only 18% of 14 to 17 year-olds claimed to use the internet to look for political information, with teenagers being the least active age group aside from the 65 years and over category. That said, the same survey found over half of 14 to 17 year-olds to state that they would turn to the internet first if they were looking for information about the name of their MP (rather than go to a book or directory, use the telephone or personally visit a location). Other studies report the majority of young people to not take advantage of the enhanced citizenship opportunities of ICTs such as digital television, with many young people preferring to use ‘interactive’ media in non-participatory, linear ways (Hujanen and Pietikainen 2004). Although limited in its cause and effect analyses, another recent study suggests that more youth-orientated ‘soft news’ such as the ‘Daily Show With Jon Stewart’ may have detrimental citizenship effects amongst young people, driving down support for

political institutions and leaders among those already inclined toward non-participation (Baumgartner and Morris 2006).

If nothing else, the contradictory nature of this body of evidence suggests that young people are no more a homogenous group of online citizens than they are in offline terms. As Vromen’s (2003) study of young people in Australia demonstrates, young people do not have homogeneous ways and means of engaging with political or civic affairs. Whilst some young people can be classified as activists or parliamentary orientated, others are more individualistic or disengaged. Crucially these patterns appear to continue rather than be altered when young people’s online political participation is examined (Vromen 2004).

The reinforcing rather than transformatory effect of ICTs is also highlighted by those studies carried out on informal uses of CMC and social software. Here it is observed that young and old people tend to align themselves with online groups that are homogeneous rather than heterogeneous, with such forms of ‘civic’ participation often turning people away from formal political participation, and not all groups promoting democratic values (Theiss-Morse and Hibbing 2005). The limited empirical work on informal blogging and other forms of social software is equally ambivalent (eg van der Kuyl 2007; McAvinia and Keating 2007). As Scheidt (2006) outlines, diary-type weblogs produced by adolescents are the most numerous type of blog to be found on the internet. These diary-type blogs (as opposed to news filters or knowledge-logs where users collate external content) can act both as a form of life-writing and a reflexive engagement with an imagined

RESEARCH EVIDENCE FOR THE ROLE OF TECHNOLOGY IN YOUNG PEOPLE'S INFORMAL CITIZENSHIP PRACTICES



audience, what Kitzmann (2004) called a 'connected privacy'.

Yet Scheidt (2006) suggests that over half of adolescent blogs are purely exercises in self-presentation, with only a quarter of young bloggers producing material that could be classified as being more citizenship-orientated, "evaluating values, beliefs, meanings and identities; including race, social class and gender issues". Moreover, the same study reports around two-thirds of blogs to be short-lived in their maintenance. In a similar vein, studies of young people's use of discussion forums and mailing lists suggest that they are more likely to result in localised rather than trans-national public spheres (Cammaerts and Van Audenhove 2005).

Finally, in terms of leisure-related computer games-playing, research findings have been more optimistic, positive and – one could argue – uncritical. Burn and Carr's (2006) study of the informal learning opportunities within MMORPGs celebrated the "unavoidably public" nature of the games and the citizenship values which players are expected to exhibit when interacting with other players. These authors argued that the formation of relationships within the context of the game, as well as players' reflection on the nature of their own character and political alignment, can act as a scaffold into adult roles for young people. This can be seen in the emergence of online 'Virtual Citizenship Associations' that have been formed by games players wanting to debate and shape the rights of online games characters.

Thus alongside the obvious entertainment motivations for playing such games, the communal aspects of the role-play would

seem to act as an important site of informal citizenship education. In particular Burn and Carr (2006) identified how young players learn to manage social relationships within the community of games players both 'in character' and 'out of character', noting the "strategic incentives" that such games often contain for cooperative and pro-social behaviours. Similar empirical observations regarding the informal learning of negotiation, respect and other citizenship values have been made by Karlsen's (2004) study of the Discworld MUD (multi-user dungeon). Yet these observations aside, the actual evidence for such positive citizenship education potential of MMORPGs is limited. Indeed, the moral and ethical environment of such games can be argued to be dubious – as evinced in the development of 'virtual sweatshops' where low-waged professional players are employed to carry out mundane and repetitive tasks on behalf of richer players (Thompson 2005).

CONCLUSIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH, PROVISION AND PRACTICE



9 CONCLUSIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH, PROVISION AND PRACTICE

Although the area of ICT and citizenship – both inside and outside the classroom – continues to attract much attention, the evidence base for the effectiveness (or otherwise) of young people’s ‘citizenship’ uses of ICTs remains inadequate. The enthusiastic and expectant discourses which continue to surround the citizenship potential of ICTs have little empirical support. Moreover, the research and evaluation that has been carried out in the area could not be considered to be high-calibre or even generalisable. Whilst the literature reviewed in this report provides some suggestion of what might be happening, the evidence base is by no means robust or rigorous enough to draw any firm conclusions. As such there is a pressing need for the academic community to empirically engage with this area of education provision in a systematic and considered manner.

This lack of research aside, there are other pressing issues which citizenship education and education technology stakeholders would do well to attend to. For example, it would seem that the effectiveness of ICT-based citizenship learning is being shaped (and one could argue compromised) by the wider educational inertia surrounding the citizenship National Curriculum in schools. At present citizenship appears to be a marginalised concern for teachers and schools, with the application of ICT reinforcing rather than altering existing practices and priorities. Whilst some changes to school-based practices are possible, the real potential for media and technology-based development of

citizenship values and practices may well lie within young people’s engagement with ICTs outside of the formal classroom setting, although this area also lacks a solid supporting base of evidence.

With these observations in mind we can therefore conclude this report with suggestions for some changes to ICT and citizenship learning. We can offer a set of suggestions for future priorities in terms of education practice, education policy, content production and educational research.

FUTURE PRIORITIES FOR EDUCATION PRACTICE

Given the lowly place that citizenship education holds in the hearts and minds of many educators, the low-key and often uninspired use of ICT within the subject area is perhaps to be expected. There is still a sense that ICT applications are being produced and used as a ready ‘technical fix’ to the problem of delivering the citizenship curriculum, especially amongst teachers who may lack either the subject expertise, confidence or enthusiasm to deliver the teaching themselves. Indeed, as Davies et al (2005, p354) concluded, “it is clear that teachers will look for easy-to-use resources that are labelled ‘citizenship’”. Yet teachers and others responsible for the procurement of ICT applications need to be discerning consumers of citizenship resources and look for applications which extend rather than replicate the citizenship education which schools are already delivering through ‘offline’ means. As was suggested in the first Futurelab review, ICTs can be most useful in this sense in promoting and supporting active forms of citizenship education (rather than the passive



CONCLUSIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH, PROVISION AND PRACTICE



presentation of citizenship information). Unless teachers are aware of these opportunities and willing to use them in their teaching, the more obvious forms of passive citizenship provision will continue to prevail.

These concerns over the appropriate use of ICT applications notwithstanding, a key question for the future nature and forms of formal citizenship education is the extent to which it recognises and (re)appropriates the wide range of informal ICT-based activities that many young people are obviously engaging with outside of the classroom. A key area of debate at the moment within general citizenship education circles is how schools and teachers draw on the knowledge and technological practices of their students, thus offsetting their own deficiencies in expertise and resourcing as well as increasing the relevance of what takes place in the classroom to young people. It has been argued by some commentators that schools should make more use of the knowledge and processes inherent in the formation of young people's citizenship outside of the school in different contexts and at various places in the local community (Lawy and Biesta 2006).

Citizenship education inside the school has the potential to be enhanced by recognising and drawing upon these outside-school knowledges and practices instead of resisting or denying them. Instead of young people having to "check in their local knowledges" before entering the classroom (McNeill 1988), a re-interpretation of the relationship between school and community is seen to be required, acknowledging "that this relationship should not only be sensitive to but even porous with regard to local

knowledges and sociabilities" (Magalhães and Stoer 2004, p329). In this respect, schools and teachers could strive to draw upon the outside-school citizenship knowledges and ICT-based practices of their students.

The role of ICT in the process of importing outside-school practices needs to be carefully thought through. Indeed, there has long been a tendency for educationalists and technologists to seize upon young people's 'popular' technology uses and attempt to reproduce 'educational' versions for classroom use in the hope of replicating their popularity and enthusiasm. This can be seen in the production of 'educational' computer games since the 1980s which have attempted to replicate popular games-genres of the time, from 'shoot-em-ups' to adventure games. Yet it has often been the case that the essence of what makes the original, non-educational forms of such games popular with young people is largely lost in the classroom context, with young people well aware of the lower production standards of educational games, wary of the submerged pedagogic intentions and narratives of the game texts, and stymied by the artificial playing environment of the school lesson and the classroom context.

Although it is tempting for educationalists and educators to attempt to 'import' young people's current popular ICT uses which are seen to be fostering forms of citizenship learning and practice, attempts to 'import' young people's current popular ICT uses from the home into the classroom should be carefully thought through. It is possible that attempts to directly import software such as MySpace, Facebook, MMPORGs and other 'popular'

ICT applications into the teaching of citizenship will be perceived by young people to be forced and limited – with the school environment not allowing young people the more immersed and unstructured engagement with such applications that they are used to when at home.

Whilst schools should not be discouraged from educating their students through applications such as MySpace, Facebook and so on, there may well be an opportunity (and even a need) for schools to also educate their students about the use of such applications. There is clearly still a role for schools, parents and communities to get involved in the informal citizenship practices of young people. As Howard Rheingold (2006) observes, when it comes to the informal use of ICTs for citizenship, the current population of young people “is both self-guided and in need of guidance”:

“I think we have an opportunity today to make use of the natural enthusiasm of today’s young digital natives for cultural production as well as consumption, to help them learn to use the media production and distribution technologies now available to them to develop a public voice about issues they care about. Learning to use participatory media to speak and organise about issues might well be the most important citizenship skill that digital natives need to learn if they are going to maintain or revive democratic governance [...] By showing students how to use Web-based tools and channels to inform publics, advocate positions, contest claims, and organise action around issues that they truly care about, participatory media education can draw them into positive early experiences with citizenship that

could influence their civic behaviour throughout their lives.” (Rheingold 2006)

This need for some school-based support and guidance could be especially pertinent for those students who are currently not engaging with ICTs in these ways. As we have seen from some of the research evidence presented in this report, whilst new ICTs are providing for new citizen practices they are “not necessarily producing ‘new’ citizens” (Hermes 2006, p306). In other words there is a substantial proportion of young people who are either not aware or motivated to be using ICTs for these informal citizenship practices, leaving a clear and valuable role for schools and teachers to support them in developing these uses amongst all their students.

FUTURE PRIORITIES FOR EDUCATION POLICY

For any real change to take place in the citizenship classroom there needs to be serious reconsideration of education policy in the area, not least a rethinking of the nature of the citizenship curriculum which ultimately is the driving (and constraining) framework of citizenship education practice. Here it can be argued that only by reorienting the presently rigid curriculum orders towards the more fluid and individualised realities of 21st century citizenship, can citizenship education achieve the relevance and dynamism it currently seeks through the application of ICTs. Whereas new technologies have a role to play in enabling this individualisation and ‘bottom-up’ reshaping, ICTs alone cannot be expected to revitalise the citizenship curriculum unless accompanied by profound educational and political change.

CONCLUSIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH, PROVISION AND PRACTICE



As was argued in the first Futurelab report, schools will not be free to make more expressive and expansive uses of ICTs unless the citizenship curriculum privileges more active forms of citizenship learning. As we have discussed throughout this report, there are some obvious ways in which the scope of citizenship as it currently is laid out within the National Curriculum can be broadened beyond the concerns of the formal political establishment, in line with the changing needs of young people and the realities of contemporary society and citizenship. Rather than starting from the interests and agendas of the formal political establishment, effective citizenship education should “somehow incorporate or start from that which is already important to the majority of young people” (Supple 1999, p19).

Another area for political reconsideration is a more idealistic one, but one which is at the heart of the (in)effectiveness of citizenship education in schools – that of making politics itself more engaging to young people. Here then there is a definite need for non-ICT related reform. As Gerodimos (2006, p1) argues, “the internet has the capacity to facilitate the creation of new forms of civic engagement, but the realisation of these opportunities requires institutional and cultural reinforcement”. There is a need to alter the nature of formal politics if we are to hope for increased interest and engagement from young people. It could be argued that no amount of technological (re)presentation will alter the fact that citizenship education is predicated upon “the same old electoral and institutional politics” (Scammell 2000, p356). From this perspective, there is a need for practitioners and politicians to avoid assuming that increased access to

citizenship information and resources via media will somehow lead to increased levels of citizenship. Efforts should be made instead to address the serious shortcomings of the political system. This is, of course, not an easy task but it would seem essential to move away from the “essentially orthodox agendas” which currently hold little resonance with today’s young people (Davies and Issitt 2005).

FUTURE PRIORITIES FOR CONTENT PRODUCTION

The area of future priorities for content producers and software manufacturers is a more difficult one to expand upon, not least given the rather suppressed nature of the citizenship marketplace at the moment. It could be argued that until educational and political reform of citizenship education is achieved then the area will continue to be a rather uninspiring (and unprofitable) one for content producers and software manufacturers. With this in mind, perhaps the most pertinent move that producers and manufacturers could make in the short term is to lobby government and other educational bodies for the reform and upgrading of citizenship education.

Nevertheless, we are able to offer a few suggestions for future content production. For instance, as has been hinted at above, there is a pedagogic (if not commercial) need for producers to continue to move beyond the passive presentation of citizenship material, information and facts. As we have seen, this is best achieved through the production of software and content which engenders citizenship discussion, such as citizenship-specific ‘social simulations’ with the aim of

stimulating discussion amongst learners and packages which help learners produce citizenship materials. Since the initial Futurelab review, there has been less progress than might have been expected the production of applications which support the school-wide or class-wide democratic practices and activities. Similarly, producers of civic and political websites, especially where the producer is not necessarily a youth-focused organisation also need to continue to produce content which is not perceived by young people to be dull, as well as providing genuinely 'interactive' environments in which young people's contributions are responded to appropriately, and offer clear benefits. Given the staid nature of the citizenship education in schools, it could be that content producers can best fulfil a citizenship role through exploring and developing the informal citizenship education opportunities within commercial software produced for the leisure/domestic market - not least in terms of online and multi-player gaming.

FUTURE PRIORITIES FOR EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

Finally, the paucity of current research on ICT and citizenship education cannot be over-emphasised, especially in the context of the school and classroom. Although systematic reviews such as this report can be correctly challenged for their "limited capacity to inform policy or practice" and what Maclure (2005, p393) refers to as their resulting "clarity bordering on stupidity", the lack of depth of this review reflects the dearth of decent research in this area, rather than an over-simplification or mis-reading of the research literature.

Indeed, there are clear deficiencies in terms of quantity and quality of the research conducted on young people's ICT-based citizenship education in schools and, to a lesser extent, the research conducted on their informal practices.

For example, the school-based studies reported on in this report nearly all relied upon small-scale case study research designs. The data collected was often limited in scope and studies could be criticised as lacking the rigour and robustness associated with good social science research. In contrast, there is a relatively more rigorous (although by no means comprehensive) empirical base with regards to young people's out-of-school engagement with online citizenship resources. Some of this research is characterised by large-scale data sets, often based on randomised samples of young people and complemented by in-depth exploratory qualitative data, all approaches which should be used to greater effect by classroom studies.

The present paucity of quality classroom-based research is, in part, a reflection of the general lack of robust research on citizenship education in schools. As Osler and Starkey (2005) argued:

"Most university-based research in this area appears to have been conducted without external funding. There has been no significant independent funding for research in this area and consequently no substantial and coherent programme of university-based research into what is widely recognised as one of the most important recent developments in the national curriculum. Most of the work is relatively small scale and those projects which explore the relationship between

CONCLUSIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH, PROVISION AND PRACTICE

school learning and community learning are modest in scale. A number of studies appear to have been conducted in a vacuum, with researchers failing to draw upon the available research literature.”

We would certainly reiterate these criticisms in the specific instance of research in ICT-based citizenship learning. If we are to better understand the nature and effectiveness of citizenship education, there is a need for sustained, robust and generalisable classroom research to be conducted. Without a more rigorous evidence base, future practice will continue to be predicated upon little more than the assumptions and good intentions of those who believe that ICTs have a role to play in citizenship teaching and learning. As the second review of citizenship education from EPPI (2005) concluded:

“There is a need for more interdisciplinary research, research which employs mixed methods, quantitative and qualitative, and which involves in-depth study of several schools. Studies are needed of the effects of different citizenship models and pedagogies on cognitive learning outcomes, and into ways to link such learning more carefully and systematically to complementary personal and social learning. Since citizenship education is about lifelong learning and practices, research should also investigate the interrelation between school-based learning in citizenship education and the family and community-based learning.”

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APPENDIX: INDICATIVE CITIZENSHIP SOFTWARE AND ONLINE RESOURCES

ONLINE RESOURCES

Active Citizens

www.active-citizen.org.uk

Amnesty International

www.amnesty.org.uk

BBC Online

www.bbc.co.uk/schools/citizenx

Becta

curriculum.becta.org.uk

Being Heard

www.beingheard.org.uk

British Council eTwinning project

www.britishcouncil.org/etwinning

Britkid

www.britkid.org

Centre for Citizenship Studies in Education

www.le.ac.uk/se/schoolcentres/citizenship

Changemakers

www.changemakers.org.uk

Channel 4

www.Channel4.com/learning

Children's Express

www.childrens-express.org

Citizen 21

www.citizen21.org.uk

Citizenship and Teacher Education

www.citized.info

Community Service Volunteers (CSV)

www.csv.org.uk

Department for Education and Skills (DfES)

www.dfes.gov.uk/citizenship

Development Education Association (DEA)

www.dea.org.uk

DfES Global Gateway

www.globalgateway.org.uk

EPPI Centre Citizenship Education Research Group

eppi.ioe.ac.uk

Generation Europe

www.generation-europe.org

Get Global

www.actionaid.org.uk

Global Express

www.dep.org.uk/globalexpress

Globaldimension

www.globaldimension.org.uk

Learning Through Landscapes

www.ltl.org.uk

Newswise

www.dialogueworks.co.uk/newswise

One World Online

www.oneworldonline.com

Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA)

www.qca.org.uk

School Councils UK

www.schoolcouncils.org

Radiowave

www.radiowaves.co.uk

Association for Citizenship Teaching (ACT)

www.teachingcitizenship.org.uk

The Citizen project

www.thecitizenproject.co.uk

Citizenship Foundation

www.citizenshipfoundation.org.uk

Greenpeace

www.greenpeace.org

Hansard Society

www.hansard-society.org.uk

Institute for Citizenship Studies

www.citizen.org.uk

Media Channel

www.mediachannel.org

UK Parliament

www.explore.parliament.uk

United Nations

www.un.org

Young People's Parliament

www.ypp.org.uk

Yvote

www.yvote.co.uk

Time for Citizenship

www.timeforcitizenship.com

YouthNet UK

www.thesite.org

ONLINE POLITICAL GAMES**McDonalds' Game**

www.mcvideogame.com

Publisher/software house: Molleindustria

Queerpower

www.molleindustria.it/home-eng.php

Publisher/software house: Molleindustria

Tamtipico the virtual flexiworker

www.molleindustria.it/home-eng.php

Publisher/software house: Molleindustria

Darfur is Dying

www.darfurisdying.com Susana Ruiz/

Publisher/software house:MTVu

Oil God

www.shockwave.com/gamelanding/oilgod.jsp

Publisher/software house: Persuasive Games

Food Force

www.food-force.com

Publisher/software house: United Nations'

Airport Insecurity

www.persuasivegames.com/games

Publisher/software house: Persuasive Games

Bacteria Salad

www.persuasivegames.com/games

Publisher/software house: Persuasive Games

ACTIVIST WEBSITES**McSpotlight**

www.mcspotlight.org

Whirled Bank

www.whirledbank.org

Global Arcade

www.globalarcade.org

Cybergrrl

www.cybergrrl.com

PUBLIC ACTION WEBSITES**Pledgebank**

www.pledgebank.com

Mysociety

www.mysociety.com

Netaction

www.netaction.org

Timebank

www.timebank.org.uk

SOFTWARE

Exploring Marriage with Newsdesk

Publisher/software house: Damaris
Age group: 14-19

Ace Monkey's Interactive PSHE & Citizenship 1

Publisher/software house: Birchfield
Age group: 4-7

Ace Monkey's People Who Help Us

Publisher/ software house: Birchfield
Age group: 4-7

Boardworks

Publisher/software house: Boardworks
Age group: 12-14

Interactive Wordsearch for PSHE & Citizenship

Publisher/software house: Birchfield
Age group: 14-16

PSHE and Citizenship – Face the Chair

Publisher/software house: Birchfield
Age group: 11-16

21st Century Citizen

Publisher/software house: Teem
Age group: 11-16

Kar2ouche: Criminal Law

Publisher/software house:
Immersive Education
Age group: 12-16

Kar2ouche: Local Democracy

Publisher/software house:
Immersive Education
Age group: 7-12

Explore Parliament

Publisher/software house: Armchair Travel
Age group: 11-16

CitizenCentral Politics

Publisher/software house: Gapwork
Age group: 14-16

Strumble Island

Publisher/software house: Semerc

CONTENT CREATION SOFTWARE

Newsmaker (newspaper creation)

Publisher/software house: Guardian learn
Age group: 9-14

Qwizdom (class voting system)

Publisher/software house: Quizdom

Podium (podcast creation tool)

Publisher/software house: Softease

TEACHER RESOURCES

Making it click: an interactive guide to practice

Publisher/software house: LSDA
Age group: 16-19

Choosing an angle: citizenship through video production

Publisher/software house: QCA/ BDP media

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Futurelab is passionate about transforming the way people learn. Tapping into the huge potential offered by digital and other technologies, we are developing innovative learning resources and practices that support new approaches to education for the 21st century.

Working in partnership with industry, policy and practice, Futurelab:

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- communicates the latest thinking and practice in educational ICT
- provides the space for experimentation and the exchange of ideas between the creative, technology and education sectors.

A not-for-profit organisation, Futurelab is committed to sharing the lessons learnt from our research and development in order to inform positive change to educational policy and practice.

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