

## **Nurturing Citizenship in the Early Years**

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## Executive Summary

Finding ways of fostering positive citizenship, resilient communities and effective leadership are key policy concerns in Scotland and education has traditionally been seen as having a significant role to play in the socialisation of children into responsible and active citizens. Becoming a responsible citizen is one of the four goals of the Curriculum for Excellence which guides the educational provision made for children from 3- to 18-years of age in Scotland. However, no explicit definition of 'responsible citizen' is offered nor is any specific pedagogic practice promoted. This literature review was commissioned to explore the meaning of citizenship in early childhood and seek out evidence about the ways in which early learning and childcare settings can support young children to develop the skills, dispositions, practices and understandings associated with citizenship.

### *Review Findings*

The review adopted a broad, two-pronged approach, searching both key academic, peer-reviewed journals within the early years field, as well as grey and policy-related reports. There was little in the literature that explicitly addressed the nature of citizenship or education for citizenship in early childhood settings. However, an enduring ambiguity was identified in both policy and practice about the status of young children as citizens with current rights or as 'not yet' citizens; a debate that is concerned with rights and notions of competence and responsibility. Furthermore, the opportunities given to children and the expectations of them as citizens are often conflated with ideas about participation and the right to be consulted. While there was little literature about the outcomes of particular practices, activities and experiences on the citizenship behaviours and skills of young children, some common themes informed the lessons drawn from the review.

### *Key Lessons*

- Citizenship is a complex and ambiguous concept with inherent tensions. The educational and policy communities in Scotland should engage in further debate about how the curriculum goal of becoming a responsible citizen in the early years is to be understood and pursued.
- There is a lack of good quality studies of pedagogic practices to support the development of citizenship in the early years. The available evidence suggests that educators should focus on developing *skills* which will support positive citizenship and personal and social development in the present and which can be built upon as children progress through school. For example, developing children's capacities to form and voice an opinion, solve problems, negotiate roles, recognise diversity and inequality and consider the impact of their decisions and behaviours on others.
- Early years educators and primary school teachers need opportunities in their initial and continuing professional education to:
  - consider how the social and learning environment they provide fosters acts of positive citizenship, inclusion and equity;
  - reflect on their personal perspectives on citizenship, moral values and attitudes and their understanding of the perspectives which parents and the local community hold about citizenship; and
  - develop a shared repertoire of pedagogic practices, materials, resources and interactions to support the skills and dispositions associated with citizenship.

- Further empirical research on children's perspectives is needed to advance our understanding of their capacity for positive citizenship and the ways in which it can be nurtured.

## 1. Introduction

Debates about the nature of citizenship, the citizenship status of children and ways of developing behaviours and attitudes associated with making a positive contribution as a citizen are thought to have important implications for the wellbeing of young individuals and for the communities in which they live<sup>1-3</sup>. Finding ways of fostering positive citizenship, resilient communities and effective leadership are key policy concerns in Scotland, along with providing services and initiating interventions to ensure that young children grow up in an environment that gives them the 'best start in life'<sup>4</sup>. Furthermore, becoming a responsible citizen is one of the four goals of the Curriculum for Excellence which guides the educational provision made for children from 3- to 18-years of age<sup>5</sup>.

Education has traditionally been seen as having a significant role to play in the socialisation of children into responsible and active citizens<sup>6-9</sup>. However, questions about citizenship education in the early years are now more important than ever due to two factors. Firstly, the evidence of the impact of attending good quality early learning and childcare settings has led to increased policy interest in early years education as long-lasting investment in children's future attainment and contribution to society<sup>e.g. 10</sup>. Secondly, there is renewed interest in citizenship due to a perceived democratic crisis linked to various factors, ranging from the apparent apathy of young people to engage with the political process to the rise of nationalist and populist parties in Europe<sup>2,11,12</sup>. On the other hand, children have often been excluded from debates about citizenship due to their perceived lack of capacity<sup>13-15</sup>.

Evidence suggests that positive and responsive citizenship and leadership is a key asset at individual, family and community levels, raising questions about the ways in which these capacities might be fostered. Research led by the Glasgow Centre for Population Health demonstrated the importance of leadership as a factor contributing to the resilience of communities and their capacity to provide supportive environments for living and learning<sup>16</sup>. Associated with this programme of study was an asset-based perspective (at individual, community and institutional level). An asset-based approach recognises and fosters individuals strengths, and supports them in developing new assets<sup>17</sup>. This stands in contrast to a more typical deficit approach that is concerned with disadvantage, needs and difficulties. Evidence gathered by GCPH attests to the efficacy of an asset-based approach in attending to the capacities, networks and social capital of communities<sup>17,18</sup>. Our earlier study of the contribution of nurture corners in pre-school provision in Glasgow found that provision and practices in early learning and childcare settings can make a difference to the social and emotional behaviours of 3- to 5-year olds<sup>19</sup>. It is in this context that the current review was commissioned to explore:

- (i) the behaviours and characteristics of young children that might be associated with positive citizenship in their present or future lives, and;
- (ii) the ways in which educational practices can contribute to building these assets in individuals and communities.

An account of the review process is given in Section 2 where we set out the research questions which shaped the review and the methods employed. In Section 3 we include a brief discussion of the policy context before we move on in Section 4 to give an account of the literature identified. This account is organised around the six topics which emerged from our analysis of the material available. Finally, in Section

5 we return to the review questions and propose some answers from the evidence of our review.

## 2. The Review

This review was commissioned by the Glasgow Centre for Population Health and was carried out by members of the Centre for Child Wellbeing and Protection, University of Stirling between May and July 2017. The purpose of this study was to explore how citizenship can be fostered in the early years. Our focus was on exploring how citizenship is understood in the early years and the practices which are associated with supporting the development of citizenship as a dispositional characteristic or a repertoire of actions or expressions of responsibility or concern. Because notions and expressions of citizenship in practice with young children are under-researched it was decided, after some initial, informal conversations with educators and those responsible for early years provision, to concentrate our research time on a review of the pertinent literature.

### 2.1 *The Review Questions*

The aim of the review was to explore the ways in which citizenship is conceived of and might be fostered in early learning and childcare settings and the first years of primary school. Our focus was on literature relevant to children in the Early Level of the Scottish Curriculum for Excellence (3-6 year olds).

The initial proposal aimed to answer the following questions:

- RQ1 (i) What do educators understand by 'citizenship' as it relates to the learning and experiences of children aged 3-6 years old?
- (ii) What behavioural characteristics, dispositions or actions of 3-6 year olds do educators consider to be evidence of positive citizenship?
- RQ2 (i) What evidence is there of the efficacy of particular educational practices, activities or programmes as a way of developing understandings of and skills for positive citizenship in the early years?
- (ii) What features of educational settings, practices or policies facilitate or hinder educators who wish to promote citizenship in the early years curriculum?
- RQ3 (i) To what extent do national and local policy positions support, shape or inhibit fostering citizenship in the early years?
- (ii) What features of local communities or institutions facilitate or hinder fostering citizenship in the early years?
- (iii) What implications arise from the findings of this review for policy and practice development?

After preliminary work scoping the available literature it was clear that these questions were too ambitious. Given the limited pertinent theoretical and empirical work our questions were modified to ensure that some progress was made. The questions that shaped our review of the literature were then:

- RQ1 (i) What is understood in the educational literature by the concepts of 'citizen' and 'citizenship' as they relate to the learning and experiences of children aged 3-6 years old?
- (ii) What behavioural characteristics, dispositions or actions of 3-6 year olds are associated with positive citizenship?

- RQ2 What evidence is there of the efficacy of particular educational practices, activities or programmes as a way of developing understandings of, skills for or positive dispositions towards positive citizenship in the early years?
- RQ3 What implications arise from this review for the development of policy and practice to foster positive citizenship in young children attending early learning and childcare settings?

## 2.2 The Review Process

This was a rapid review of the literature that adopted a two-pronged approach. The first approach focused on key academic, peer-reviewed journals within the early years field. Table 1 lists the main journals included in the search and the search terms employed.

**Table 1:** Journals and Search Terms

Journals	Search terms
<i>Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood</i> <i>International Journal of Early Years Education</i> <i>Early Years Childhood</i> <i>Early Childhood Research Quarterly</i> <i>European Early Childhood Education Research</i>	citizenship, participation, children leadership, resilience, civic attitudes, assets-based
Children & Schools Children & Society	Citizenship OR civic OR participation AND early years;

The second approach was a wider search of grey and academic literature. We used StirGate, the University of Stirling's search engine, and Google Scholar for a search of academic journals published in English between 2000 and 2017, although we occasionally included earlier publications where relevant. To access grey literature we carried out a search on Open Grey, a European search engine that focus exclusively on grey literature, as well as two web-based search engines: Google and Bing. An account of the search history is summarised in Appendix 1.

We searched primarily for work relating to children and their educators in early learning and childcare settings or the first year of primary school. In some instances we drew on articles which focused on slightly older children<sup>e.g. 6,11,14</sup> or which did not specify the ages of the children who were the focus of the study because they provided important insights about citizenship education in the early years. For instance, we included work by Miller *et al.*<sup>12</sup> which referred simply to primary school aged children and that by Bath and Karlsson<sup>15</sup> which talked about young children.

In the literature accessed, young children's citizenship was often conflated with participation. In section 4.2 below we offer a brief look at some of the literature which seemed to relate to both these concepts. However, it was decided to exclude papers that focused exclusively on examples of children's participation, methods to support participation, ethical implications of children's participation, particularly in research, and philosophical justifications for participation. There are two reasons for this decision (i) whilst participation is a significant component of citizenship it should/may not be its most important element or defining characteristic<sup>1,14,20</sup> and (ii) the difference in the quantity of literature available around children's participation would



mean that it would dominate any search in which it was included and risk overwhelming the particular interest in citizenship.

We summarised all pertinent saved papers and produced brief summaries from which we identified the topics dealt with in more detail in Section 4 below. It should be noted that the terms used to refer to the adults responsible for the care and learning of children in preschool settings and in primary school vary from location to location and with the writers involved. In this report we have used the terms practitioner and educator inter-changeably to refer to all those who work with children in the educational settings<sup>a</sup> they attend before they begin primary school. Those who engage with children in primary school may be referred to as teachers or educators.

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<sup>a</sup>Note that these settings are variously referred to across countries and time periods as nursery, preschool, early education and in Scotland, since 2014, as Early Learning and Childcare (ELC).

### 3. Policy Context in Scotland

Educational policy in Scotland is driven by the Scottish Government's desire to make Scotland 'the best place in the world in which to grow up'<sup>21</sup>. This ambition was reiterated at the time of the passing of the Children and Young People Act<sup>22</sup> and drives a range of policy initiatives to ensure social justice<sup>b</sup> and equity and meet the needs of disadvantaged and vulnerable families. For instance, the Scottish Government<sup>23</sup> is currently planning a substantial increase in the provision of early learning and childcare services for *all* children aged from 3 to 5 years old and for eligible under two-year olds<sup>c</sup>. This substantial expansion in early learning and childcare provision planned for 2020 is intended to:

- (i) improve outcomes for all children but particularly for those from disadvantaged and vulnerable families
- (ii) increase opportunities for parents to move into employment or to study
- (iii) close the gap between the attainment of children from advantaged and less advantaged socio-economic backgrounds
- (iv) reduce inequalities in the early years, and
- (v) contribute to a reduction in child poverty<sup>23</sup>.

Running in parallel with these intervention policies is the Scottish curriculum for children aged from 3- to 18-years old<sup>5</sup>. Known as the Curriculum for Excellence, this policy document sets out national educational aims and expectations. It is designed around four goals for all children. The aspiration is that they will be successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens and that these outcomes will apply across the four contexts for learning: curriculum areas and subjects, interdisciplinary learning, the ethos and life of the school, and opportunities for personal achievement.

The Curriculum for Excellence does not specify particular pedagogic content or actions (for instance, 'facts' to be learned, topics to be addressed or ways for educators to structure a lesson) in order to achieve any of the four goals at any one stage of a child's educational journey. Rather, it is expected that progress towards these goals will be made through an extensive range of experiences, designed by teachers and early years practitioners on the basis of their professional knowledge and their understanding of age appropriateness and relevance to the interests of the children for whom they are responsible and the context in which they are learning.

As a consequence of the Curriculum for Excellence's focus on general expectations and outcomes to be achieved through the application of professional practices and knowledge no precise definition is given of 'responsible citizen' in the curriculum documentation, nor is any specific mention made about particular citizenship practices or outcomes to be targeted and no syllabus is prescribed. However, an inspection of the experiences and outcomes listed for the curriculum area Health and Wellbeing gives some indication of the kinds of skills, practices and values which the curriculum designers associate with citizenship. For example, there is an expectation that children's educational settings (across the age range) will support the development of self-awareness, self-worth and respect for others; as well as an understanding of risk-taking and the impact of risky behaviours. Educational settings are also expected to support the development of social skills, confidence and

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<sup>b</sup> Social justice is here concerned with matters of fairness, equality of opportunity, power, health and wealth, reduction in poverty and the creation of an inclusive society.

<sup>c</sup> Eligible two-year olds are those who are, or have been at any time since their second birthday, looked after by a local authority or subject to a kinship care order, or whose parents receive certain benefits such as income support, incapacity or disablement allowances.

resilience and help children make informed choices. There is a concern for social justice too with mention of the acceptance of diversity and understanding of personal responsibility to challenge discrimination. This concern with social justice and rights is found again in the *National Framework for Inclusion* published by the Scottish Teacher Education Committee (STEC) in 2009.

Educators supporting the learning and development of children in the Early Level (3- to 6-year olds) are expected to adopt what is described as an active learning approach<sup>24</sup>. Active learning is *'learning which engages and challenges children's thinking using real-life and imaginary situations.'*<sup>24: p.5</sup>. It includes child- and adult-initiated play activities, exploration, and reflection on everyday experiences. The practice guidance suggests that active learning can contribute to children becoming responsible citizens as they experience *'different ways of seeing the world, learning to share and give and take, learning to respect themselves and others, and taking part in making decisions.'*<sup>24: p.6</sup>. Active learning experiences associated with the other goals can be seen to overlap with aspects of citizenship too – building resilience, dealing with risk, taking leading and supporting roles, resolving problems and respecting the opinions of others<sup>24</sup>. In the curriculum for children in the Early Level (3-6 year olds), as well as for older pupils, becoming a responsible citizen seems then to draw on notions of personal development and of the capacities needed to support social justice.

A similar set of desirable outcomes for young children are found in the curriculum guidance of the other three education systems in the UK. In England, citizenship education was made statutory for secondary school students in 2002 and is recommended for all primary schools. The National Curriculum for England (1999) sets out three strands to citizenship education: teaching about community, social and moral education and political literacy<sup>25</sup>. The guidance for Citizenship at Key Stages 1 and 2 identifies a number of themes linked with citizenship education such as knowledge and understanding about rules, rights and responsibilities; the local environment; democracy and diversity; and the ability to debate and resolve conflicts (DfEE & QCA, 1999 in ,26). Although there is no specific mention of developing citizenship in the English Foundation Stage (from 0-5 years old)<sup>27</sup>, the curriculum guidance includes aspects of behaviour such as developing social skills, understanding similarities and differences between people, being able to work with others and managing feelings, which also feature in the Scottish expectations about outcomes in the Early Level. The Welsh Foundation Phase curriculum mentions developing respect for the diverse cultures and languages of Wales and the diverse needs, capacities and perspectives of others, as well as personal self-esteem and moral values<sup>28</sup>. Each of these attributes may be seen as pertinent to desirable citizenship practices but the only explicit mention of this concept is a reference to preparing children to become global citizens. There is no mention of citizenship in the curricular guidance for the early years in Northern Ireland and while there is concern for the development of personal and social skills, values and attributes there is less apparent concern with diversity and inclusion in this curriculum<sup>29</sup>.

### *Summary*

The policy framework in Scotland, as in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, positions early learning and childcare settings (whether public, private or third sector) as a site for progress towards social justice and includes a number of principles that could support the development of citizenship education in the Early Years. Although becoming a responsible citizen is one of the four goals for the curriculum there is no overt strategy set out for the teaching of citizenship or the attainment of this or any of

the other goals in early learning and childcare settings. Educators are expected to use their professional knowledge and repertoire of pedagogic actions to ensure that the curriculum goals are met. Early years educators are expected to support the development of children's personal social skills, their understanding of social attitudes and values and their capacities for positive social interactions through the ways in which they arrange their provision and the learning opportunities which they provide.

## 4. The Review of the Evidence

### 4.1 What is Citizenship?

As our exploration of curriculum policy has suggested, there appears to be no agreed definition of citizenship<sup>14,15,20</sup>. In contrast to the attention paid in curriculum guidance to nurturing personal and social dispositions and capacities, the academic literature offers contemporary understandings of citizenship that define it mostly in terms of membership of a community and accompanying rights and responsibilities of individuals<sup>2,3,14,20</sup>. As Ben-Arieh and Boyer<sup>3: p.33</sup> explain, citizenship is defined as

*'... a source of human rights and entitles its owners to services, protection and benefits. Citizenship stipulates what obligations a citizen must fulfil and in what manner he or she is to behave. Citizenship is the prerequisite for belonging to a group (from a social and historical perspective) and as such bears a significant impact on identity formation.'*

In this understanding, citizenship is a socio-legal status contingent on membership of a group and inevitably involves a dialectical process between inclusion and exclusion Kivisto and Faist, 2007 in 20. Although it is less pertinent to the focus of this review it should be noted that a significant strand of the literature encountered when exploring citizenship in the early years is concerned with the rights of all citizens to be included in policy and provision. This work typically examines ways in which educational settings and policymakers can respond to include all citizens in the community which they serve, respecting the values and meeting the expectations of particular families or groups in local society. (See, for instance, the work of 30 on sensitivity to and inclusion of migrant and minority groups)

Children's citizenship occupies an uneasy space within current understandings of citizenship. Children are often denied full citizenship due to their perceived lack of cognitive capacity and evolving communicative capacity<sup>14,15,20,31,32</sup>. As Grindheim<sup>33</sup> notes young children are treated as a different kind of citizen because they are not considered to be responsible for all their actions and are thought of as biologically immature, dependent on adults for aspects of their care and less experienced than adults. However, as Larkins<sup>14</sup> has pointed out, there are no clear cuts as to when one's capacity starts or ends. Furthermore, any understanding of citizenship that is informed by contemporary socio-cultural or cultural-historical understandings of society and behaviour must acknowledge that all individuals, be they children or adults, will be constrained in their capacity for self-sufficiency and self-direction by the social context in which they live<sup>14</sup>.

Due to their typically subordinate position in society children are not able to act as full citizens in their communities<sup>32</sup>. For instance, whilst children are typically afforded specific rights such as those granted through the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child<sup>34</sup> they lack civic, political and economic rights<sup>20,33</sup>. Similarly, whilst they may be invited to participate in some decisions (typically those that directly affect them, such as consultations about plans to develop a playground or activities while in hospital) they are often excluded from major decisions, such as how local and national governments should allocate and spent their budgets<sup>20,33</sup>. In addition, opportunities for young children to make decisions in educational settings are usually limited (e.g. about the school menu or uniform), dependent on adults and most often are concerned with what they do with peers<sup>8,13</sup>. In these circumstances it seems appropriate to conclude that children are not current citizens, but may be offered some 'training' for future citizenship roles when they reach adulthood. However,

Marchant and Kirby<sup>31</sup> argue that recognising young children as citizens in the present would benefit society as a whole because it demonstrates a respect for the principles of democratic life and supports improved community relations.

Ailwood *et al.*<sup>8</sup> point to the tension between constructing children as agentic<sup>d</sup> and capable participants in decisions about their own life and the developmental perspective, still present in among some policy makers and writers on early years practice, that sees young children as not yet capable of the kind of abstract thought they consider necessary to understand citizenship. Such deficit thinking is likely to favour policies and curriculum approaches which limit children's agency and ignore their ability to act as citizens in the social situation of their educational setting.

Ailwood *et al.*<sup>8</sup> conclude that, despite the widespread recognition among practitioners that children are capable of participation in decision-making, it is the developmental discourse which dominates in Australian policy and curriculum for citizenship. The researchers suggest that policy constructing young children as unable to understand abstract notions about what it is to be a 'good citizen' has resulted in them being seen as future citizens rather than present citizens in Australia.

Writing in the context of New Zealand, Mitchell<sup>35</sup> suggests that three constructions of the child are present in that country's policies. One of these is of the child as a citizen in a social community, an agent in a social situation but one who is also in need of holistic provision which includes education and care, contributing to personal development and community cohesion. She goes on to argue that constructing children as citizens can foreground their rights, agency and the interdependence of care and education. Duhn's<sup>36</sup> review of the discourse present in the New Zealand curriculum for the early years (Te Whāriki) concludes that this guidance is driven not by ideals about best practice but a vision of the 'ideal child'. She goes on to argue that this thinking about the ideal child was at that time heavily influenced by current political thinking which saw early years education as contributing to the neo-liberal vision of future global citizenship.

An analysis of policies in the Nordic countries<sup>37</sup> found a desire for democracy in early years education that was manifest in a concern for the future and the present. In the policies analysed children were treated as future beings who need to learn about and be prepared for the expectations of themselves as citizens, as well as present beings who should be educated and cared for in an environment that is founded on democratic principles and ethical and emotional relationships. They argue that in policy in Nordic countries children are positioned as both subjects, with rights about their present lives and as objects for future development. By contrast, Moss<sup>2</sup> and Bath and Karlsson<sup>15</sup> argued that early years education policy in England was being driven by the contemporary political agenda and that (at the time of writing) it was too focused on concerns about creating and maintaining a 'mixed market' for early education and childcare. The aim of this market was to ensure that parents had opportunities to make choices about taking up state-funded and personally-funded provision in local authority or private and voluntary sector settings. This concern with creating an effective market focused attention on efficiency and profitability which Moss<sup>2</sup> and Bath and Karlsson<sup>15</sup> argued was incompatible with citizenship education.

Millei and Imre<sup>32</sup> highlight the danger that a focus on citizenship in education can become tokenistic and normalise particular structures and practices. For example,

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<sup>d</sup> The recognition of children as 'agents', that is, as autonomous and capable individuals, is relatively recent and has been promoted by the development of the 'new' Sociology of Children and Childhood.

school councils can become a way of apparently giving children a space to act as citizens in the school community and have their views heard. However, the effectiveness of this depends on the approach of the adults making decisions and the inclusivity of the process of arriving at a 'pupil perspective'. Opportunities to act as a representative can become construed as evidence of good citizenship in these circumstances, but will inevitably be limited to a few children rather than all. This raises questions about whether policies and practices founded on a citizenship agenda constrain children by normalising particular behaviours (e.g. voting in class, volunteering as a spokesperson), rather than fostering individual agency as a citizen. Focusing on the child as an actor in a social setting, Tesar<sup>38</sup> points to the ways in which the normalising tendencies of the institution and the power relationships in particular early years settings can construct an individual as a supporter, a victim or a rebel. In each of these cases the child is positioned as unequal and conceptualising him or her as a citizen is, at best, constrained and, at worst, inappropriate.

A way forward from these dilemmas is offered by Dunne<sup>39</sup>. Writing from a philosophical position, but drawing too on empirical work, he attempts to directly tackle the tension between constructs of citizenship and childhood. Dunne begins by considering Plato's perspective. Plato favoured the state, rather than the family (and local values), as the most appropriate agent for up-bringing and the shaping of citizenship. Dunne dismisses this position as inappropriate for contemporary times. He also reviews and rejects Rousseau's call to protect childhood against the demands of the state and the expectations of citizens. However, Dunne acknowledges that there remains the problem of *'how to understand the relationship between childhood and citizenship and how to translate this understanding into an educational project'*<sup>39: p.6</sup>. He goes on to suggest that the answer for our post-modern times lies in an Athenian or republican conception of citizenship which is based on three principles outlined by Aristotle:

- (i) freedom, including freedom to participate with others in decision-making and self-governance;
- (ii) equity, particularly in the worth of the individual and their views;
- (iii) solidarity or civic friendship which sees others not as opponents or strangers but as individuals to be cared for.

Dunne argues that this way of thinking about citizenship raises ethical and educational implications, such as the need to foster civic virtues and nurture particular dispositions. He suggests that it is possible to think of childhood and citizenship as linked rather than in opposition if Aristotle's ideas about citizenship are enacted through three key qualities of humanity (speech and expression, deliberation or reflection, and action) in situations of social interdependency.

Dunne illustrates his argument that citizenship and childhood can be reconstructed to overcome the tensions discussed above by referring to the ways in which children and adults engage in the educational settings of Reggio Emilia in northern Italy. Arising from the specific social and political context of the area, early years provision in Reggio Emilia is based on an understanding that children's development should be fostered through following their interests and curiosity. Children work on topics or questions in groups supported by adult educators and artists. The focus is on joint construction of learning and careful attention to and reflection on what are often referred to as the 'hundred languages of children'<sup>40</sup>. The Reggio Emilia approach also depends on an open and ongoing dialogue between children and adults; sensitive responses by adults to support children's agency; and active engagement

between parents, the community and the educational settings. For Dunne, this approach to early years education offers a way to overcome the paradoxical relationship between citizenship and childhood.

Some have suggested that citizenship should be understood as a political practice rather than a legal and social status<sup>14,32</sup>. Larkins<sup>14</sup> argues that citizenship should be understood as a practice that is relational and contextual. Adopting such an understanding of citizenship would open up opportunities to understand children's practices as actions of citizenship. Similarly, Millei and Kallio<sup>41</sup> suggest that closer attention should be paid to the 'mundane politics' that emerge in the day to day of any community, including preschool settings, as well as the official politics and policies such as those about the purposes and ideas of provision. They argue that not doing so risks children's everyday political agency being overlooked and the actions of some being misunderstood or hindered.

### *Summary*

No one definition or understanding of citizenship or the behaviours or practices which are associated with this construct emerges from the literature. Early years curricula appear to focus on personal, social and emotional aspects of development as contributing to well-being and fostering good citizenship and relationships with others. The academic literature points to alternative understandings of citizenship that attend to rights, the responsibilities of community membership and to socio-political activities. Central to the debate about the meaning of citizenship for young children is the tension between expectations that citizens are holders of rights and can be expected to take responsibility and contribute to society and the understanding of childhood as a time of immaturity, dependency and vulnerability. There is another dilemma too, made more acute when children are recognized as agents in their social world. This is the tension between a focus on developing children as future citizens (with decisions to be made about what skills, dispositions or understandings should be developed) or attending to children as current citizens in their learning and other communities (requiring attention to relationships, inclusive behaviours and expressed preferences).

## *4.2 Citizenship and Participation*

As stated above, in the literature young children's citizenship was often conflated with participation<sup>2,8,11,42-44</sup>. The conflation of the two can be traced back to two key events:

- (i) Marschall's<sup>11</sup> seminal work on citizenship published in 1950 which stated that true citizenship could only be realised through individuals' full engagement with society, and;
- (ii) the increased focus on involving children in decisions that affect their lives since the ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child<sup>34</sup>.

Participation can be understood as a right, without which claim to other rights cannot be exercised. In this understanding, participation in decisions that can affect one's life is an essential prerequisite of learning to be a good, responsible and active citizen<sup>43</sup>. Young children's participation has, therefore, often been pursued and defended on the basis that it will support children to become citizens; rather than recognising children as citizens in the present<sup>31</sup>.



However, such a narrow understanding of citizenship is problematic for a number of reasons. First, as mentioned above, children who may be unable or unwilling to participate could be perceived as second-class citizens<sup>11,20</sup>. Additionally, focusing on participation in decision-making ignores other aspects of children's social and political agency that constitute practices of citizenship, such as negotiating the rules of social coexistence in their play<sup>14,15</sup>. As Larkins<sup>14: p.19</sup> argues:

*“This is not to deny the importance of participation, but to also value the practices through which children do not participate in the citizenship they are offered, but enact citizenship of a different kind.”*

Secondly, it assumes that participation is always a positive experience for children. However, as Marchand and Kirby<sup>31</sup> and Neale<sup>1</sup> have argued, this is not always the case. Participation can be tokenistic and without recognition and respect it can become an empty exercise.

Thirdly, questions have been raised about the relationship between increased attention to and advocacy for children's participation and the rise of neo-liberal ideas of individuals as consumers and service users who are responsible for making rational choices to maximise their wellbeing. In this understanding, participation is not a liberating practice but a technology of government which has as its main purpose the creation of self-regulating individuals<sup>45</sup>. This neo-liberal conception of participation moves away from the values typically associated with citizenship as it privileges the capacity of individuals to make decisions to maximise their own wellbeing, rather than that of their community<sup>2</sup>.

### *Summary*

Participation in or consultation about decision-making is often conflated with citizenship. However, while the opportunity to participate may be necessary for active citizenship the latter encompasses a much more extensive set of behaviours, actions and expectations. Indeed a focus on participation can mean that other ways of acting as a citizen are overlooked. In addition, participation can be de-valued if the views of young participants are not acted upon or used as a means of moving towards ensuring individual choice and responsibility rather than focusing on community needs and outcomes.

### *4.3 Fostering Citizenship: Pedagogy and Practices to Nurture Citizenship*

Conceptualising citizenship as a social practice and young children as social actors seems to suggest that everyday experiences in early learning and childcare settings should offer opportunities for developing relevant skills and understandings. However, turning to the literature about the relationship between educational practices, pedagogic actions and interactions and the outcomes associated with current and future citizenship reveals little in terms of 'tried and tested' approaches or even any substantial agreement on approaches that may be beneficial. Instead what emerges is a number of disparate studies or essays with little cumulative evidence.

Baker<sup>46</sup> suggests that there are three aspects to active citizenship (membership, obligation and participation) and argues that each of these can be fostered by educators in the context of the Foundation Stage<sup>e</sup> curriculum in England. She

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<sup>e</sup> The Foundation Stage of the English Curriculum applies to early education and childcare provision for children from birth to five years of age. It applies to preschool settings and the reception class year of primary school. The focus is on adult- and child-initiated play-based ways of learning, although

describes generalised principles for practice (many currently part of a wider consensus on good practice) as contributing to children developing the attitudes and skills needed to ensure a more just and sustainable future and of '[t]eaching character'<sup>46: p.1116</sup>. Her approach appears to be largely one of acting in the present to ensure future informed political citizenship. She talks of current Foundation Stage practices as preparing children to take part critically and contribute constructively to political and social life locally, nationally and globally. However, there is little evidence offered as to the efficacy of the Foundation Stage as a way of preparing for this particular notion of engaged future citizenship. The expectation of positive outcomes seems to rest on assertions that a curriculum that fosters a spirit of inquiry, creativity, problem-solving, along with a play-based and active learning pedagogy and positive relationships between adults and children in early years settings will result in children acquiring characteristics that will sustain positive adult citizenship.

While Baker argues that the actions of educators and the implementation of curriculum guidance will foster an understanding of citizenship, others see children as becoming citizens through their interactions with peers, rather than the intervention of adults. Beginning from her construction of young children's citizenship as relational, concerned with difference and expressed in actions rather than linked to status, and drawing on her research with six groups of marginalised children aged 5-13 years old living in Wales and France, Larkins<sup>14</sup> finds evidence of children's current rather than future contribution to social wellbeing and that they can engage in actions of citizenship independently from adults. She sets out a four-way framework to describe the ways which children can act as citizens:

- (i) negotiation of rules and creating selves;
- (ii) contributing to social goods;
- (iii) contributing to the achievement of individuals' rights and
- (iv) transgressing existing boundaries of citizenship to dispute balances of rights, responsibility and status.

Hägglund and Samuelson<sup>7</sup> also conclude that young children learn about social justice and equity through their interactions with each other and that this learning is independent of adult guidance and control. Devine<sup>11</sup> comments on the importance of peer relations and how these provide an opportunity for children to negotiate their own rules and regulations. It is through peer relations, Devine argues, that children experience a sense of connectedness and belonging in school life.

Others highlight the importance of play for an understanding of children's citizenship. Bath and Karlsson<sup>15</sup> conclude, based on the research evidence collected in England and Sweden over a 10-year period, that in their play children demonstrate forms of citizenship based on an ethic of solidarity, social justice and equality. Elbers<sup>6</sup> examines how children represent, learn about and challenge social rules in their pretend play. He emphasises how pretend play does not merely imitate the social world, but also creates a space where children can reflect upon and change the rules.

Such studies suggest that young children may learn about citizenship through their interactions with the world and relationships with their peers, rather than the explicit teaching practices of adults. Acknowledging children's existing or developing capacities for acts of citizenship can be seen as empowering and respectful. However, it also risks inappropriately shifting the responsibility to learn about the

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some more formal aspects of literacy and numeracy (e.g. phonics learning) are introduced during this stage.

principles and values of citizenship and to develop skills in self-regulation on to children themselves. Educators who want to provide opportunities for children to develop skills associated with citizenship and to foster independent acts of citizenship will want to consider how they can provide an educational environment that nurtures peer interactions, an ethos of justice and equity and empowers children to act in the ways outlined in Larkins's<sup>14</sup> framework.

Several studies point to the developmental value of the experience of conflict with peers, although in these findings there is more explicit recognition of a role for adults in the children's encounters with each other. Describing an empirical study of 1-3 year olds Pálmadóttir and Johansson<sup>47</sup> note that conflict is useful for children to clarify their views and make their positions visible. It also supports the learning of skills required for conflict resolution. Similarly, Johansson and Emilson<sup>48</sup> suggest that conflicts (appropriately supported by adults) offer possibilities and obstacles for learning about democracy and are indeed part of democratic life. Conflicts offer experience of diverse voices and pressures to conform and the development of three traits which they identify as important for resistance: playfulness, courage and managing emotions. Church *et al.*<sup>49</sup> point out that, despite evidence that suggests that modelling problem-solving is the most effective way in which educators can intervene in children's disputes, it is adult-led cessation strategies that are most often observed in practice. The authors claim that their analysis of interactions in preschool settings demonstrates how adult modelling of problem solving can successfully support children to settle disputes themselves.

An action research project drew attention to the influence of the educators' actions on classroom culture and disruptive behaviour and suggested that the ways in which adults engage with children can positively influence the experience of all in a class community<sup>50</sup>. This project in an early years classroom in Spain was a response to concerns about the impact that the negative behaviour of a few children (driven by frustration and anger) was having on the adults and children with whom they shared the environment. Changing the practices of adults so that their actions empowered children was a key contribution to achieving a changed environment. For example, altering the way in which the daily classroom discussion was managed offered opportunities to tackle children's perceptions of injustice and gave space for children to raise and address conflicts that made a difference to the classroom community. Sheridan and Samuelson<sup>13</sup> argue that practitioners can extend children's opportunities and capacities to take decisions by actively listening to children and encouraging them to argue for their standpoints. Others<sup>9,25,26</sup> emphasise the importance of teaching the skills children require to reflect critically on their own perspective and the views of others and be able to express and justify their opinions. Moss<sup>2</sup> goes further, arguing that creating a democratic and participatory learning environment in an early years setting requires children and adults to engage in at least four activities:

- (i) decision making about the purpose, practice and environment of the nursery;
- (ii) evaluation of pedagogical approaches through participatory methods;
- (iii) contesting dominant discourses that shape subjectivities and practices and;
- (iv) opening up for change.

The ways in which adults engage with children in their setting is also central to a study reported by MacNaughton *et al.*<sup>43</sup>. They suggest that when educators use their professional knowledge to consult with children they reinforce the perception that

young children are not yet able to form and articulate their views and that this consequently hinders their participation in decision-making and constrains their rights. On the other hand, when educators use their professional understandings to collaborate with children, young voices are given a place and the citizenship of children is advanced. Devine's<sup>11</sup> research focusing on the experiences of participation of primary school children (7-8 years old and 10-11 years old) showed that social interactions in school impacted on children's constructions of themselves as citizens. In children's accounts of their interactions with teachers they constructed themselves as subordinates, as 'others'. In contrast, children's interactions amongst themselves were marked by a continual striving for connectedness and belonging.

The work of Arnott<sup>51</sup>, while not being directly concerned with matters of citizenship, offers a useful account of the ways in which children's behaviours and actions (in this case their engagement with new technologies in their playroom) are influenced by interpersonal, structural and material features of their educational environment. For instance, the nature of resources that children are asked to share, expectations about and opportunities for making choices, rules that limit how many children can play in a particular space and rules about appropriate behaviour all make a difference to the ways in which children experience the playroom and their possibilities for action.

Serriere<sup>52</sup> argues for a pedagogic approach that makes use of participatory methods such as photo elicitation and supported conversations to enable children and educators to reflect on and reimagine social dilemmas and inequalities in the early years classroom. Among the advantages claimed for this approach is that it builds on children's own experiences to explore and understand social justice, acknowledges and works with children's understanding of difference and values individual identities. Edwards *et al.*<sup>53</sup> also advocate beginning with children's interests, though their work considers the value of beginning with the popular culture of young children. They suggest that contested areas such as wellbeing, sustainability and healthy eating can be effectively addressed through the medium of children's popular culture in ways that support children's everyday choices and practices. Nichols<sup>54</sup> makes a plea for a different way of supporting young children's understanding and development of citizenship. She argues that children need educators to provide opportunities for them to learn what she describes as the 'literacies of social participation'<sup>54: p.129</sup>. These literacies include knowing how to form and express an opinion, how decisions are recorded and how place, society and identity are represented in talk and text.

A small number of studies are concerned with developing resilience in young children. Duncan *et al.*<sup>55</sup> demonstrate how features of what they call the learning architecture (both physical and institutional) can facilitate or hinder a child's entry into the community of learners in his or her early years setting and the learning dispositions, including resilience, developed there. Two parallel studies<sup>56,57</sup> explored the ways in which teachers and parents supported children from disadvantaged areas who demonstrated resilience as they made the transition from preschool to school. Among the strategies adopted by the mothers was a concern for the child's socio-emotional development, learning to identify and name emotions and encouraging his or her independent engagement with peers and community. Teacher strategies such as working with feelings, learning from mistakes and fostering self-regulation all contributed to developing resilience.

### *Summary*

There is a striking absence of evidence about the ways in which pedagogic interactions and practices can support children's development of the particular skills,

dispositions, practices or understandings associated with citizenship. Nevertheless, across a number of studies some common features emerge;

- (i) Through child-focused, responsive and active learning opportunities educators can aspire to develop young children's current capacities for problem-solving, negotiating, critical thought and exploration. There is not as yet evidence about the sustainability of these capacities into adult life.
- (ii) Interactions with peers in unstructured play and in adult-initiated activities offer opportunities to develop skills and engage in practices which are beneficial for membership of a community and promote self-regulation and an understanding of equity and social justice.
- (iii) Peer conflict situations can be opportunities for active learning about positive ways of engaging with diversity and difference, particularly when appropriately supported by educators.
- (iv) The actions of educators, the social environment and structures they shape in their educational setting and the ways in which they understand and respond to children's perspectives and shared popular culture can make a difference to the opportunities children have to act in positive ways towards others and feel included in the community of learners.

#### 4.4 *Teaching Citizenship*

To date, there is little research considering how citizenship is being conceived of and delivered in primary schools<sup>25,26</sup>. The Association for Citizenship Teaching<sup>58</sup> has developed CPD modules to support the delivery of citizenship education in primary schools but it is unclear whether these resources are being used at all and if so who is using them and how often. Explicit teaching about citizenship does not find a place in the child-centred and active learning environment that is typical of much early years provision and is the expectation in early learning and childcare settings in Scotland. On the other hand, adult-initiated opportunities to develop specific skills are offered in early learning and childcare settings and it is possible that there is a place for targeted citizenship skills development in the Early Level.

Authors commenting on citizenship education in England<sup>25,26</sup> and Scandinavia<sup>7</sup> have noted that there is little guidance about how citizenship education is to be delivered in practice. It is therefore left to individual teachers to decide how to introduce political issues in the classroom. Ailwood *et al.*<sup>8: p.651</sup> note that if citizenship education is only briefly referred to in policy documents, this signals that '*teachers are not generally expected to explicitly teach this and there is little support for those who do.*' Some evidence suggests that teachers who are better informed about, and feel more comfortable with, political issues are better able to introduce these topics in the classroom<sup>14,59</sup>.

There is some evidence to suggest that citizenship education is often embedded within associated learning and teaching in primary schools. Brownlee *et al.*<sup>9</sup> argue that active citizenship can be embedded within 'values education'<sup>f</sup> as both should include the teaching of moral values *and* the skills required to construct and

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<sup>f</sup> According to Hawkes<sup>62</sup> 'values education' was developed in response to the English National Curriculum (DfEE & QCA, 1999) aiming to "promote students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and prepare all students for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life." It is intended to support schools in considering how to embed positive, universal values (such as respect and honesty) in the curriculum in a way that will inspire students to express these values in their lives.

questions these values. They went on to identify three different paradigms in relation to values education and argue that the most common paradigm amongst educators is the developmental approach. In this paradigm, the child is understood as essentially egocentric and less capable of empathy. They see such an approach as incompatible with citizenship education because it positions children as less capable, in need of strong guidance and support from adults and does not advance the cause of children's participation. On the other hand, Brownlee *et al.*<sup>9</sup> see the constructivist paradigm as viewing children as active participants in their own learning and values education (of which citizenship education is part), involving teachers and children reasoning together. However, they conclude that it is only the third and final paradigm described as critical values education that is fully compatible with active citizenship. Critical values education goes further than simply teaching children right from wrong, or to be open to listen to the perspective of others. It also supports children to think critically about their and others' perspectives and dominant values; and to develop an understanding of inequality and social justice that can lead to transformative action. Whilst advocating for this latter approach, they note that research indicates that critical values education is not often the focus of teaching practices in the early years.

Similarly, Adams<sup>26</sup> states that the teaching of Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) education and citizenship education can complement each other. He emphasises that there is one key difference however: PSHE is concerned with personal and social development; citizenship education is concerned with thought and debate in the public sphere. According to Adams<sup>26</sup> citizenship education encompasses four forms of understanding: (i) ethical, (ii) economic (iii) legal and (iv) political. In and of themselves these paradigms are not enough to foster citizenship which must be developed through social and moral questioning and involvement in and deliberation on community participation. This attention to experiential citizenship education was evident in a consultation with teachers in six primary schools and one secondary school in Scotland. Miller *et al.*<sup>12</sup> found that when asked about how global citizenship was taught in school teachers referred to initiatives, activities and resources used, rather than the philosophy or core principles or a specific set of aims that informed their practice.

Research by Paterson<sup>60</sup> challenges the traditional expectation that increased levels of education are associated with more positive attitudes towards democracy, increased levels of opinion formation, civic activity and voting. Although this research was carried out with adults the finding that education is not automatically associated with what Paterson calls 'democratic enlightenment' is a salutatory warning for all educators and policymakers. Among the very varied and nuanced findings from Paterson's research is the suggestion that acculturation (tending towards the characteristics of the social group to which an individual belongs), rather than education, may be the most likely explanation for the ways an individual engages with civic issues and democratic practices. Such findings remind us that lofty expectations about what citizenship education may be able to accomplish are not necessarily matched by evidence of immediate or sustained impact<sup>12,20</sup>.

### *Summary*

There is little empirical evidence about the ways in which citizenship is being taught in primary schools or embedded in activities in early learning and childcare settings. It seems likely that children encounter education about citizenship in the context of broader teaching about values, personal decision-making and fostering health and wellbeing. The literature suggests that there is an emerging consensus that these

opportunities to learn about citizenship will make a more effective contribution when they require children to reflect critically, compare, pose questions and alternatives, take explicit account of and take action to foster equity and justice. Nevertheless, one study cautioned that citizenship behaviours were more influenced by the culture of the social group with which a young person identified than their educational experiences reminding us that citizenship education, even if explicitly pursued, may not necessarily accomplish its desired aims.

#### 4.5 *The Perspectives of Educators*

Fostering citizenship in early learning and childcare settings does not receive explicit attention in the syllabus for initial professional development for practitioners entering with the HNC/Level 7 qualification in Scotland (the most common route). There is mention of learning to support positive behaviour, effective communication and protection and participation but notions of children engaging in and developing a capacity for citizenship, democratic or civic activity, participation in decision-making and contributing to assets for social cohesion are not evident. Writing about circumstances in England, Baker<sup>46</sup> reports that ways of supporting active citizenship are under-developed in post-graduate level teacher professional education at both the primary and secondary level. She goes on to suggest that, while early years educators appear to be comfortable with what she describes as 'character development', they remain unsure about their role in fostering active citizenship among young children.

Although it seems then that educators responsible for learning and development in the Early Level (3-6 years old) are unlikely to experience professional education about fostering citizenship they will bring their personal epistemologies to their role. Links have been made between teachers' experiences, beliefs and attitudes and their willingness and capacity to teach citizenship<sup>2,7,9,11</sup>. For example, Brownlee *et al.*<sup>9</sup> state that educators who espouse absolutist or subjectivist personal epistemologies may find it difficult to teach citizenship. Those with an absolutist perspective believe that moral values are absolute and immutable and not open to discussion and reflection. While those with subjectivist perspective focus on the truth of their own opinions and moral values. In both cases, educators would see little need to critically reflect on their own or competing moral values and engage children in discussion or debate. On the other hand, educators who espouse a constructivist epistemological perspective are more likely to be able to challenge accepted ways of knowing, being and doing and to create the space for children to do the same.

Many authors have indicated that views about children's perceived vulnerability and lack of capacity are incompatible with citizenship education<sup>2,8,11,25</sup>. Holden<sup>25</sup> argues that educators who adhere to this view may feel that it is their duty to protect children from the outside world. Moss<sup>2</sup> argues that for democratic practice to emerge practitioners must recognise children, and their parents, as competent citizens with a right to and capacity for making decisions. In these circumstances practitioners must be able to listen to, and understand, the different languages and means of communication children and adults use. Practitioners will then be able to recognise that their way of doing and knowing is one amongst many and value children's and parents' perspectives and contributions.

Whilst critical engagement with, and questioning of, knowledge, practices and values is seen as a key component of citizenship education, some authors have noted that teachers are often uncomfortable with, and resistant to, the idea of teaching political

literacy to children<sup>11,12,14,25,26,59</sup>. According to Adams<sup>26</sup> teachers are often opposed to the teaching of political literacy to young children because they believe that primary school aged children are not able to grasp socio-political concepts.

### *Summary*

Early years educators and primary school teachers typically receive little or no initial or continuing professional education about developing citizenship and ways of fostering appropriate practices, dispositions or understandings. But children's experiences in the early years playroom or primary classroom will be influenced by the personal beliefs and perspectives, moral values and understandings of the capacities of children to engage as citizens held by their educators.

#### 4.6 *Children as agents of change for global citizenship*

The literature on citizenship in early education makes mention of the values of connectedness with the local and global environment. According to Miller *et al.*<sup>12</sup> and Priestley *et al.*<sup>61</sup> global citizenship is a concept that is gaining worldwide importance in education. Whilst, as with citizenship, there is no commonly agreed definition of global citizenship, the International Development Education Association of Scotland (IDEAS)<sup>59</sup> defines global citizenship education as an active learning process that:

- (i) *“enables people to understand the links between their own lives and those of people throughout the world;*
- (ii) *increases understanding of the economic, social, political and environmental forces that shape our lives;*
- (iii) *develops skills, attitudes and values that enable people to work together to bring about change and take control of their lives;*
- (iv) *contributes to the development of a more just and sustainable world, in which power and resources are more equitably shared.”*

According to Priestley *et al.*<sup>61</sup> education for global citizenship is a point of convergence between at least three disparate educational traditions: environmental education, development education and citizenship education. Indeed, in the literature global citizenship or sustainable development education are both discussed as comparable to citizenship education. For example, Hägglund and Samuelson<sup>7</sup> argue that learning about sustainable development is directly linked to citizenship education as both aim to teach about democracy, solidarity and justice. These disparate educational traditions are therefore said to share a common ethos, with a focus on the global and the connectedness between us all, independent of our backgrounds and experiences<sup>7,12</sup>. This learning should therefore imbue in children empathy and a sense of responsibility for everyone and the planet<sup>7,12</sup>.

The surge of interest in education for global citizenship has been backed by many non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that see this as a route towards a more just, democratic and sustainable world. In Scotland, IDEAS offers free courses, resources and events to teachers, school and local authorities to support them in developing global citizenship education across the curriculum; whilst Oxfam Education has developed lesson plans on global citizenship for children aged 3 to 5. However, as Priestley *et al.*<sup>61</sup> note education for global citizenship is not unproblematic and can be seen as part of the harmonising project of neo-liberal, Western democracies.

### *Summary*

The movement to foster global citizenship acts on concerns about social justice and sustainable development and the recognition of the potential of children to be active



agents of change. Educational programmes are available for use in schools but there is little evidence offered for their efficacy.

## 5. Addressing the Research Questions

Despite a broad search process, open to directly and in-directly pertinent literature, material relevant to the kind of thinking about citizenship in the early years which initiated this study was not plentiful. Furthermore, that which was available was often dependent on a particular way of construing citizenship, was highly contextualised and, in some cases, lacking in empirical rigor. A similar search around ways of fostering literacy, numeracy or social development would have presented a very different picture and left the researchers struggling to cope with the scale of the material available.

The paucity of attention in the literature to ways of fostering citizenship in the early years stands in some contrast, in Scotland at least, to the centrality of the goal of ensuring that children's educational experiences ensure that they become responsible citizens.

RQ1 (i) *What is understood in the educational literature by the concepts of 'citizen' and 'citizenship' as they relate to the learning and experiences of children aged 3-6 years old?*

Our review suggests that citizenship is conceptualised by some as a socio-political status that grants a number of rights and demands certain expectations; with the potential to both include and exclude. From this perspective citizenship is either awarded on maturity or granted in carefully prescribed ways to children who are most appropriately seen as 'different citizens'. Children's citizenship status can be limited by doubts about their capacity to engage with abstract thought and concepts, a focus on children as immature and vulnerable or adults as responsible for their care and protection. More recently developed understandings about young children's capacity to participate meaningfully in decision-making have challenged, but have not necessarily overcome, doubts about their capacity for citizenship. An alternative construction of the child as citizen derives from thinking about the agency of individuals, their capacity for agentic action in social situations and their verbal, emotional and physical interactions with peers. From this perspective citizenship can be seen as a social practice of 3- to 5-year olds, acting in the present and developing skills and values which will be built upon through interactions with peers and adults, policy and practice, as they continue with their educational journey.

(ii) *What behavioural characteristics, dispositions or actions of 3-6 year olds are associated with positive citizenship?*

There is little empirical evidence to draw on to answer this question and one conclusion has to be that there is a need for situated, systematic observational studies of young children's enactment of citizenship as a social practice if our understanding of their ways of and capacity for acting as citizens is to be advanced. Nevertheless, some suggestions can be made in response to this question, at least in terms of young children's present citizenship behaviour. Positive citizenship is associated with an understanding of and openness to difference and the values of inclusion, social justice and equality. Capacities for listening, problem-solving, sharing and understanding one's own feelings and those of others receive attention in the literature, as does acquiring the literacies and practices needed for social participation and for conflict resolution. It is suggested that for young children to act as present citizens they need to learn how to form and effectively voice opinions and

negotiate rules and roles. However, our understanding of any associations between a child's behaviours and actions in their early years and their activity as an adult is under-developed. Questions about likely associations between childhood capacities and future competencies remain unresolved.

*RQ2 What evidence is there of the efficacy of particular educational practices, activities or programmes as a way of developing understandings of, skills for or positive dispositions towards positive citizenship in the early years?*

There is little or no clear evidence for any one educational programme, set of experiences or pedagogic interactions. What understanding can be gleaned from the literature points in the direction of interactions with adults who respect and understand young children's capacity for acts of positive citizenship and effective participation and who are sensitive to the ways in which dominant discourses and embedded power relationships can influence the environment they share in the educational setting. To enable their development as citizens young children benefit from educators who provide carefully targeted opportunities to acquire and practice a particular range of skills and behaviours (such as those noted in response to the question above), in the same way as they help scaffold children's learning in other areas of the curriculum. There is some evidence from studies with older children that for citizenship to be fostered, developing skills and content knowledge needs to be supplemented by encouragement to take action to transform circumstances and to reflect on conflicts, alternative options and the impact of the behaviour of groups and individuals.

*RQ3 What implications arise from this review for the development of policy and practice to foster positive citizenship in young children attending early learning and childcare settings?*

This review suggests that if the citizenship expectations central to the Curriculum for Excellence and the desire to develop active, positive citizenship as an asset contributing to resilient and successful communities is to be realised it will be necessary to develop new ways in which children as citizens are conceptualised in the early years and in educational policy and practice guidance in Scotland. For instance, is citizenship in young children thought of as a repertoire of social practices or as a socio-political status? What are the implications of the way in which citizenship is defined for actions and interactions between adults and children? If children are to be thought of as 'different citizens' then there is a need to articulate a consensus about the nature of their participation in citizenship practices, their rights and the expectations associated with those rights as a basis for practice development and the evaluation of the quality of children's everyday experiences in their educational settings.

The answers we have given to review questions 1(ii) and 2 begin to set an agenda for practice guidance and development, although it seems clear that this development of curriculum and pedagogy can, as yet, only be considered as a means to contribute to children's present capacities to behave as citizens. Attempts to link present educational experiences to specific long-term future citizenship outcomes seem inappropriate, although there is no evidence of any reason to expect that early learning in this area will be any less effective than it is in areas of the

curriculum such as social, emotional or physical behaviour. There is scope to review our current educational settings in terms of (i) the ways in which the environment they provide encourages and empowers young children to acts of positive citizenship and (ii) the pedagogic activities educators employ to develop the kind of skills and behaviours and capacity for reflection that are characteristic of active citizens.

## **6. Lessons from the Literature Review**

- (i) Citizenship is a complex concept with no clear definition and a number of inherent tensions. There is a need for the educational and policy community to engage in further debate to clarify the way in which the curriculum goal of becoming a responsible citizen is to be understood and pursued.
- (ii) Given the lack of empirical evidence about pedagogic practices to support the development of citizenship behaviours and understandings and uncertainties about the sustainability of any specific learning into adult life, it seems appropriate to conclude that educators should focus on developing skills which will support positive citizenship and other aspects of personal and social development in the present, can be built upon as children progress through their school years and which may have some legacy into adulthood. For example, early years educators can contribute to children's capacities to form and voice an opinion, solve problems, negotiate roles, recognise diversity and inequality and consider the impact of decisions and behaviours on others.
- (iii) Early years educators and primary school teachers need opportunities in their initial and continuing professional education to:
  - consider how the social and learning environment they provide fosters positive citizenship, inclusion and equity;
  - reflect on their personal perspectives on citizenship, the ways in which this can be enacted in young children, their own readiness to engage in reflection on moral values and attitudes and their understanding of the perspectives which parents and the local community hold about citizenship; and
  - develop a shared repertoire of pedagogic practices, materials, resources and interactions to support the skills and dispositions associated with citizenship.
- (iv) To advance the available evidence about young children's capacity for, understanding of and willingness to engage in positive citizenship it will be necessary to conduct empirical research which focuses on observing children's behaviours in a range of everyday settings and articulates their perspectives on the choices and challenges they experience, their reactions to the experiences of others, and their developing responses to matters of social justice, participation and agency.

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## Appendix 1: Searches

### Journals

Journal	Searches	Returns	Checked	Saved
Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood	Citizenship	184	First 60	12
	Participation	427	First 60	2
	Children leadership	177	First 60	1
	Resilience	51	All	1
	Civic attitudes	9	All	0
	Assets-based	17	All	0
International Journal of Early Years Education	Citizenship	89	First 60	8
	Participation	473	First 20	0
	Children leadership	138	First 60	1
	Resilience	36	All	1
	Civic attitudes	4	All	0
	Assets-based	15	All	0
	<i>Other articles from links in IJEYE</i>			3
Early Years	Citizenship	102	First 60	5
	Participation	457	First 60	3 (plus 5 noted)
	Children + leadership	193	First 60	0
	Resilience	47	All	3
	Civic attitudes	8	All	1
	Assets-based	0		
	<i>Other articles from links in EY</i>			3
Childhood	Citizenship	221	First 60	2
	Participation	493	First 60	0
	Children +leadership	120	First 60	0
	Resilience	80	First 60	1

	Civic attitudes	13	All	0
	Assets-based	42	All	0
Early Childhood Research Quarterly	Citizenship	16	All	0
European Early Childhood Education Research Journal	Citizenship	129	First 60	10
	Participation	557	First 20	0
	Leadership	181	First 20	0
	Resilience	47	All	0
	Assets-based	23	All	0
	Agent of change	30+	All	0
Children & Schools	Citizenship education AND early years	3	All	0
	Participation	158	First 60	0
Children & Society	Citizenship OR civic	208	First 60	0

### Search engines

	Search terms	Returns	Checked	Saved
Bing	Citizenship AND 'early years' from 01.01.2000 to 27.04.2017	2,170,000	First 40	3
Google Scholar	Citizenship AND 'early years' from 01.01.2000 to 27.04.2017	1,020,000	First 40	6
	Citizenship AND childhood from 01.01.2000 to 27.04.2017	99,400	First 40	4
	'citizenship education' and 'early years' from 01.01.2000 to 27.04.2017	832,000	First 40	1
Open Grey	Key work: citizenship Discipline: education, training Language: English	167	First 60	2
Stirgate	citizenship OR civic AND 'early years' OR preschool OR pre-school OR kindergarten (in all text) from 2000-2017, in English, academic journals only	666,162	First 100	6
	leadership AND 'early years' OR preschool OR pre-school OR kindergarten (in all text) from	460,182	First 50	1

	2000-2017, in English, academic journals only			
	resilien* AND 'early years' OR preschool OR pre-school OR kindergarten (in all text) from 2000-2017, in English, academic journals only	22,131	First 50	2
Other resources from search engines				14