

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

EDUCATION SUB-COMMITTEE – 31 OCTOBER 2000

EDUCATION FOR CITIZENSHIP IN SCOTLAND A PAPER FOR CONSULTATION AND DISCUSSION

Report by Director of Educational and Social Services

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1** To advise Members of the publication by Learning and Teaching Scotland of a Paper for Discussion and Consultation on Education for Citizenship in Scotland.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1** Scotland now has its first parliament in nearly 300 years. This momentous event and related developments throughout the UK and in Europe have prompted many people to debate how democracy in modern Scotland can be nurtured and sustained. In addition, the growing sense of the connections among peoples across the world and the increasingly global impact of local decisions on the environment or on the economy have encouraged an interest in active citizenship in many countries. These events have been accompanied by a growing scepticism about traditional structures of representative democracy and low voter participation in local elections and by-elections.
- 2.2** Schools have a dual role in society: they reflect its customs and traditions and help to shape new ways of life. The advent of New Community Schools, for example, is signalling the importance of teachers collaborating with other professionals and with people in their local communities to provide the best possible opportunities for all to maximise their achievements. Continuing debates about the nature of effective teaching and learning and about the purposes of the school system also signal anew the major contribution that education makes to the health and wellbeing of our society.
- 2.3** It is therefore natural that the role of schools in nurturing and sustaining participative communities and democratic practices should be a topic for debate in these exciting times. Schools and other educational establishments are, of course, not the only influence on democratic society, but they play an important role. For example, they help young people to distinguish between evidence and opinion, to argue logically and to develop a sense of our common identity.

3. THE NATURE OF CITIZENSHIP

- 3.1** This consultation paper addresses a key, overarching purpose of the curriculum from 3 to 18. It sets out views regarding the nature, importance

and aims of education for citizenship in Scotland and the characteristics of effective practice. The principal focus is on the school and pre-school sectors and on clarifying the role of formal education from 3 to 18 in equipping young people as citizens. At the same time, the paper may have implications for further and higher education. Moreover, and importantly, the paper recognises that education for citizenship is not restricted to educational institutions. It is also a priority for community education and is a process to which, for example, families, peers and the media contribute in influential ways.

- 3.2** Much that is already happening in schools and other educational settings could be described as good education for citizenship. However, this is not always recognised and made explicit. The intention, in undertaking a review of this area, is to develop a helpful and robust framework that can be used by schools, pre-5 centres, local authorities, HMI and others in the evaluation and further development of policies and practice.

4. DEVELOPING CITIZENSHIP

- 4.1** The consultation paper proposes broad notions of citizenship and of education for citizenship. These notions encompass political literacy, but extend beyond this important concept. Citizenship is about enjoying rights and exercising responsibilities in the various types of community to which people belong. The aim of education for citizenship is to develop a broadly based capability for active and responsible participation in a range of activities that affect the welfare of communities. This is an essential feature of a just and caring society.
- 4.2** From this consideration of what education for citizenship should mean in practice, it is concluded that it is neither appropriate nor adequate to create a new subject that attempts to encompass 'citizenship education'. Rather, young people are entitled to experience a range and variety of opportunities for progressive development of their capability for active and responsible citizenship. Education for citizenship is a key, overarching purpose of the curriculum and, as such, is the concern of all staff and the whole of each educational establishment.
- 4.3** There are, therefore, two connected aspects of citizenship, as follows:
- provision of a planned and coherent set of learning experiences within schools, pre-school centres and local communities that are successively more demanding of young people's knowledge and skills (these learning experiences need to relate to the curriculum as a whole)
 - an overall approach that concerns a development in the culture and ethos of pre-school and school settings so that they model the practices inherent in participative communities and provide opportunities to exercise responsible citizenship.
- 4.4** It is believed that this approach, together with a set of learning outcomes related to capability for citizenship, provides the basis for a national

framework for education for citizenship. This framework is intended both to shape the development of education for citizenship and to provide reference points against which to evaluate its effectiveness.

5. CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

5.1 The consultation paper addresses four main questions.

5.1.1 What do we mean by 'citizenship'? and Why is 'education for citizenship' important?

These questions focus on the qualities and dispositions that are regarded as essential characteristics of active and responsible citizenship.

5.1.2 What should education for citizenship do for young people?

The third question addresses the issue that education for citizenship should be taken as a key purpose of the curriculum. Its overall goal is summed up as development of capability for thoughtful and responsible participation in political, economic, social and cultural life. This capability for active citizenship is analysed in terms of four types of learning outcome: knowledge and understanding, skills and competences, values and dispositions, and creativity and enterprise.

5.1.3 What does effective education for citizenship involve in practice – for the curriculum, for schools, for pre-5 centres and for communities?

This question explores the types of opportunities and conditions for learning to which all young people are entitled in order to develop, in a progressive manner, the capability for active and responsible citizenship.

5.2 The discussion paper concludes with a number of broader questions that respondents are encouraged to consider:

- What are the longer-term implications for the content and organisation of the curriculum?
- How does education for citizenship relate to other social and educational priorities, such as social inclusion and improving achievement?
- Should education for citizenship be assessed and accredited? If so, in what ways?
- What are the professional development implications for teachers and other practitioners?
- How can the enthusiasm and commitment of staff be fostered and supported?

5.3 Submissions are sought by 16 March 2001.

6 POLICY/LEGAL/FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Nil.

7 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members of the Education Sub-Committee:

- (i) invite the Director to consult widely on the Education for Citizenship in Scotland Paper and submit an Authority response for Committee consideration in due course; and
- (ii) otherwise note the contents of this report.

John Mulgrew
Director of Educational and Social Services

KMcK/MTC
11 October 2000

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. Education for Citizenship in Scotland – A Paper for Discussion and Consultation - Learning and Teaching Scotland (2000).

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AGENDA