SCHOOLS, POLITICAL LITERACY AND THE 2014 SCOTTISH REFERENDUM

Research Report

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2014 Scottish Referendum was not only an historic event in its own right, it provided an opportunity to examine how schools handle teaching controversial political issues in the unique circumstance of the lowering of the voting age to 16 - the first time a significant population of young people at school in the UK would also be voters. The Stevenson Trust for Citizenship saw the Referendum as an apposite context in which to find out the views of teachers and their pupils on citizenship education and learning relevant to political literacy. The purpose was both to provide useful feedback to teachers and education authorities and further consider whether Glasgow University through the Stevenson Trust might provide assistance to schools, in collaboration with relevant authorities, if required.

The Study

- The study comprises questionnaire surveys of teachers and of students/pupils[2] in 21 secondary schools in the West of Scotland: 9 from authority A, 11 from Authority B and from one independent school (students only). The research was carried out between March and August 2014.

- 84 questionnaires were returned from teachers from a wide range of subject specialism. For the purpose of analysis they were grouped by their main subjects - Modern Studies (MS) (12) – Other Social Studies (including English, History and Geography) OSS (59) and Modern Languages, Maths and Science (LMS) 12. There were 516 questionnaires returned from pupils from S5 and S6 classes in the age range 15 to 18. 53% female and 47% male: about two-thirds would be eligible to vote.

- The questions of the surveys covered views about citizenship education and the teaching of political literacy; views and opportunities of community involvement; learning about the Referendum compared with the teaching of other controversial or contentious issues, and views on the lowering of the voting age.

The Findings

- The large majority of teachers (80%) saw the most important aspect of citizenship education for society and schools to teach was 'moral and social responsibility;' many too saw this to be linked with 'community involvement' but few made the connection with political literacy. Only one in ten teachers viewed political literacy to be of major importance. The concept of 'political literacy' is not well understood amongst teachers.

- Two thirds of teachers thought their pupils were well or adequately prepared for democratic life; the third who thought them inadequately prepared included most of the few who did attach importance to political literacy. Just over a third of teachers believed that schools have an important or very important role to play in students' understanding of political issues. Many teachers saw Modern Studies as the primary or even only subject area for addressing political issues, though other subject areas were mentioned.

- Teaching moral and social responsibility and community involvement were aspects of citizenship which most teachers thought schools did well. Many examples where given by both teachers and pupils of ways pupils engaged with their local communities, including providing a service, fund-raising for charities and helping the environment (notably picking up litter). Over sixty percent of pupils stated that they had been involved in community activities. However nearly one fifth of pupils said they had been offered *no* opportunity to participate in the community.

- The problems most commonly reported by teachers about covering political issues were lack of time, concerns about being seen by pupils as biased and lack of suitable materials. Discussions and debates were by far the most usual means of encouraging pupils to participate. Amongst the factors which limited the development of pupils' reasoning ability were their immaturity, lack of knowledge, and negative home and peer group influences, which curriculum pressure and class size made difficult to offset.

- Most pupils in our study confirmed that politics or political issues were being discussed at school; more than a third (35%) indicate that this was with a fairly high degree of frequency (at least weekly); more suggested, 'a few times each term' (39%); over a quarter (26%) 'not at all'. Over half (56%) thought this was 'about right', more than a third (38%) wanted more teaching of politics – some expressed the wish for 'much more'. Pupils divided in approximately equal numbers between those who thought home (39%) and those who thought school (34%) was more important in learning about politics; over a quarter (28%) thought they were equally important.

- Almost all teachers thought the Referendum was an important matter to be discussed at school: 9 out of 10 thought it 'Very important'. Even so, about half the teachers surveyed had little or no awareness of how their school dealt with the Referendum. Teachers divided about evenly between those who thought teaching about the Referendum posed special difficulties and those who thought it no more problematic than covering other controversial issues. Both groups recognised the importance of achieving balance and avoiding partiality or bias and they commonly saw 'debates' and discussion to be the best method to achieve this, though external speakers and electronic and visual aids were also important.

- For pupils teaching about the Referendum and Independence was predominant in their reporting of political and controversial issues discussed at school. They cited relatively few other 'controversial issues.' The schools handling of the Referendum was recognised by them to be important. Over a third 38% said there had been a lot of discussion of the Referendum at school, about a half (46%) reported 'a little,' but a significant minority (14%) were aware of none. A third of girls and a quarter of boys wished there had been more discussion or teaching about the Referendum; only one in 10 thought there had been too much. The great majority of pupils (85%) said they had 'enjoyed' leaning about the Referendum.

- Most pupils had an accurate view about their entitlement to vote and most (80%) thought they were at least partially well enough informed to exercise the vote, including those who lacked the entitlement. There was a relatively little lack of interest in the Referendum issue or belief that it had received too much attention in school (one in ten pupils). Most of those who reported being ill-informed wanted more discussion or teaching. A few pupils wished teachers had felt able to give their own opinions on the merits of Scottish Independence.

- A small majority of all teachers with decided views were against voting age at 16 becoming the general franchise (44% against, 39% in favour and 17% undecided). The clear majority of Modern Studies teachers (10 of 12) were in favour of voting at 16. By contrast, more than half the pupils were in favour of voting at 16 (57%); 36% at 18 and among the 6% 'other' most suggested ages below 16 or no minimum age at all.

Conclusions

- Citizenship education among teachers is most widely understood to involve their pupils in acquiring moral and social responsibility, but their capacity to act politically is not generally recognised to be an important aspect of citizenship. There is a major need to improve understanding of political literacy across the curriculum and to embrace the teaching of controversial issues.

- The evidence is that schools recognise the importance of community involvement and within the constraints of the formal curriculum encourage pupils to contribute to community projects in and beyond their schools. We suggest that community service might be enhanced as an aspect of active citizenship learning, if opportunities can be created to reflect upon and discuss the issues that community service provokes.

- The importance of addressing the Referendum on Independence was widely recognised by schools and they were generally successful in enabling pupils to be confident of their competence to vote.

- Schools successfully avoided accusations of bias in their handling of the Referendum debate. However, concerns about achieving balance (heavily reinforced by advice from local authorities) influenced and limited the range of pedagogues deployed. Teachers need to be assisted to overcome the constraints they perceive in teaching political and other controversial issues.

- In our judgement schools will have benefitted from their experience of meeting the challenge of the Independence Referendum and will benefit further from sharing their experience. An enhanced demand for teaching about politics amongst pupils was created and lowering of the voting age in subsequent Scottish elections places schools in the vanguard of changing political culture. There is an obligation on other educators to collaborate with schools and education authorities to improve citizenship education.

INTRODUCTION

The 2014 Scottish Referendum and schools

The Scottish Referendum of September 2014 was a unique event in modern Scottish history. In educational terms, it offered schools an exceptional occasion to explore young people's engagement with a major civic process and help prepare for possibly the most significant political event in students' lives thus far. In addition, the lowering of the voting age to 16 for the first time in a major UK election meant that schools had significant numbers of pupils/students in class who would themselves be able to take part in the vote, so that the issues were of immediate relevance to them.

The research team recognised the special opportunity this context presented to explore young people's and their teachers' experiences of preparation for the Referendum and the wider questions it raised regarding citizenship, political literacy and the teaching of controversial issues. As a result of interest in these questions, the Stevenson Trust funded a research project carried out in the period leading up the Referendum. This report describes the results and implications of that study. It begins with a brief review of the educational and political matters that informed the research.

Education for citizenship

The Referendum represented a fundamental aspect of democratic citizenship – an occasion not only to vote on the future of one's own country, but also to determine its form of nationhood as either an independent state or as part of the United Kingdom. For schools, it posed in a heightened way challenges they face on how best to help young people understand political processes and become good citizens.

It is worth recalling that the impetus within the UK to include citizenship education in the formal school curriculum at the new millennium came chiefly from concern about 'worrying levels of apathy, ignorance and cynicism' about politics and our failure to educate young people to participate in democracy (Crick Report 1998, paragraph 1.5). The three elements of citizenship education identified in the Crick Report were 'social responsibility, community involvement, and political literacy'. (paragraph 1.8) These elements were declared to be 'closely linked'.

In England and Wales, the teaching of citizenship in secondary schools was put on a statutory foundation and made an examinable subject in 2002. By contrast, the approach adopted by the Scottish Executive (following the recommendations of the Munn Committee) was to recognise citizenship as a subject embedded throughout the curriculum (Teaching and Learning Scotland 2000). The *Curriculum for Excellence* endorses the whole school approach to developing young people's capacities, thereby creating 'responsible citizens', 'effective learners', 'confident individuals' and 'effective contributors to society'.

It may be argued that 'responsible citizenship' in a democracy requires individuals both to contribute to life in their communities and to become politically informed and capable (Crick 2000; Lockyer 2012). It was predictable, though, that teachers 'would be tempted to focus on the obligation to inculcate moral and social responsibility, rather than the other elements of citizenship, given both schools' traditional role in

socialising young people and heightened concerns about anti-social behaviour (Munn 2010: 97).

There are also a number of other factors which limit the extent to which Scottish secondary schools are able to provide opportunities for community involvement and which inhibit the commitment to teaching political literacy. The demands of the formal curriculum, combined with a policy emphasis on performance based outcomes and the achievement of 'hard' measurable targets, militate against the informal curriculum fostering engagement with their local communities (Reeves 2008).

It has also been suggested that an 'anti-political culture' has long existed in UK education policy (Frazer 2003). The longstanding reluctance amongst teachers and education administrators to embrace issues of contemporary politics in schools derives in part from concern about being open to accusations of bias. The always exaggerated fear of 'left wing indoctrination' (Scruton 1985) led to two Education Acts (1986 and 1996) making statutory provision to exclude 'the promotion of partisan political views' in school.

Both the Crick and Munn Reports argued that classroom discussions of controversial and contested issues are central means of promoting political literacy, but putting this into practice has been constrained by the prevalent association of 'politics' with 'partisanship'. However the pre-existing teaching of Modern Studies provided a potentially fruitful context in which Scottish schools responded to embracing the political element of citizenship education (Maitles 2008).

While it could be considered a step in the right direction, the notion that Modern Studies would be the main vehicle for acquiring the skills, aptitudes, and knowledge for citizenship was resisted because the Scottish approach was to be cross-curricular and included the idea that citizenship should be taught at all levels to all pupils. The barriers to fully adopting citizenship across the school's curriculum were recognised to be formidable (Deucher and Maitles 2008). Cultural change to a more student participatory ethos throughout schooling would be necessary.

What was demanded was a shift from didactic teaching to a learner-centred pedagogy, which amounted to 'a reconceptualisation of the traditional role of the teacher' (Munn 2010: 94). Creating opportunities for the student 'voice' to be heard and taken seriously within schools demands accommodation of organisation and regimes (Tisdal 2012). The landmark report of the HMIe in 2006 *Improving Scottish Education* found that schools generally had increased their emphasis on citizenship. 'Many are giving some attention to involving young people in decision-making. However practice is uneven within and across schools'. It was 'not yet common' to find 'systematic curriculum planning to prepare pupils for political, social, economic and cultural involvement in society', or to permit them to 'participate in significant decision making at school.' The message was that much more needed to be done with political literacy and citizenship education.

Curriculum for Excellence and political literacy

The Education Scotland Act (2000) provided five National Priorities for Scottish Education, one of which is Values and Citizenship. In subsequent years a number of policies emerged from the Scottish Executive and Scottish Government regarding young people, their learning and their relationships among each other, within schools and with wider society.

One of the most significant was the Curriculum for Excellence (Scottish Executive 2004). Whilst the principal reasons for this substantial curriculum change may well have been to address issues of coherence and suitability for the 21st century economic context, there was also recognition that:

> The educational process itself [was] changing. There [was] growing understanding of the different ways in which children learn and how best to support them (SE 2004: 10).

Since the launch of the Curriculum for Excellence, there have been a number of initiatives throughout Scotland's teacher education community to explore and develop pedagogical approaches that would enhance learning in line with policy aspirations. In particular, the National Framework for Inclusion (www.frameworkforinclusion.org) and academic research and theorising (e.g. Florian) have interrogated the context leading to new and innovative learning approaches related to active learning, interdisciplinary learning, inclusive pedagogy and educational mobility.

Also significantly for this research, the authors of the original document argued that the curriculum should help children and young people understand the world in which they live and that learning should be active. They based this proposition on a set of values that included the rights and responsibilities of individuals and nations. The aim was to allow pupils to develop the 'attributes and capabilities to make valuable contributions to society' (SE 2004: 11).

Central to this aspiration was the capacity of responsible citizenship through the development of which young people would be able to 'participate in the political, social and cultural life of Scotland' (SE 2004: 12). At the core of children's and young people's development of this and the other capacities were learning and teaching choices which would enable pupils *inter alia* to have 'informed ethical views of complex issues' and a knowledge and understanding of the world and Scotland's place in it' (SE 2004: 12).

The Curriculum for Excellence's conceptualisation of citizenship education and its transformative aspirations closely follow those of the Crick Report. The seminal guidance to schools and colleges on political literacy was issued by Education Scotland in August 2013. This document gives an extended articulation of the central place of citizenship education in the Scottish school system (see *Curriculum for Excellence: Political Literacy* CfE 14).

Political literacy is said to be 'one of the foundations of modern democracy and its guardian. It is the particular combination of attributes and capabilities, skills (including high order skills), knowledge and understanding that helps learners to

become responsible citizens and to participate in society's decision-making processes' (CfE 14 section 1). Effective learning of the combined ingredients is to be acquired across the curriculum in different subjects, classrooms and other school settings. Under the heading 'Experiences and Outcomes', is a list of different approaches and practices including – 'discussions, debates, voting, topic work, interdisciplinary studies, personal research and reflection, the use of partnerships including visits and visitors…' (CfE 14: section 2).

The growing recognition that educational institutions must allow young people to express their views and for these to be given due weight (Article 12 of the UNCRC[3]) is reflected in the guidance to Curriculum for Excellence. Political literacy is linked with finding occasions and settings where 'the learner's voice' is listened to and encouraged. The guidance incorporates much of the philosophy of education that derives from liberal democratic theory. The mantra of 'ethical education' requires learners to be able to form their own views about what is 'right' or 'good' under conditions where there is scope for 'reasonable disagreement' (Rawls 1993).

The engagement of students in the discussion of controversial issues – which are at the heart of politics - is central to learning the values associated with reasoned and evidence based argument, giving equal opportunity for the expression of diverse views and respect for difference (Brown, Ross and Munn 2012). The teacher has a seminal role in providing the right forum for open and balanced discussion (McLaughlin 2003). The Guidance enjoins 'practitioners' to provide a 'safe respectful environment' where everyone feels comfortable to participate in discussion and 'they are listened to and their contribution is valued' (CfE 14 section 3).

In the section headed 'Using contemporary events to promote political literacy' (CfE 14 section 4) parliamentary elections and 'international terrorist events' are mentioned as occasions for discussion. It is also noted that mock elections may be organised in schools. Yet the run-up to the Referendum and the circumstance of the lowering of the voting age amounted to much more than just another opportune event to be used. Hence more specific guidance was issued by Education Scotland in response to a recognised need by education administrators and providers arising from the challenge of teaching related to the Referendum.

This guidance encouraged schools and other education institutions to approach the forthcoming national debate on Scottish independence as an opportunity to be grasped, but also contained material which can be regarded as a warning for 'practitioners'. They are entreated to achieve balance, demonstrate impartiality, and avoid bias – 'they are role models and young people can be strongly influenced by things they say or do; '…they should 'take particular care not to promote any particular view at the expense of others'; they must be 'well versed in ensuring a balanced approach to exploring political issues' (CfE 14 section 4). Certain local authorities and head teachers provided further cautionary advice conveying their concern about partiality and accusations of bias. This may well have been sufficient to make the non-specialist subject teacher wary about facilitating discussion of the Referendum.

The Education Scotland guidance concludes with some pertinent questions for taking forward political literacy (CfE 14 section 6)

- ‘Does everyone have a clear understanding of the breadth of political literacy in CforE and how it relates to different areas of the curriculum…?’
- ‘Does everyone involved apply local guidelines which are intended to ensure balance and impartiality…?’
- ‘Does everyone involved have access to a wide range of evidence and perspectives available to them..?
- ‘Do learners and their parents have a clear understanding of how practitioners deliver political literacy and ensure partiality?’

The implication that ‘everyone’ should be this well-versed is clearly aspirational, but to what extent these questions can be answered in the affirmative is something we hoped our research would contribute to answering.

Young people and voting

The Scottish Referendum raised issues not only about how schools prepare children for such a major political event, but for the first time enabled students aged 16+ themselves to take part in the national democratic process. One British study revealed that often young people identified citizenship with activities that only adults are allowed to do, including voting in elections (Lister et al. 2003).

It has been stated that many young people are not interested in politics or voting. This assertion is supported by self confessed lack of interest expressed by most teenagers in attitude surveys as well as high figures for non-registration and non-voting by those just over the age limit (Furnham and Stacey 1991; Hackett 2004). On the other hand there have been surveys showing a majority of children and young people admitting to an interest in political issues and wanting some kind of input into the political process, though many comment negatively about party politics (Furlong and Cartmel 1997; CYPS 2003). Many say they would like more attention to political issues at school (Fahmy 2006).

It has been found previously that a considerable proportion of young people in Britain would like to see the general minimum voting age brought down to 16 or in some cases 15 (Fahmy 2006). For much of the twentieth century, the minimum voting age in the UK (and many other countries) was 21. After 1945 a gradual worldwide trend emerged to reduce the voting threshold to 18, which happened in the UK in 1970. During the 1990s, some states in federal countries like Germany and the USA lowered the relevant age further to 16. Brazil had already legislated for that age to apply in national elections in 1989. In 2004, only nine countries in the UN had an age of majority below 18 and not all of these were liberal democracies (Electoral Commission 2004). In 2007 Austria became the first EU state to adopt a voting age of 16+ for most purposes. Currently 18 still remains by far the most common age worldwide for voting in national elections.

Two main factors have influenced demands for a reduction in the age of majority – first that it is intrinsically justified by young people’s abilities and entitlement and second that it would help with perceived public disengagement from politics. At Westminster in 1999, Parliament considered this issue, but there was little support for making a change, though subsequently higher proportions of MPs argued in favour of

16. However, in response to growing calls to lower the minimum age for voting, the UK Electoral Commission reviewed the arguments for and against in 2004. Its conclusion was in favour of the status quo. This was mainly based on opinion poll evidence that most adults preferred 18 and that young people were themselves divided. The Commission noted that some people under 18 would be ready to exercise the right to vote, but 'many others do not appear ready' (p. 4). Even so, the Commission stated that circumstances could change if citizenship education improved and a wide debate led to changes in attitude. The Scottish Referendum was the first time that age 16 was used in a major public vote within the UK.

The main reason why children and young people aged under 18 have not been allowed to vote is that they are perceived by adults as not having the intellectual capacities or knowledge to make such an important decision. Full systemic thinking and consideration of multiple interests may not emerge until 19 or later, though it is acknowledged that there are wide individual variations and also that development is affected by the external environment, including school (Furnham and Stacey 1991: Lehalle 2006). Surveys have shown that young people lack knowledge or are uncertain about key aspects of national and local political life (Furnham and Gunter 1989). Many young people themselves have stated they do not know enough to make informed political choices (Fahmy 2006).

Different academic traditions question or reject the 'representations' of young people as incompetent that are seen to underpin lower age limits such as that for elections. From this perspective, legal decisions to exclude young people from certain adult entitlements as citizens, such as voting, are seen to reflect adult's power and children's lack of power (Qvortrup et al 1994; Liebel 2012). This perspective is part of wider movements in practice as well as academe that suggest children and young people's agency and abilities have been undervalued. Similarly their views have been ignored or marginalised (Liebel 2012).

THE STUDY

Research aims and design

The Referendum posed challenges to schools about how to address such an important subject on which many people held strong and opposing views. It was felt that research could help assess the extent to which education about citizenship and political literacy in general were being practiced in schools and to examine whether the Referendum led to additional problems and/or opportunities. A study could also assess the degree of support among staff and young people for the reduction of the minimum age for voting to 16. It was also hoped to identify if there was a need for further training and learning materials to support citizenship education, perhaps with the help of organisations like the Stevenson Trust.

Hence the primary aim of the research was to examine young people's and teachers' experiences and views regarding citizenship education in general and political literacy in particular, and see how the Referendum on Scottish independence was dealt with by schools. An important secondary aim was to elicit opinions about the reduced minimum age for voting.

At an early stage of planning the research it became clear that there was significant public and media speculation on how the newly enfranchised might affect the outcome of the Referendum, or more realistically, since their proportion of the electorate would be relatively small (around 3%), what side of the argument might benefit from their inclusion. In order to gain the agreement of potential participants it was necessary to stress, which we did repeatedly, that we were not seeking to investigate opinion on the merits or otherwise of Scottish independence.

Taking account of resource constraints, it was decided that the study would comprise a questionnaire survey of staff and students. The survey would include significant numbers to provide reasonable generalisability of the findings. The research team recognised that more depth and detail could have been obtained from interviews, group discussions, observations and/or documentary analysis, but as funding was limited, these were unable to take place.

The questionnaires were kept fairly short as it was accepted that schools are understandably concerned about not imposing too much on staff and pupil time. The questionnaire for teachers was longer than that for pupils, as the former's role meant they were in a better position to answer on certain matter of pedagogy. We also asked a few 'background' questions on teachers' main subject area(s) and students' age and gender. We avoided questions about political views, affiliations or identities which would be relevant if were interested in how young people or their teachers might vote. The questionnaires covered the four main areas discussed above, namely:

1. Approaches to citizenship education
2. Teaching about the Referendum
3. How did teaching on the Referendum compare with teaching on other controversial or contentious topics?
4. The reduced minimum age for voting

A mix of fixed choice and open-ended questions was included. The wording and order of particular questions were modified after a draft version was piloted and feedback obtained from a few teachers who did not participate in the final survey.

Partly for convenience and also as the Stevenson Trust's main sphere of interest is Glasgow and the West of Scotland, it was decided to concentrate the study in that part of the country. A meeting was held with representatives of several local authorities to invite participation. It was promised that schools and individuals who took part would not be identified in the reporting of the research and also that the focus was not on inter-school comparisons. In the event two local authorities committed themselves to providing access to their schools, which resulted in 20 public sector secondary schools taking part in the study. Nine were in Authority A and eleven in Authority B. One school that took part had a specialist focus and hence authority-wide rather than local catchment area. Contact was made with several independent schools and one agreed to take part. The survey took place in March-August, 2014.

As our interest was in finding out how citizenship education and political literacy were viewed and implemented across the curriculum, teacher questionnaires were distributed to teachers with a range of subject specialisms. We anticipated that this

would give a broader picture compared with confining our questionnaires to modern studies teachers or teachers of social subjects, who might be expected to be most keenly aware of the citizenship education agenda and have curricular responsibilities directly relevant to political literacy. Each school was asked to distribute around eight questionnaires to teachers and twenty-five to pupils in classes S5 and S6 aged between fifteen and eighteen. This would include students eligible to vote in the September, 2014 Referendum as well as some just below the threshold.

Analysis and data presentation

The responses to all the questionnaires were analysed using SPSS. Pre-coded responses were entered directly and qualitative responses to open-ended questions were grouped into suitable categories before entry. Where it was meaningful, cross-tabulations were carried out. The qualitative data was examined to provide further insights and furnish appropriate illustrative quotations.

Since the data was primarily quantified, the findings mostly comprise the numerical results. It is normal with questionnaire surveys that some people do not answer every question, so the total number of valid answers varied somewhat. In the text the amount of missing answers is referred to only when this was more than a few, but tables give the total number of valid responses. Percentages are given to the nearest whole number.

The results for the teachers and pupils are presented separately. Our analysis of data on teachers did not examine differences between the schools, as numbers were too small to draw useful conclusions. Similarly, comparisons of pupil and teacher responses within schools were not undertaken, but comparisons were made between pupils and teachers at the level of the total samples.

FINDINGS OF THE TEACHER SURVEY

Sample characteristics

It was hoped to obtain a teacher sample of over 100, but our contact teachers varied in the eventual coverage achieved. Eighty-four questionnaires were returned from teachers in the local authority schools. The private school returned only pupil responses so was not included in the teacher survey. On average between four and five teachers per school took part. In two thirds of the schools, between three and six teacher questionnaires were returned. The largest number from any school was nine, while two schools returned only one teacher questionnaire.

The survey succeeded in obtaining responses from teachers with a wide array of subject responsibilities. The most directly relevant subject specialism was Modern Studies and this turned out to be the most common amongst our teacher returns (12). However this constituted only 15% of our sample and three other subjects each also accounted for 10% or more of the sample. These were English, Geography and Mathematics. The full distribution is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Teachers' main subject areas

Subject	Number	%
Modern Studies	12	15%
English	11	13%
Geography	8	10%
Mathematics	8	10%
History	6	7%
Modern Languages	6	7%
Art	4	5%
Physical Education	4	5%
Religious Education	4	5%
Business	3	4%
Music	3	4%
Physics	3	4%
Social subjects	3	4%
Biology	2	2%
*Other – 1 each **	*7*	*8%*
Total	**84**	

* Additional Support Needs (ASN); Enterprise, Employment and Welfare (EEW); Graphics; Home Economics; Latin; Philosophy; one with no subject identified.

To see whether subject specialism made a difference to the knowledge and perceptions of teachers for cross- tabulations we put them into three groups:

Table 2: Teacher's main subject grouping

Subject	Number	%
Modern Studies (MS)	12	15%
Other Social Studies (OSS)	59	70%
Modern Foreign Languages, Maths and Science (LSM)	12	15%
Total	**83**	

Thus the great majority of respondents taught in areas where political issues would naturally arise from time to time, but were not a primary constituent of their teaching.

It should be borne in mind that discussion of political or other current issues may arise outwith the taught curriculum so the teacher's subject specialism will not be their only opportunity to engage pupils with citizenship learning. Teachers were asked to indicate if they had '*a form or register class or other responsibilities which may be relevant to citizenship education*' and over half replied that they did. Also, a number of teachers mentioned 'out of class' discussions of the Referendum.

Teachers' views on citizenship

We wished to find about the perceived comparative importance of the three aspects of citizenship that have been widely canvassed from reports by Crick and Munn, namely 'moral and social responsibility', 'political literacy' and 'community involvement'. The question invited respondents to rank the three aspects in importance, 'for society' and secondly 'for schools to teach'. The results for society and schools were in fact very similar in that the great majority ranked 'moral and social responsibility' as of first importance both for society (81%) and for schools to teach (82%). Clearly, moral and social responsibility was seen by a distance to be both the most important aspect of citizenship and a chief goal of citizenship education.

Similar numbers (about 10%) regard each of the other two options as most important. However, considerably more teachers put community involvement second, whilst political literacy is ranked least important by most teachers. So while teaching moral and social responsibility is regarded unequivocally as the school's business, far fewer think it is as important to teach the other two aspects of citizenship. Some comments cast doubt on whether teachers even recognised political literacy as an aspect of citizenship even though the Curriculum for Excellence Guidance indicates that it should be. For instance one Modern Studies Teacher said

> *'I think you should understand that political literacy and citizenship are very different things. Much of this questionnaire has the two very closely linked. If pupils study Modern Studies from S3 to S5/6…they should be politically literate, yet other pupils will not be.'*

We do not know how representative this view was, but other comments suggested that certain non-Modern Studies teachers thought political literacy was a curriculum choice linked to studying Modern Studies and not a matter for other subject areas.

Teachers were asked a further question to explore their ideas about political literacy - '*how well do you think we 'as a society prepare pupils to engage with democracy?*' They divided fairly evenly between three groups: those who thought pupils are '*well*' or '*fairly well*' prepared for democracy; those who believed them '*adequately*' prepared; and those who saw them as '*inadequately*' prepared (Table 3).

Table 3: Pupils' democratic preparedness: Teachers' views

How well are students prepared	Number	%
Very well	5	6%
Fairly well	23	27%
Adequately	28	33%
Inadequately	28	33%
Total	**84**	

There was a positive association between ranking political literacy to be relatively important and thinking pupils inadequately prepared for democracy. None of the teachers who thought that political literacy was of first importance believed pupils were very well prepared for democracy. All who thought pupils were 'very well' prepared for democracy rated political literacy of least importance. This suggests that teachers with a strong commitment to political literacy have different and probably higher expectations about the requirements for being prepared to engage with the democratic process.

Teachers were asked an open-ended question to explore what aspects of citizenship they believed were taught best in their school. Most of the teachers replied and mentioned one subject, a few mentioned more than one, giving a total of 95 topics. One teacher, evidently representing a small minority perspective, responded *'I think it need not be taught in schools'*.

The particular responses were likely to be affected by the prior question about three aspects of citizenship. Indeed nearly half the responses repeated or were similar to two of the previously mentioned aspects of pupil responsibilities and community involvement, though nobody referred to the third (political literacy), which again highlights the relative lack of prominence of this. This may reflect unfamiliarity with the terminology as much as a negative judgement by teachers. Almost equally lacking was direct reference to 'political' subjects, with one exception who cited '*the importance of voting.'*

Broadly, most of the responses took the form of principles of citizenship (e.g. responsibilities, tolerance) or what might be termed practical altruism (e.g. community involvement, charity work) (Table 4).

Table 4: Well taught aspects of citizenship: Teachers' views

Aspect of citizenship	**Number**	**%**
Rights and responsibility	27	
Social and moral responsibility	7	
Other principles/virtues	8	
Tolerance and respect	6	
Global citizenship	5	
Principles/values total	**51**	**54%**
Community Involvement	18	
Charity work	9	
School related contributions	7	
Local environment	5	
Practical altruism total	**39**	**41%**
Other	7	
Total	**95**	

Over half of the replies referred to principles. '*Rights and responsibilities*' (27) was the largest single response, made by a third of all respondents. This is a quite well used formula in the literature to convey what citizenship entails. Virtues such as 'tolerance' and 'respect for others' are aspects of citizenship thought well taught. Two fifths of replies made reference to 'practical altruism'. Most of the replies were generalised, but a few were quite specific, such as 'picking up litter' or 'buddying'. While the great majority of answers related to society at large or the local neighbourhood, the last example showed that a helping role within the school was also sometimes seen as an important (and well taught) element of citizenship.

Among the responses classified as '*other*' were references to students' personal attributes and development, such as leadership skills, wider achievement and making good choices. We might take it that these capacities are viewed to be relevant to students making a valued contribution to society.

At the end of the questionnaire, a few teachers took the opportunity to make general comments on citizenship and politics. Two emphasised the importance of seeing citizenship in broad terms:

> *There is more to citizenship than political literacy*
>
> *There is more to citizenship than the Referendum*

Others emphasised difficulties that schools face in encouraging interest in political matters:

> *It's difficult to engage with pupils about politics.*
>
> *Children need more encouragement to engage with local and national politics.*
>
> *Political decisions are affecting young people and their disillusionment with the political process.*
>
> *I believe political literacy starts at home.*

Community engagement

Since involvement with the community, whether locally or more widely, was seen by the research team (and as it turned out also the teachers) as an important aspect of citizenship, several more detailed questions were asked about their schools' roles in this. The first question asked '*In what ways does your school participate in or contribute to community projects and issues that could be considered as part of citizenship or political education*?' This resulted in a long and varied list of activities (see Table 5). Including multiple answers from the same individual, there were 114 responses, though five simply said 'many' without specifying which and so are omitted in the table below.

Table 5: Forms of community or political engagement: Teachers' views

Forms of community engagement	Number	%
Services to Community	19	17%
Charity work	17	16%
Environmental or community projects	16	15%
Links to community groups	14	13%
Political engagement	10	9%
Fund raising appeals	9	8%
Within school 'service' and other school links	8	7%
Others	17	16%
Total of specific responses	**109**	

The table classification of the replies must be regarded with caution because in many cases the nature and extent of the engagement was generalised or unclear. The great majority of responses related to the local neighbourhood of the school, rather than wider political education. 'Services to community' includes all responses that suggested that pupils were doing unpaid work or providing help in kind either to the community as a whole or to specific groups. That could be on a regular basis or one off. Included here were food banks (5), help for or working with the elderly (4), Fair Trade (4), works with local businesses (3), clothing banks (2), work with the local council (1). The learning experience from the above will doubtless vary a good deal. Those activities that bring pupils into contact with vulnerable groups may enhance social awareness and lead to political reflection.

'Charity work' was the most regularly used phrase overall to describe community engagement. The nature of the work undertaken was unclear, but in some instances included direct involvement with local recipients of a charitable organisation. A number of teachers specifically referred fund-raising, which is the easiest to accommodate in a busy timetable. This is a type of virtuous giving of the fund-raisers time, though its value for citizenship education will vary substantially depending on the extent to which the individual might engage with 'the cause' or with the recipients of the charity. Among the particular appeals were both national and local causes, including the Shoe Box appeal (3), Poppy Scotland (1) John Muir (1) and Mary's Meals (1). A major element of difference in fund-raising activities is the extent to which they take pupils out of the school or are conducted within the school.

Fund-raising is also a means of engagement with international causes, which may be considered an aspect of global citizenship and can lead to political understanding. Responding to international appeals was mentioned more than once, e.g. *'S1 pupils support street children in Peru'.* International and cross cultural understanding is sometimes promoted by Scottish Schools having contact with schools in other parts of the world.

'Environmental projects' covered any response using this wording explicitly (4) or any that referred to the local physical surroundings. The most common manifestation was 'picking up litter' (9), a simple but effective means of demonstrating awareness and care for our neighbourhood. There was evidence that some schools sought to engage pupils in more ambitious and creative activities to protect and improve the physical environment.

'Links to local communities' (14 returns) included class visits and local community groups using school premises. Such contacts with groups of adults from a range of background and ages are a form of citizenship learning.

Only a few responses indicated engagement with formal political processes. Two teachers mentioned in this context visiting the Scottish parliament (2) and another mentioned attending 'the youth parliament' (1). Meeting local councillors or MSPs was reported three times. Alongside these references to national and local politics, a few referred to rehearsing political knowledge and skills within the school – by means of a Debating Club (2) and a 'Democracy certificate' (1).

Schools are themselves communities and a few teachers cited in-school help as examples of citizenship activity. The main instances were buddying and peer support (2) and involvement with pupil councils (2). Links or 'partnerships' with other neighbourhood schools and 'twinning' were also referred to (4).

The large number of 'other' responses reflected different ways of interpreting questions about citizenship or political education. A few could be seen as primarily about individual or group endeavour though with potential benefits to others, such as 'carol singing' and the Duke of Edinburgh award. Three Physical Education teachers understandably linked the questions to their own specialism and pointed to pupils participating in sporting activities beyond the school, which similarly can contribute to more than their own health and well-being. One said *'many of our pupils mix with pupils from other schools and adults in the community through sport*' and another noted that *'sport provides the opportunity for good role-models'.*

Teachers were asked how successful their school was in engaging pupils with the local community. Just under a third (30%) chose the 'Highly successful' answer and rather more (39%) opted for 'Moderately successful'. Just over a quarter selected the least favourable estimation of 'Successful to an extent'.

The invitation to explain or expand on the fixed choice answer was taken up by half of the teachers in the survey. Most either replied in fairly general terms or indicated activities already covered elsewhere in the questionnaire. Among the more positive comments were the following:

> *The school is encouraging pupils to look after their environment.*
>
> *The school's pupils are known across the city for the work they have done.*
>
> *Good things are happening though there is a lot of pressure on staff.*

The school recognises its part in the local community and helps in it.

Several observed that local engagement was considerable but could be expanded. Some pointed to perceived lack of interest by pupils or parental support. Several mentioned pressures of time and resources, one attributing this to the *Curriculum for Excellence.* Among the most negative opinions were these:

Apathy still exists amongst the majority of pupils.

Not enough established links within the school to the community.

I don't believe we embody the community.

Teachers' views on the teaching of political matters

Teachers were asked in what subjects or classes are political issues such as the Referendum on Scottish Independence taught. All except one teacher answered this question and nearly everyone named at least one curriculum subject, with the majority of them giving more than one. However two respondents admitted to ignorance: one said '*none*' and the other said '*unable to answer – am only involved in Science'*.

Modern Studies was mentioned three times as frequently as other Social Subjects (either by subject name or collectively) and it was usually put first. Indeed all but a few teachers (85%) named Modern Studies. A quarter said English (26%) and History (26%), while one fifth said PSE (20%). Geography (7%) and RME (5%) were included by more than one person, while Economics, Business Studies, 'Languages and Science' were mentioned once.

To explore the difficulties most commonly found in the teaching of political or other controversial issues, respondents were given a list of five such 'problems' and invited to identify which applied. The list was based on responses to the piloted draft questionnaire. Respondents could also choose an 'other' category box and then specify what that referred to. The numbers and percentage of respondents agreeing with the 'problems' are ranked below in Table 6.

Table 6: Problems in teaching political issues: Teachers' views

Problem	**Number of responses**	**% respondents who mentioned this**
Lack of time in curriculum	53	63%
Concern about pupils misreporting bias	42	50%
Lack of suitable materials	39	46%
Concern about handling extreme views	31	37%
Difficulty of achieving balance	24	29%
Other	12	15%
Total	**201**	**N = 83**

Lack of time in the curriculum was overall the most frequently identified by almost two thirds of respondents. Modern Studies (MS) and Language, Maths and Science (LMS) teachers were more likely than Other Social Science (OSS) teachers to cite lack of time – three quarters of the former groups and half of the latter. Concern about 'misreporting bias' was viewed by half all teachers in the survey as a problem. This was cited by just over half the MS teachers and perhaps surprisingly by three quarters (9 of 12) LMS teachers. It might be surmised that some in the latter group were speculating rather than having experience of pupils misrepresenting them, but in response to a follow up question discussed below, 5 of 12 teachers in these non-social subjects reported that they had encountered issues that had proved problematic to teach.

Only a quarter of MS teachers (3 out of 12) thought lack of suitable materials was a problem compared with over a half of OSS teachers, which may well reflect the former's better access to apt resources. The same proportion, a quarter, of MS teachers thought that handling extreme views was a problem, which was a smaller proportion than that of the other categories of teacher despite it being intuitively probable that Modern Studies is more likely to cover subjects where expression of extreme views by pupils might arise. The possible explanation is that MS teachers are more practiced and confident in dealing with controversial subjects - none of this group of teachers in the sample thought 'difficulty in achieving balance' was a problem, whereas almost half of the other teacher groups did.

One RME teacher encapsulated more than one reason why teachers could be reluctant to handle controversial subject matter:

> *'Whilst I think teachers are able to find balance when discussing political and controversial issues, teachers often feel unqualified to discuss issues openly. The compartmentalisation of the curriculum creates a tendency for teachers to feel its not part of their subject especially when dealing with a sensitive contemporary issue.'*

There were 12 'other' problems cited. Three referred to parents and home - '*possible conflict with views from home' - 'parental influence can be negative' – 'complaints from parents about bias*'. Three invoked an absence of commitment to the subject by the pupils or the school – '*lack of interest in politics', 'politics seen as boring'- 'there is a culture where ignoring political education is seen as less serious'*. Other comments were - '*class debates highlight the need for more information on political issues*'; '*there is a perception that other people will promote their own ideology*;' '*mixed information from the local authority.*'

After the general question about problems, another was asked about respondents' individual experiences of controversial issues that had proved problematic to teach. Just over half (55%) provided a response to this question. Of those who replied, 19 (41%) said 'Yes' and 27 (59%) said 'No'. It is probable that many of those who did not answer also lacked a direct experience, so it would appear that the great majority of respondents had not encountered a difficulty, either because they rarely dealt with controversial issues or because they had done so without incident. Amongst those

who said 'Yes' and gave an example, 4 were MS Teachers, 5 were LMS, 10 were OSS. The controversial issues cited were unsurprising. The Referendum was mentioned most often (6 times), probably influenced by its current prominence. Others were - asylum seekers (3), religion (3), immigration (2), biased opinions, domestic abuse, gender, homosexuality and racism (once each).

A follow up question asked how the problem had been handled. This led to 27 responses. 19 cited an actual problem, while 8 replied apparently hypothetically about how they 'would have' addressed a problem. Half of all these teachers said they reacted to the problem by 'discussion' (13). Others answers were equally succinct – 'outside agencies' (4); 'teaching' (3); 'school guidelines' (3); 'Devil's Advocate' (2); 'balance' (2); and 'with care' (1). Evidently discussion was much the favoured method adopted by the range of subject teachers.

The questionnaire next asked, '*When discussing political or controversial issues, how are students given the opportunity to participate?*' A few people gave more than one answer, so there were slightly more responses (92) than the total of teachers. Unsurprisingly over two-thirds (65) said through '*discussion*' or '*debate*'[3]. '*Group work*' was next most common (11). A few suggested participation involved individual written or verbal presentations (essays and presentations). Other forms of participation were mock elections (3), COP1 (2); and mentioned once were '*case studies*,' '*drama*', '*taking part in local events*,' and '*opinion box*'. Whereas most of these methods engage everyone in class, the most commonly used (discussions and debates) usually have uneven participation.

The next question widened the focus from participation by asking the main constraints on pupils developing the capacity to engage in reasoned argument, a key element of political literacy, as well as an important skill in its own right. A list of eight possible constraints was given with the instructions '*tick which apply*' and '*specify other*'. All but three teachers responded and most ticked between three and five boxes.

The constraints reported can be divided broadly between those where deficiencies can be attributed to pupils and their families and peers, and those that attach to the education providers - teachers, school or curriculum. Pupils (or their circumstances) were held to be a greater source of the constraints than the education providers by three fifths (62%) to two fifths (38%).

Table 7: Constraints on pupils development of reasoning
Teachers' views

Pupil Deficit		**School Deficit**	
Pupil immaturity	62	Curriculum pressure	53
Lack of knowledge	60	Class size	44
Home environment	49	Lesson time	28
Peer pressure	38	Traditional Teaching	5
Other	3		
Total	**342 responses**	**from 81 respondents**	

The first two most common constraints which three quarters of teachers reported were pupil immaturity (77%) and lack of knowledge (74%). Home environment was also thought to apply by three fifths of respondents (60%). While it might seem that these replies predominantly blame pupils and their families for constraints, it could also indicate that teachers recognise that schools have not been able to do enough to offset these deficits, despite the policy commitment of the Curriculum for Excellence. Pressures of the curriculum itself were viewed as a constraint by two thirds of teachers (65%), which suggests that not enough time was available to develop reasoning skills. This was seen as a problem by a similar proportion to those who generally see the deficit in their pupils' attainment and circumstances.

Language, Maths and Science teachers in the survey were the group who proportionately recognised the largest number of constraints. This may link to other findings that they make least use of discussion (though it was still the favoured means of addressing controversy) and they almost all think 'pupil immaturity' and 'lack of knowledge' inhibit pupils' capacity for reasoned argument.

Modern Studies Teachers viewed class size as a problem even more than curriculum pressure in the sample. Lesson time and peer group pressures are still viewed as significant constraints by all teachers, but less so in Modern Studies. It may be that in this subject teachers have more opportunity to address potentially constraining factors - we know from other answers that MS teachers felt better equipped to achieve balance and deal with potential problems.

Very few teachers regarded 'traditional teaching methods' as a constraint, though we have not explored the extent to which these methods are thought to be practised. Only three returns added '*other*' constraining factors on pupil's capacity to engage in reasoned argument. One referred to '*lack of parental engagement*,' while another found a constraining limitation on the use of a favoured method, namely '*confident individuals dominating debates*.' The final comment was '*reasoned argument not addressed at all in the curriculum*', which is a concerning view.

Teaching on the Scottish Referendum

The next section of the questionnaire explored what distinctive issues, if any, arose from the task of providing teaching relevant to the forthcoming Referendum on Scottish independence. Firstly teachers were asked to what extent was the Referendum 'an important subject to be discussed at school?' Over three quarters (87%) said 'Very'. One in 10 (11%) chose the response of 'Moderately' and 2 thought 'Not at all'. As might be expected all Modern Studies Teachers in the survey thought discussing the Referendum at school was very important.

Teachers were then asked, '*Do you think the Referendum on Scottish Independence presents problems beyond those encountered in the teaching of other political or controversial issues?*' Answers were roughly evenly divided with 45 saying 'Yes' (56 %) and somewhat fewer, 35, responding 'No' (44%). This distribution of opinion was similar among teacher subject groups.

Two thirds explained their answers – the 'reasons' given below might explain either why the presenting problems were different or why they were not.

Table 8: Reasons teaching on the Referendum was different or not

Explanation	**Number of responses**	**% respondents who mentioned this**
Balance/ bias	17	32%
Important/ Emotional issue	14	29%
No more controversial than others subjects	8	15%
Curriculum/Information	7	13%
Pre-conceived Opinions	5	9%
Others	3	6%
Total	**54**	

The single most commonly raised explanation concerned the need for 'impartiality,' and 'neutrality', to be 'balanced,' and 'avoid bias' (32%). This fits with official advice to teachers about maintaining neutrality. For some, this was a factor making the Referendum special, while for others it was a reason that it was not different from other political issues. Some noted that neutrality was more 'difficult' to achieve, with several acknowledging that their views might be 'powerful' or 'very influential', which required 'careful handling'. Some teachers criticised the constraints placed on them by the Local Authority. One other complained that they were not allowed to give their own opinion. Relatively few responses referred to 'lack of information' or 'too few facts' (4), but a number (3) took the opportunity to bemoan the general lack of political education in the curriculum.

Prominent amongst the comments of those who said problems of teaching about the Referendum were different was reference to the critical nature of the vote. Teachers referred to its 'great importance;' the 'profound' and 'momentous' nature of the decision; it is ' an emotive subject'. The 'one-off' decision could 'change the direction of the country' or even 'permanently divide the country'. Several responses acknowledged that the intensity of interest in the debate made for difficulties – 'feelings run high.' Influences from home were severally mentioned in what we have classified as Pre-conceived Opinion. This was almost always viewed to be a problem rather than a help. The most common single explanation for answering in the negative to the question on whether or not the Referendum was distinctive was that it was 'no more controversial than other subjects.'

We sought to ascertain how each school addressed the issues raised by the Referendum debate. Only two thirds of teachers answered this question (54, 65%) and more than a third of these responses were 'don't know' (19, 37%). Taking together the non-responses and the 'don't knows', it may be inferred that at least half of the teachers had little or no awareness of how the Referendum was covered in their

school. This casts doubt on the extent to which a whole school approach was being taken in many schools.

Among those who did offer an account (i.e. excluding don't knows), the predominant answer by far was through debates and discussions (25 respondents). There was little evidence of didactic teaching about the Referendum issues – only three suggested planned lessons on the subject. Other responses by one individual only each included wall displays, visits from politicians, school Referendum and 'explained how to register to vote'.

We next asked for recommendations about teaching methods and materials suited to teaching political or controversial issues like the Referendum.

Table 9: Favoured methods for teaching controversial issues

Methods and Materials Recommended	**Number of responses**	**% respondents who mentioned this**
Balanced handouts or materials	20	28%
Debate/discussion	19	26%
DVDs/ on-line materials	9	13%
Visiting MSPs or other speakers	9	13%
Power Point presentations	5	7%
Group work	3	4%
Other	7	10%
Total responses	**72**	

About half of those who made a recommendation indicated that the suggested resources were already in existence (34, 52%) while a similar number thought they were not (31, 48%).

The single most popular method recommended was for debates or discussions (19), which paralleled the most common method actually used. Many replies stated that materials need to be balanced whatever they were. Balanced handouts (7) were recommended most frequently; sometimes the balance was to found in a variety of resources (3). The use of electronic media in various forms was suggested (9); DVDs were mentioned 6 times, other forms of online resources were vaguely specified but 'video clips' were specifically mentioned.

Among outside speakers, MSPs were identified most frequently (6), which presumably suggests the need for more than one if balance is to be achieved. Less often 'knowledgeable speakers' were wanted (3) - they might be expected to be 'neutral'. A few teachers wanted 'presentations' and 'power points' to be used. It was not clear whether these were for teachers or pupils to use, but they are likely to be a mixture of these. Guidelines were mentioned twice.

We further asked what could be done for teachers to help with the Referendum or more generally to assist in teaching of political or controversial issues. The answers are summarised in the table below.

Table 10: Desired help for teaching controversial issues

Methods and Materials Recommended	**Number of responses**	**% respondents who mentioned this**
More and better material	35	59%
More staff, time and money	8	14%
Training and CPD	6	10%
Policy change/ support for teacher	5	8%
More external input to schools	5	8%
Total responses	**59**	

Quite a few of the responses could be viewed as requiring additional financial resources, but others were more about quality. By far the most common type of reply made reference to availability of materials – more, better or both. A common theme was for access to materials or methods of 'more interest to young people' (7). The use of 'technologies familiar to young people' was also mentioned: we can conjecture that this would include electronic communication and on-line resources.

A significant minority wanted 'more staff', 'time' and 'money' and several respondents wanted in-service training and CPD events. These could all be seen as implying that a larger proportion of school budgets be devoted to these, but they are about school management as well as finance. They also require that teachers and their schools recognise the value of training in helping them meet the challenges of teaching political and contested issues. There were appeals for more support for teachers other than training with some asking for 'advice' in handling controversial issues (3) and others that they were 'trusted' to deal with them. There was again recognition that outside visitors to the school would be a helpful resource (5). Contrasting views were expressed about guidelines, with two individuals asking for them and two others expressing a wish not to be constrained by them.

Teacher's views on the age of entitlement to vote

Given that the Referendum had introduced a lower voting age than other elections in Scotland, we thought it valuable to obtain views on this. Rather more teachers were against the lowering of the age to 16 (37, 44%) than in favour (33, 39%), but the difference was small. Interestingly nearly one in five were undecided (14, 17%).

It is instructive that a much higher proportion of Modern Studies Teachers 10 (80%) were in favour of voting at 16 than colleagues in other subject areas. By contrast the Languages, Maths and Science group of teachers were twice as likely to be against as in favour, while the Other Social Science group were divided 55% against and 45% in favour. It may well be reasonable to conclude that teachers whose work is least likely to deal with social and political subjects are most inclined to view pupils as ill prepared to vote at 16.

FINDINGS OF THE PUPIL SURVEY

Sample characteristics

516 valid questionnaires were returned from pupils attending twenty-one schools. The range of returns varied widely with the lowest school returning only seven and the highest school returning over forty. The average return was roughly twenty-five.

Table 11: Ages of pupils in the sample

Age	**Number**	**%**
15[4]	189	37%
16	237	46%
17-18	85	17%
Total who stated their age	**511**	100%
No age given	5	

Just under two thirds of the sample were aged 16 or over and hence clearly eligible to vote in the Referendum. A substantial minority were 15 at the time of the survey, but some of these would reach their 16th birthday by the time of the vote.

As would be expected, there was a fairly even divide between females (271, 53%) and males (243, 47%). Two pupils did not state their gender. We carried out cross-tabulation on other variables by age and gender, but these are only reported below where they approached or reached statistical significance.

The teaching of political issues

The first question asked pupils to state how often they discussed or debated politics or political issues in class. It is worth noting that students may have discounted teaching on political issues that did not involve discussion or debate. They were given three options to choose from. The replies indicated a wide disparity in frequency, as perceived or recalled by the students, ranging from weekly or more to never. The most frequently ticked was ‘A few times each term’ **(**202, 39%); somewhat fewer but more than a third selected ‘At least once a week’ (180, 35%); more than a quarter indicated ‘Not at all’ (134, 26%).

To ascertain how far the actual frequency of such discussions fitted with young people's level of interest, they were next asked to rate whether the amount of discussion on political issues was about right or not. Schools may take comfort from the fact that well over half agreed that the frequency was 'about right' (290, 56%). However, more than a third (196, 38%) did want more, whereas only a few (28, 5%) felt that attention to political issues was excessive. Among the minority of students who took the opportunity to make final comments at the end of the questionnaire (69 or 13%), a fair number highlighted their wish for more extensive coverage of politics at school:

'Teaching of political issues should be increased dramatically'

'Politics should be discussed often'

'Politics is under taught'

'The school don't help us to look deep into politics'.

'Politics should be discussed in other subjects, not just modern studies'.

A large number of pupils (148, 29%) stated that the subject had been discussed in more than one class. The most common single subject, predictably, was Modern Studies (136). Indeed this was the only subject cited by more than 5% of the sample. The next most common subjects mentioned were English (19), History (14) and PSE (11). A wide range of other subjects was offered including Graphics, Business, Music and science subjects, but each was given by only a few pupils (1 to 4). Surprisingly, given the subject matter, Scottish Studies returned only one response also, though this may reflect that this is not widely taught as a separate subject.

When asked about the particular political topics discussed, 'independence' (114) and 'the Referendum' (84) were the most referred to, together they comprised nine tenths of topics mentioned (which of the two terms were cited is probably of no significance). As with some other questions, these answers reflected the immediate topicality of the forthcoming vote on Scotland's future and would not have been so prominent a few years earlier. Time will tell whether 'independence' will remain high on the agenda of political issues discussed in school. The timing of the research and the nature of the research question may account for the fact that other issues were apparently infrequently discussed. The most cited were War (10), Abortion (5) and Poverty (3).

We were interested to know about individual participation in such discussions. Seventy percent of the sample (335) stated that they did feel able to give their views in class discussions. For many of these - just under a half - however, this occurred only 'occasionally' (233, 45%). About twenty per cent of the total number of students (102) said their participation happened 'a lot'. Almost thirty percent of pupils (143) who took part in the research felt that they were unable to participate in class discussions. About half the respondents gave an example of an issue discussed in class that they had contributed to. Again most referred to either independence or the Referendum.

To contextualise our data on teaching about politics at school, we also sought to assess the relative importance, in pupils' eyes, of home and school in learning about politics. Although the largest number of responses (185, 39%) stated that home was more important, nearly as many (164, 34%) said the reverse was true. A somewhat smaller but still considerable proportion claimed that home and school were equally important (139, 28%). These findings suggest that both school and home are strong influences on young people's political understandings, though doubtless there are other important ones such as peers and the media (traditional and social).

Citizenship in school and the community

The central part of the questionnaire moved away from a more commonly understood sense of 'political issues' and looked at issues that affected the pupils' engagement within the school and local community. Among concerns discussed about the school itself were school ethos and values and school uniform.

Over sixty percent of pupils said they had been offered opportunities to be involved in the community. The fact that over a third responded negatively about this is at odds with the teachers' accounts indicating a wide range of ways in which each school engaged locally. Pupils did instance a wide range of activities undertaken 'in the community' including charity work, helping the elderly, singing and volunteering. These corresponded with the examples provided by teachers. Likewise, pupils also referred to fund-raising, which might be for local or national causes. Female pupils were disproportionately represented in those who mentioned 'helping the elderly, 'charity' and 'fund-raising'.

Many pupils felt that they had not been given as much opportunity as they would have liked to be involved with the community or neighbourhood outwith the school (195). A slightly larger proportion of girls (106, 39% of female pupils) wanted greater opportunities than boys (89, 37% of male pupils).

Pupils' views on teaching about the Referendum

Our survey took place when there were only two months of school time left before the Referendum would take place. It was to be expected, then, that most school-based teaching in relation to this topic would already have occurred. Nevertheless nearly half of the pupils stated that only 'a little amount' of discussion had taken place (237, 46%), while as many as fourteen percent (70) claimed to have had no discussion of the topic at all. Just over a third (194, 38%) said that they had discussed the issue 'a lot'. As with views on discussion of political issues more generally, more than half of the pupils (287, 56%) were satisfied with the amount of discussion, though over a quarter believed there had not been enough, for instance:

> *'I learn a lot about politics in my school. I think people should be more informed on what a Referendum is'.*
>
> '*We should be taught more about the Referendum*'

For nearly ten percent (49), attention to the Referendum in class had apparently been too much. This was twice the number that had thought discussion of politics in general happened too often (28), as noted above, but it is highly likely that this reflects the exceptional attention given to this political subject. There was no gender difference in reported experience of discussion of the Referendum, but girls expressed a substantially greater demand for more discussion - 38% of all girls (102) said there was 'not enough' compared with 25% (60) of boys.

The great majority of all pupils said they had enjoyed discussions on the Referendum either a lot or a little (405, nearly 85%). The remainder (72, 14%) indicated that they did not enjoy such discussions, though this included some (11) who also said there had been no discussion. Among the 10% of the sample who had both experienced discussions and found them not enjoyable, the most common explanations (not all gave them) were 'boredom' or 'little interest' in the subject (25). A few complained of the quality of the discussions e.g 'not enough detail' or' too few facts' (6). Only a few (3) said that they did not understand the issues. Two referred to having too much other work to do. Two individuals cited 'bias' as a reason for their dissatisfaction. Interestingly, by contrast several individuals stated that teachers should be allowed to express their opinions.

Eligibility and preparedness for the Referendum

We asked pupils whether or not they believed they were entitled to vote in the Referendum. Nineteen pupils responded that they were unsure whether they were eligible to vote or not. Of those who replied with a definite answer to the question, 358 (72%) believed that they were eligible. This included 65 who were 15 at the time of the survey.

We had not wished to complicate the questionnaire by asking respondents to state what their age would be on September 18th, so it is likely that some of the 15 year olds who claimed to be eligible would pass their 16th birthday in the few months between the survey and the vote. Equally others were probably under misapprehension about eligibility, as was also the case for seven 16-year olds who thought they were not entitled. On the whole, it seemed that most pupils were aware of the changed age of majority for this particular vote.

Four fifths of the sample reported being at least partly informed enough to vote. They divided almost equally between those who thought they were fully informed and those who felt only partly informed. This meant that about one in five reported that they were not informed at all. This considerable minority apparently lacked the capacity to competently vote and so may be deemed ill equipped to perform as politically active citizens. This included quite a few who said they were entitled to vote (39, 7%) but were predominantly against acquiring the franchise at 16.

It was not possible to explore the various reasons for this lack of preparedness, which could have included inadequate input at school, indifference by the pupil, limited discussion among family and friends, and so on. However, we did ask what more the school could have done to make them better able to make a decision about Scottish independence or not (Table 12).

About half the sample declined to answer, while a small number said 'nothing' (7%). Among the rest, the main suggestions (from 60%) were for more discussion or debate [5] in class. Over one third wanted more didactic teaching and presentations. A few wanted external input, for instance from MPs or 'experts'.

Table 12: What more could the school do to help decide about Scottish independence: Pupils views

Method	Number	%
Debate or discussion	165	60%
More teaching	95	34%
Presentations	11	4%
Involve pupils more	4	1%
Leaflets	2	<1%
Speakers	2	<1%
Total	**279**	

Many responses emphasised the importance of balance, for instance:

'Give us information from both sides of the argument'

'Give more details as to how it would affect us both positively and negatively'

'Offer more informative sessions during class about the issue/Pros & cons'

'Have a debate showing about good and bad things about independence'

A few students took a different perspective on school neutrality, as they expressed concern that further teaching might be experienced as an unwanted attempt to affect their opinions**:**

'*The school should do nothing to influence us'*

'*I don't believe it is the school's position to influence me'*.

As lowering the voting age to 16 was seen by some politicians and commentators as an experiment and others as a precedent, we asked what respondents thought should be the voting age in all elections – in other words whether or not 16 should be retained across the board as the threshold for suffrage. The result showed substantial support for keeping the lower age. More than half were in favour of retaining the age of 16 for all future elections, but just over one third wished to revert to 18 as in other recent elections. Amongst 'others' were some who wanted the age older than 18, some younger than 16 and a few wanted no age limit at all. (Table 13).

Table 13: What the voting age in all elections should be: Young people's views

Preferred age	Number	%
16	284	57%
18	179	36%
Other age	31	6%
Total	**494**	

When the results were analysed by age of respondent, the proportions for 15, 16 and 17-18 year olds were very similar. In other words, as many younger pupils were in favour or against 16 as older ones.

Thus, notably more pupils than teachers were in favour of the innovation of a lower age of eligibility to vote, but a significant minority did not think people of the same age as themselves should generally be able to vote. Comments made to elaborate on these opinions illustrated the range of views. Here are examples from those favouring a change to 16 or no age threshold:

'*We know as much as our parents about political issues'*

'It's our future and we are as mature as eighteen year-olds'

Others wanted a higher age:

'The voting age should be raised'

'Don't think that sixteen year-olds are mature enough to vote'.

Others take the middle course

'Age should not be the deciding factor on whether or not you can vote'

'You should be able to vote when you know and care enough to.'

SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

Review of key findings

The research set out to gain some understanding of the ways in which schools handled preparation for the Independence Referendum of 2014, within the context of their approaches to education about politics and citizenship more widely. Further aims were to obtain teacher and pupil views about specific pedagogic and democratic issues related to citizenship education, as well as opinions about the lowered age for voting.

This study comprised a questionnaire survey carried out in 21 local authority schools and one independent school in the West of Scotland. 84 questionnaires were returned from teachers – all in the local authority schools. They taught a wide range of subjects across the curriculum. Modern Studies, English, Geography and Mathematics each contributed 10% or more to the sample. Five hundred and sixteen pupils took part, including ten from the independent school. They were aged between 15 and 18, i.e. they were over or close to the threshold of eligibility for the Referendum. The questionnaires for the pupils were somewhat shorter than that for teachers, but both explored interlinked issues of citizenship, political education in schools, community involvement and teaching about the Referendum.

Teachers were asked to rank three commonly used elements of citizenship and the great majority (four fifths) placed moral and social responsibility ahead of political literacy and community involvement. Teachers expressed mixed views about how well their schools prepare pupils for democracy. There was strong evidence of teaching about responsibilities and encouragement of community involvement, whereas political literacy rarely figured in teacher responses, which reflected its low priority, lack of understanding of the concept, or both.

Respondents gave many examples of pupils engaging with their local communities in a wide range of ways, including providing a service, fund-raising for charities and helping the environment (notably picking up litter). Over sixty percent of pupils stated that they had been involved in community activities. They gave a broad array of examples similar to those given by teachers. However nearly one fifth of pupils felt that they had been offered *no* opportunity to participate in the community.

It was also clear that many schools also promoted awareness of more global issues, but only a few teachers mentioned engaging pupils with formal political processes. Just over a third of teachers believed that schools have an important or very important role to play in students' understanding of political issues. Many teachers saw Modern Studies as the primary or even only subject area for addressing political issues. However, other subjects were also commonly cited as having the scope to deal with political matters, especially English, History and PSE. Pupil responses indicated that, in practice, Modern Studies was by far the most common locus for such topics, though many also indicated that political or other controversial issues were covered in more than one subject.

The problems most commonly reported by teachers about covering political issues were lack of time, concerns about being seen by pupils as biased and lack of suitable materials. Discussions and debates were by far the most usual means of encouraging pupils to participate, though group work was also important. Teachers recognised a number of pupil-based factors constraining the development of reasoning. These included immaturity, lack of knowledge and the home environment. Somewhat fewer acknowledged school-based constraints, notably shortage of time and class size.

The pupils in our study mostly confirmed that politics or political issues were being discussed, in some schools with a fairly high degree of frequency (at least weekly). Over a quarter of pupils, however, claimed that no discussion took place at all. Similarly, about two thirds stated they were able to participate in class discussions by being given the chance on political matters, but a significant minority said they could not. Doubtless some of those who took part were affected by reticence or the difficulty of any large group discussion to include everybody. The comments of a few also indicated a lack of interest in the subject matter. By contrast about a third of students wanted more frequent attention to be paid to political issues, both by discussion and more didactic methods.

While it seemed that most teachers did not see political education as a very prominent part of school business, the great majority of teachers did believe that the Referendum was an important matter to be discussed at school. Even so, about half the sample had little or no awareness of how their school dealt with the Referendum, perhaps not surprising given that many taught subjects like Maths and PE where it was unlikely to arise. For pupils, teaching about the Referendum and Independence was very prominent in their examples of political issues discussed – a reflection of the topicality at the time of the survey.

Many teachers thought that teaching about the Referendum posed no special difficulties for schools compared with other controversial matters, like abortion or immigration, but slightly more than half did think there were special considerations involved. They highlighted the particular importance of balance and avoiding bias along with the strong feelings and opinions associated with the decision about Independence. The most favoured methods for handling the Referendum were discussions/debates, but use of external speakers and electronic or visual aids were also important. Some thought t that more time and/or teaching resources were needed to help with this.

With regard to the new voting age of 16 introduced for the Referendum, most Modern Studies teachers supported this for elections in general, although a slight majority of all teachers considered together were against extending this to other elections (44% against, 39% in favour and 17% undecided). By contrast, a higher proportion of pupils were in favour of 16 as the normal age of majority. This applied regardless of the pupils own age. Most students seemed to have an accurate idea about whether or not they were eligible for the Referendum, though it seemed a small number were uncertain or wrong about their entitlement.

Discussion 1: Community Involvement and Political Literacy

The evidence showed that many teachers recognised the link between educating young people to be capable and responsible citizens and schools' obligations to facilitate community engagement, whereas few saw the connection between this and political literacy. For the most part, teachers reported positively on their pupils' efforts as regards practical altruism supporting 'good causes' and doing voluntary work. Both they and their students on the whole viewed this as something schools do well, but might improve upon. Attaching value to community engagement is consistent with the evidence of surveys which have canvassed young people's views of citizenship. They generally see citizenship to entail community service and helping others, rather than their own entitlements or political involvement (e.g. Smith et al 2009).

Political literacy as an aspect of citizenship was much less widely recognised. Use of the term did not readily spring to mind in connection with citizenship for teachers in our study despite the questionnaire referring to it and our providing schools in the survey with a précis of the Scottish Education CfE Guidance on Political Literacy.

To the question asked at the end of the Guidance – '*Does everyone have a clear understanding of the breadth of political literacy in the CfE and how it relates to the different areas of the curriculum?*' the answer is firmly in the negative. If there was little evidence from the survey to suggest a grasp of the concept of political literacy, there is not much prospect that '*learners and their parents' will have 'a clear understanding of how practitioners deliver political literacy…*' (CfE 14 sect 3).

The link between community service and political literacy is only achieved if there is reflection and discussion on the experience. It has been extensively argued that for voluntary work to have the educative value of civic engagement it must be reflective. It may then properly constitute what is sometimes called 'service learning' and make a contribution to the development of political literacy (Annette 2000).

For instance, voluntary work can raise questions of social morality and of public policy. These might include - how well are community services delivered? what ought to be funding priorities? what are good causes? These are controversial issues over which there may be argument and legitimate disagreement. For community involvement to be fully educative it requires to include opportunities for discussion and debate. Whether the focus is on the school as a community, on neighbourhood, or the global community, active learning requires both engagement and reflection. (Annette 2003)

For political literacy to be afforded greater weight as an aspect of citizenship it needs to be viewed not only as a concomitant of community engagement but as an essential ingredient for democratic participation. We might recall the argument that for democracy to be secure, citizens have a moral responsibility to be politically active. The impetus for introducing citizenship education into the curriculum was to combat apathy, cynicism and disengagement (Blunkett and Taylor 2010).

Concerns about under-valuing politics or making political participation optional may be exaggerated, but we should acknowledge that the skills of argument and

persuasion, and the values associated with seeking to resolve disagreement, are capacities and assets for effective life in a democratic society. Their relevance extends beyond the public sphere to all non-authoritarian contexts at home or in civil society where there is room for consensual action (Lockyer 2010).

The concept of political literacy embodied in the Education Scotland Guidance (CfE 14) which focuses upon pupils' acquiring the 'attributes and capabilities' aims to equip pupils for active citizenship in a liberal society. However, it arguably neglects the importance of knowledge about contemporary politics and society.[6] Whilst the 'political' element of political literacy goes well beyond politics as conventionally understood, it also underestimates the importance of institutional knowledge[7] and that of contemporary political affairs.

It has often been observed that there ought to be an equivalence between the required 'journey' (embracing knowledge of 'Life in the UK')[8] of those applying to be new citizens, or seeking Leave to Remain in the UK, and those citizens born and educated here. (Kiwan 2008; Meehan 2010). What ought to be included within the schools curriculum to equip pupils for 'Life in Scotland' is a large question not be explored here. Suffice to say that what is necessary and sufficient to equip young citizens to be politically active citizens needs further thought and clearer elaboration.

Discussion 2. The Referendum and Pedagogy

Although teachers gave little weight to political literacy in general, there was no corresponding failure to recognise the importance for students being properly equipped to vote in the Referendum, when they were old enough to do so. On the contrary, teacher responses to a range of questions indicated widespread endorsement of schools enabling students to exercise their vote freely and wisely. A majority of both teachers and pupils underscored the importance of learning about the arguments for and against independence so that students could make up their own minds. Very few teachers or pupils suggested that the Referendum debate was not the school's business.

The Referendum provided for us an opportunity to explore how schools and teachers deal with political and controversial issues in the classroom. While there was some evidence of innovative approaches related to active learning, student centred learning and interdisciplinary learning, on the whole teaching methods were limited in range. Teachers referred to constraints they experienced to using a wider range of pedagogical options. As well as systemic issues such as lack of time, curriculum priorities and class size, some pointed to lack of suitable materials. Many also perceived limitations in students' knowledge and maturity, and external influences including parents.

Nevertheless, the majority of the teachers who participated in the survey reported on approaches that went beyond the factual and practical matters of what was required in the Referendum and how to vote. The preferred approach of discussion and debate can be seen to be student-centred and offering opportunities for them to research, explore and express their views and have them challenged and justified by peers. Similarly, importing resources such as invited speakers, video and internet material

would have entailed participation and engagement with the salient issues on the part of students without reliance or expectation that the teacher can provide all answers.

It may be argued that the role of the 'teacher' is significantly changed when the method of learning has shifted to be that of 'facilitator' or organiser rather than sole 'provider' and font of knowledge. The extent of the challenge for teachers to adopt a non-didactic pedagogic mode will vary depending upon the prevailing practice in their subject specialisms. 'Debate' and 'discussion,' by far the most commonly identified methods of handling controversial issues, covers a range of possible forms, from formally staged adversarial debates (with set topic and 'rules of engagement') to unstructured discussions.

Whatever the discursive form, the teacher's role in facilitating the learning experience raises significant issues of managing equitable participation and achieving balance. The Referendum offered the prospect of an opportunity to develop pupil's capacities to engage in reasoned argument, not just to hold opinions but to have publically defensible views. Although the concept of political literacy may not have been at the forefront, there was widespread recognition amongst teachers that the Independence Referendum was an important opportunity to adopt a pedagogy consonant with allowing reasonable disagreement and teaching the values of respect for difference.

Whether or not teachers said the Referendum presented an exceptional challenge the acknowledged need to avoid accusations of bias apparently weighed heavily with some. The strong policy advice from education authorities to ensure neutrality and avoid undue influence was considered by some as teachers to be an inhibition, whether or not the 'advice' was welcomed. The evidence from our survey suggests it was in general successfully heeded.

It might be argued that putting the onus on education practitioners to achieve balance and 'avoid bias' suggests that young people are vulnerable to undue influences. That implies they are naive or lack political acuity - which may well under-estimate them. This is consistent with the view that many students are ill-prepared to engage in reasoned and evidence based argument, to weigh up the issues, and make informed decisions. Pupil immaturity and home influence we know are considered by teachers to be major limitations on their acquiring the core skills and attributes of political literacy.

Collectively the schools used a wide range of learning methods other than presentations and discussions, though each was not used commonly, which suggests that sharing ideas about different methods would be useful. One obvious omission was the apparent lack of explicit interdisciplinary approaches. The issues broached by all sides in the run up to the Referendum included the economy, defence, ecology, social justice and relationships with other countries. Whilst Modern Studies teachers, who played the major teaching role according to this study, will have addressed some or all of these issues, there was scope for collaboration with Science, History, Geography and RME, to name the obvious few.

Whilst, generally speaking, the teachers surveyed can rightly be satisfied with what they achieved, there was nevertheless a sense among the majority that more can be done. There is a need for access to a wider range of learning materials and in-service

training related to citizenship education. This applies particularly to those teaching subjects other than Modern Studies, if aspirations about a whole school approach to political literacy, and the handling of political and other controversial issues, is to be attained.

The most general fundamental finding is that schools participating in this research made a reasonably successful effort to meet the exceptional demands made by the independence Referendum. Importantly, the responses of young people were largely positive. They were either predominantly satisfied or wanted their schools to do more.

There was very little rejection or cynicism displayed in relation to discussion of the Referendum, and a good level of confidence amongst students that those eligible to vote were equipped to do so, with a number of ineligible students also keen to express their unhappiness at missing out.

Participating in democratic decision-making by voting is only the culmination of responsible citizenship when it is reflective, considered and informed. Allowing students to participate in discussion and decision-making both measures their knowledge of a subject and acts as an instrument for political engagement.

It appears that the special significance of the Referendum and the extension of the vote to young people at school resulted in very much more than usual attention to politics and controversy. The evidence of our survey suggests an increased appetite for political engagement among pupils which was recognised by some teachers. Building on this awareness and enthusiasm requires a determined effort from all parties and requires some modification of historical reticence by education authorities to the overt promotion of political debate in schools.

Discussion 3: Lowering the voting age

The post Referendum decision to retain the voting age at 16 for future Scottish parliamentary elections means that the circumstance faced by Scottish secondary schools in providing education for an in-school electorate will continue. This study indicates that many teachers doubt the political competence of many 16 and 17 years olds, though a majority of young people were in favour of the change.

A report on the conduct of the Referendum (Electoral Commission Report 2014) provided further information about the involvement of young people from an ICM telephone survey conducted following the Referendum. This gave the first reliable indication of voter turn-out amongst 16 and 17 year olds (Curtice 2014). 75% of this age group report to have voted which is below the average 85% for all voters, but significantly higher than the 54% of 18 -24 year olds, whose poor turn-out in earlier elections gave impetus to the demand for early political education. Furthermore the Electoral Commission report that 97% of 15 and 16 year olds said they would vote in future elections. This suggests a very high level of commitment and highlights the importance of adequate preparation by schools and others for political decision-making.[9]

Interestingly general public opinion prior to the Referendum about the minimum voting age was similar to that found in the present study for teachers (i.e. slightly more than half against 16 years). However it seems that opinion has subsequently shifted to a majority in favour of the lower age (Curtice 2014). Researchers from Edinburgh University reported the results of two telephone surveys conducted with 14-17 year olds 15 months and 3 months prior to the Referendum. These revealed that arguments against lowering the voting age – that young people were less interested than adults in politics and were likely to follow their parents in voting – were not supported by the evidence. They also concluded 'we find that lowering the voting age may have positive impacts on political engagement, if certain structural provisions, mainly through schools, can be established.' (Eichhorn 2014: summary) This is consistent with the pupil responses to our survey.

It would appear that there is a real prospect for Scottish schools to be populated by an increasingly politically interested and engaged body of students. It is hard to say whether the increasing recognition of the presence of enfranchised young people in the upper echelons of secondary school will over time have a significant impact on school ethos. Whether or not, and if so in what time frame, we might expect the voting age in all political elections in the UK to be lowered remains to be seen. Further, it is uncertain what might be the general impact of the lowering of the voting age on young people in the 16 to 18 age range who are currently in a 'twilight zone' of rights and responsibilities between childhood and adulthood.[10]

Yet it is clear that extending the political rights and responsibilities of citizenship to young people at age 16 is potentially far reaching. There is a real and present prospect that lowering the voting age in Scotland could be the harbinger of a real change in political culture with Scottish schools in the vanguard. This was the vision of those who pressed for political literacy to be at the centre of citizenship education to secure and renew our civic and democratic life.

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[1] The Stevenson Trust for Citizenship is dedicated to promoting public understanding of citizenship and politics. Especially since the appointment of Sir Bernard Crick as Stevenson Professor in 2006 it has played a role in assisting schools in their teaching of citizenship. The lecture series in 2006-7 gave rise to the publication (edited by B. Crick and A. Lockyer) *Active Citizenship: Active Citizenship: What could it Achieve and How?* Edinburgh University Press 2010 – which was distributed to schools. Thereafter the programmes of lectures have been and remain available on line as a teaching aid at http://www.gla.ac.uk/schools/socialpolitical/research/politics/stevensontrustforcitizenship/ including the most recent series *Scotland's Citizens: The Referendum and Beyond* (2013-2014).

[2] We are aware that that there is no consensus on whether to call older school children pupils or students: in this report we use the two terms interchangeably. Since the pupils/students were aged 15+ we sometimes follow the practice in referring to them as young people, though they are still children for some purposes (as defined by the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child).

[3] UN Convention of the Rights of the Child

[4] Although the target group of pupils for the research was age 15 and over, 20 returns were received from pupils aged 14. For the purposes of analysis by age we include these pupils with the 15 year olds.

[5] In responses to this and other questions, some respondents who used the word 'debate' may have had in mind a formalised procedure, whereas others meant simply a discussion.

[6] The concept of political literacy in the Education Scotland Guidance Note closely follows that in the Crick Report. It has been fairly argued that political literacy in the Crick Report adopts Crick's wide understanding of 'politics' which emphasises values, skills and attributes, and thereby neglects the importance of learning about political institutions. (Frazer 2000)

[7] In the case of the Referendum decision, for instance, it was important to know the difference between an independent sovereign state and the powers of a devolved legislature, actual and possible.

[8] In Scotland the SQA meet the Home Office requirements for Settlement and Naturalisation as British citizens through the provision of ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) courses which have a substantial knowledge content build in to situational speaking skills.
http://www.esolscotland.com/citizenship.cfm

[9] The Scottish Parliament Report on *The Electoral Management of the Scottish Independence Referendum* (March 2015) while it generally commends the arrangements put in place with schools facilitating the registration of young voters, it is critical of the 'overly restrictive' limitations which 14 of the 32 education authorities placed on schools in the 28 day period prior to the vote. SP Paper 686 2nd Report Session 4.

[10] The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child says 'A child means every human being below the age of eighteen years, unless under the law applicable to the child *majority is attained earlier*' (my emphasis) Currently, the 'age of majority' in Scotland is 18 as determined by the Age of Majority Scotland Act 1969, although the age of 'legal capacity' (sometimes confuse with the age of majority) is 16 according to the Age of Legal Capacity (Scotland) Act 1991.