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# Citizenship Education and School Projects in Britain

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## Abstract

This paper gives an overview of the development of citizenship education in Britain and the way in which museums are supporting schools in the delivery of this new curriculum area. It ends with a study of Campaign! Make an Impact, a new British Library Programme which uses museum and archive collections to inspire children and young people into active citizenship. Children study historic campaigns, learn campaigning skills and then plan and run creative campaigns about issues that impact on their own lives. Children leave the programme feeling that they know to and are able to change things. The programme will run on a national basis from April 2009.

**Keywords:** Citizenship education; school projects; British Library.

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## Resum. Educació per a la ciutadania i projectes escolars al Regne Unit

Aquest article ofereix una visió general del desenvolupament de l'educació per a la ciutadania al Regne Unit i com els museus estan donant suport en el desplegament d'aquesta nova àrea curricular. Finalitza amb un estudi d'un nou programa de la Biblioteca Britànica (Campaign! Make an Impact) que fa servir les col·leccions museístiques i arxivístiques per inspirar nens, nenes i joves en la ciutadania activa. Nois i noies estudien campanyes històriques, aprenen les habilitats per fer campanyes i porten a terme campanyes creatives que tenen un impacte a les seves pròpies vides. Quan acaben el programa han adquirit la sensació que saben i són capaços de canviar les coses. El programa s'estendrà a l'àmbit nacional a partir del mes d'abril de 2009.

**Paraules clau:** educació per a la ciutadania; projectes escolars; Biblioteca Britànica.

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## Resumen. Educación para la ciudadanía y proyectos escolares en el Reino Unido

Este artículo ofrece una visión general del desarrollo de la educación para la ciudadanía en el Reino Unido y cómo los museos están apoyando a los centros educativos en el despliegue de esta nueva área curricular. Finaliza con un estudio de un nuevo programa de la Biblioteca Británica que utiliza las colecciones de museos y archivos para inspirar a chicos y chicas en la ciudadanía activa. Niños, niñas y jóvenes estudian campañas históricas, aprenden las habilidades para hacer campañas y llevan a cabo campañas creativas que tienen un impacto en sus propias vidas. Cuando acaban el programa han adquirido la sensación que saben y son capaces de cambiar las cosas. El programa se desarrollará a nivel nacional a partir del mes de abril de 2009.

**Palabras clave:** educación para la ciudadanía; proyectos escolares; Biblioteca Británica.

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The development of citizenship education in Britain over the last 10 years has presented the heritage community both with challenges and opportunities. In the scope of this paper I will outline the broader background to citizenship education and how museums are taking up the challenge, finally focusing on a new British Library citizenship programme, *Campaign! Make an Impact*.

In 1998 Sir Bernard Crick completed a report (Crick 1998) with the recommendation that citizenship should be compulsory in schools. Over the last 10 years there has also been a move in Britain towards a more holistic approach to support our children and young people. Sadly this has been borne out of serious incidents where children have been harmed, such as the abuse and death of Victoria Climbié at the hands of her aunt. This led to a new government framework to create a joined up approach to protect and support children and young people in all aspects of their lives: *Every Child Matters*. The Government's aim is for every child, whatever their background or their circumstances, is to have the support they need to: be healthy, stay safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution and achieve economic well-being (Every Child Matters 2004). The aim for children to «make a positive contribution» immediately gives a strong context within which to develop citizenship education.

The impact of the Crick report has been huge. Citizenship has not only become compulsory on the national curriculum as a subject in its own right, but has become one of the three underpinning aims of secondary education. The curriculum should enable all young people to become:

- successful learners who enjoy learning, make progress and achieve
- confident individuals who are able to live safe, healthy and fulfilling lives
- responsible citizens who make a positive contribution to society.

In 2008 a new secondary curriculum was launched by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority. It includes compulsory citizenship lessons, whilst from September 2009 there will be a new GCSE (taken at aged 16) in citizenship.

Pupils learn about their rights, responsibilities, duties and freedoms and about laws, justice and democracy. They learn to take part in decision-making and different forms of action. They play an active role in the life of their schools, neighbourhoods, communities and wider society as active and global citizens. (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority 2007)

Through this approach citizenship education will include courtesy, social cohesion and change. To help this process children are also required to understand the background or history as to how rights and democracy have developed. This therefore gives the heritage community an opportunity to engage closely with the citizenship curriculum. The QCA are now reviewing the primary curriculum and it is anticipated that this will also be citizenship based.

This emphasis is new for schools and teachers are being provided with the skills to teach this subject. The process began by asking teachers of different but related subjects such as history, geography or religious studies to take on citizenship as extra duties. As the curriculum has developed citizenship is now seen as subject in its own right for which teachers need spe-

cialist skills, as they would with other subjects. Currently over two hundred teachers are being trained in citizenship each year.

So how is the heritage sector responding to this challenging and growing area? *My Learning* is a website for Yorkshire aimed at teachers<sup>2</sup>. A quick search under citizenship will bring up 35 learning resources relating to many aspects of citizenship, looking at workers rights, women's rights and social history. Some museum projects look purely at history often focusing on primary age, whilst others try to recreate debates and court cases. At the National Gallery of Justice in Nottingham, schools can visit Victorian court rooms and are invited to take part in mock trials. Upon booking a mock trial teachers receive background information to the trial, character information and a script. Objects relating to the subject are handed round at the end. The 2007 anniversary of the abolition of the slave trade (1807), gave impetus to the development of a whole range of related exhibitions, activities and resources. This subject threw up new challenges for the museum community, giving the opportunity to work with minority ethnic communities in a new way. It was a sensitive subject and many in these communities felt that their heritage and identity were directly linked to the subject. The subject led museums to look at issues around racism, identity and social cohesion. One of the largest projects is led by National Maritime Museum in partnership with key regional museums. The *Understanding Slavery Initiative* has developed an in depth website that

supports teachers in the teaching of slavery and shows how museums can be used<sup>3</sup>. When you scratch below the surface, many museums in Britain have direct, albeit hidden links relating to slavery such as furniture made from mahogany or objects related to food and sugar. This project was instrumental in writing the abolition of the slave trade in to the new secondary history curriculum, which is a huge achievement. It also provides advice as to how to approach the sensitive issues thrown up by the subject.

So many of these activities are based around looking at citizenship in the past through history. Some organisations move towards active citizenship by getting young people involved in decision making, creating youth panels and forums that feed back ideas. Sometimes the result is an exhibition or piece of art work. How can this be expanded to inspire young people into more active citizenship and encourage them to get involved in their communities today and make a change? Indeed some may ask if the heritage community should be taking this role at all. Can heritage have a real impact in changing attitudes or behaviour or should this just be left to the professionals that work with the youth culture?

In Britain there are many social issues that effect young people. Knife crime is a problem and the press regularly prints a running total of the number of children and young people killed so far through knife crime each year. Last year it was over 270.<sup>4</sup> They also focus on the fact that in some areas young people are scared to leave their immediate neighbourhood for

2. <http://www.mylearning.org/>, viewed March 09.

3. <http://www.understandingslavery.com/>, viewed March 09.

4. <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/uk/crime/article5409609.ece>, viewed March 09.

fear of being knifed in gang crime. These are very real issues that some young people struggle with every day. The police in Britain regularly hold a knife amnesty and ask people to hand in knives in exchange for not prosecuting the owner. This helps to get the knives off the streets. Two museums have a sample of these collections. The Royal Armouries in Leeds displays a gruesome array of knives. They then encourage young people to join the «No to knives» campaign where they aim to get a million signatures against knife crime<sup>5</sup>. The National Galleries of Justice also has amnesty knives on display in a temporary exhibition, *Dr Isaac Massey presents His Grand Emporium Of Curiosities From The Cabinets Of Crime*. A ribbon is placed on the wall for each young person dying from knife crime during the run of the exhibition. Both these museums link to programmes to eliminate knife crime run by local youth services. This is an impressive and brave approach, but these are contemporary collections. Can historic collections be used in a challenging or provocative way?

The British Library has developed a strong role in citizenship education. It is the national library for Britain. It has 150 million items, in most known languages including 52,000 newspaper and periodical titles, 310,000 manuscript volumes and 4 million maps. It includes a sound archive, early photography and ephemera. The Library welcomes 400,000 readers a year to these collections whilst further access is provided through a range of educational workshops for all ages, conferences, events and study days for post-16 students, teacher training seminars, conferences and

events, developmental projects, exhibition resources family activities and public tours. There is also an active exhibition programme. «Taking Liberties» explored the 900 year struggle for freedom and rights in Britain. Rarely have so many important and inspiring documents be brought together in one place. The exhibition covered a range of issues from the making of the British Isles through to the right to vote and human rights. Over 4,000 children came in school visits during the four month run. It provided an excellent resource for teachers and exhibits and inter-actives are still available on the website<sup>6</sup>.

The British Library is also involved in developing active citizenship which is a particular challenge when working with heritage. If you focus on history you can lose the impact of modern day active citizenship. If you focus on modern day citizenship you lose the link with the past. *Campaign! Make an Impact* addresses this point exactly. Although the project is funded by government through a joint funding stream from the Department of Culture, Media and Sport and the Department for Children, Schools and Families, the subject and content of the programme has been developed and directed by the British Library and its partner museums. This is not a government project, but a heritage response to citizenship and the issues that face young people today. The basic principle is that children study an historic campaign and talk about the citizenship issues around it. Then they focus on campaigning skills and how the campaigners got their message across. In the final part they discuss issues in their own areas and lives and what they would like to change. They

5. <http://www.royalarmouries.org/programmes/ntk/>, viewed March 09.

6. <http://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/takingliberties/>, viewed March 09.

choose a campaign and run it, using the skills they have learnt, taking full advantage of modern media opportunities. The British Library devised this new model through a series of pilots, and it will be rolled out to museums, libraries, archives and schools on a national basis from the end of April 2009.

In order to facilitate the process, the British Library makes archive material available specific to key campaigns that feature in the National Curriculum, as well as guidance on how to run a campaign. Schools are encouraged to use this and also visit a local museum to develop an in depth understanding of the period and campaign. The model been piloted and developed using the following campaigns as the impetus; the abolition of the slave trade 1807, suffragettes (votes for women) 1918, public health 1840's. Further resources are being developed around 19<sup>th</sup> century campaigns about the Chartists (votes for all men) and Trade Union and Factory Reform. A series of questions linked to key documents makes it easy to analyze and understand a campaign from any period. The campaign for the abolition of the slave trade can be used as a good example<sup>7</sup>:

### 1. *What was the campaign about?*

Source: page from the *Royal Gazette*, a Jamaican newspaper published in 1781. It shows adverts offering rewards etc for runaway slaves, and so sets the context for the background to the campaign. It can be used to begin talking about citizenship issues around human rights.

### 2. *What was the goal of the campaign?*

Source: an election handbill entitled «A few plain questions to a few plain men» 1820s. It shows the aim of the campaign; to end the slavery.

### 3. *How did campaigners become experts on an issue?*

Source: extract from the autobiography of Olaudah Equiano 1789. Evidence is vital when developing a campaign. You need to understand what you want to campaign about. Equiano was a slave who bought his own freedom. He then wrote a biography about his experiences as a slave and toured the country promoting it. Even today, real life experience is important to campaigns.

### 4. *Was there a resource pool? Who were their allies?*

Source: campaign medaillon. Resources can be money but it can also be people. This medallion was designed by Josiah Wedgwood, a leading industrialist. It effectively became the logo for the campaign. Wedgwood's involvement brought extra credibility to the campaign, in the same way involving a famous person would today.

### 5. *How did they plan for success?*

Source: Minutes from the abolitionist committee 1727. Planning is vital for a campaign. These are the minutes from the first meeting of the Com-

7. The documents mentioned below related to this campaign can be consulted in <http://www.bl.uk/learning/histcitizen/campaignforabolition/abolition.html> (viewed May 2009).

mittee to Abolish the slave trade written in 1787. They show the campaigners got themselves organized and recorded their actions. This source can be used to talk about the importance of working as a team and the qualities of leadership.

6. *Who were their opponents and what stood in their way?*

Source: Letter from a planter in *The Gentleman's Magazine* 1789. It is important to be able to see an issue from both sides, even if you disagree with it. Understanding what your opponents think means that you can develop a counter argument. This source is a letter published in 1789 in the *Gentleman's Magazine*. The writer suggests that being a slave is little different from being a labourer, but in the West Indies, of course, the weather is much better. The problem is that the name «slaves» is wrong and instead they should be called «Assistant Planters».

7. *How did they use the media to get their message across?*

Source: poem against the slave trade 1788  
Historic campaigners were very creative in their approach. As we have already seen Wedgwood designed what was in effect a logo. The abolitionists paid a poet, William Cowper, to write a poem «A Negro's Complaint» against slavery. An anti abolitionist playwright wrote a play supporting slavery.

Educationalists can use these resources by taking a step by step approach or by drawing out themes about the campaign.

The next part of the process is to focus in more depth on the media used to get the message across. Historic examples are used to teach key skills such as how to write a speech, how to use the written word and how to construct a powerful visual image to get a message across. The technology may be different today, but the basic skills are same as they were 200 years ago. Children and young people are very quick at adapting these same ideas into modern day techniques. For instance a poem can become a rap, a logo or badge become a modern campaigning wristband, whilst films and audio can all be used to get the message out there.

When a typical museum runs an educational project it is generally expected that the relating activity has a direct link to the period of the objects used. *Campaign! Make an Impact* moves away from this notion and allows children to choose a campaign subject; it doesn't have to relate to the historical campaign unless the children themselves want it to. There are certain techniques to facilitate this and it is important that children are allowed to do this. Obviously there needs to be some guidance to make the campaigns practical and appropriate, but imposing a subject removes the children's enthusiasm and the campaign does not work so well. In the pilots projects were given a creative practitioner or artist to help facilitate the process and follow the tradition of creative campaigning. This is because the programme isn't about radicalizing children into protests. It's about encouraging children to find their voice, raising self esteem and also learning new skills.

So what results can be expected by such an approach? The pilots showed that teaching young people about historic campaigns, could inspire them and lead them

into active citizenship to try and create change. They were able to do this in a creative way. The pilots provide good examples.

Wilberforce House, part of the local government Hull Museums Service and Harewood House, a large independent museum, partnered with the British Library in a project based around the slave trade. William Wilberforce was the Yorkshire MP whose persistence led to the bill which abolished the slave trade. Harewood House was built by financiers who were involved with the slave trade. Each museum worked with a school and a class of 30 children aged 13-14. Hull is a large industrial city on the east coast of Britain. The museum selected a school from the Bransholme housing estate, one of the largest housing estates in Europe, and an area of high economic deprivation where even 3 years ago there was 3rd generation unemployment. Harewood House worked with a local school from rural North Yorkshire in an affluent area. Children focused on the campaign aspect of the abolition, rather than purely on slavery itself. Each school visited both museums and took part in joint event based around the Parliamentary debate which led to the bill which abolished the slave trade. Much, to the excitement of all the children this event was featured on the local television news. Actors helped to facilitate the debate with all children taking some kind of role and took part in their own secret ballot on the slave trade (figs. 1 & 2). To make the debate more realistic, it took place in the Guildhall, where the local government councilors meet. Children went on to develop their own campaigns and each class split into groups according to what the children wanted to do. Children in Hull campaigned about racism and lack of school

facilities, wanting a skate board park, a skate café and somewhere to go after school (fig. 3). They produced short but powerful campaign films. Children working with Harewood House campaigned about human rights through Amnesty International and also for new school sports facilities. They made a graphic novel which reflected the history of Harewood House and included some pages on how they ran their own campaigns by writing to parents and local councilors, making posters and running a petition (fig. 4).

In another pilot experience, children at Immanuel College in Bradford learned about the 1840's public health campaigns for better living conditions. They explored the museums displays complete with its recreated smells of 19<sup>th</sup> century slum living, and used British Library archive material. They based their campaigns around school food, litter, bullying, child abuse and the need for somewhere to go after school (fig. 5). They produced short radio adverts which were then used to campaign to other students in their school through the School Council; every student in the school is involved. These are the issues of real concern to young people and their work is filled with their personal experience, giving their campaigns a really strong voice. For instance one group campaigned against bullying as one group member had recently been bullied. Another group campaigned against dropping litter because one child's dog had almost died choking on litter. The children enjoy working on these projects.

Girls from the Skinners Company's School for Girls studied the Suffragettes directly with the British Library. They were scared by knife crime and made a campaign film. Instead of just campaigning



Figure 1. The Great Debate. By permission of the British Library Board.



Figure 2. Voting. By permission of the British Library Board.





Figure 3. Campaign Against Racism. By permission of the British Library Board.



Figure 4. Graphic Novel. By permission of the British Library Board.

about the problem they took an intelligent approach, and made a film to inform other young people about how to keep themselves safe. During the film they interviewed Adelé Eastman, whose fiancé was murdered with a knife during a mugging. It is a striking interview and you can see the huge impact her experience has on the children participating in the project (fig. 6).

The children are obviously getting involved but evaluation indicates that the projects do have an impact on children. The project has been evaluated internally on an ongoing basis and also through a one off external DCMS study. Internal evaluation indicates that following participation in a project many children feel they how to change things and that they could change things; they feel empowered. The impact is often more noticeable on children from the economically deprived areas such as in Hull. These particular children were also more likely to visit the museum as a result of the project. This was probably because they didn't normally visit museums with their parents and this was their first positive experience of museums. In the external evaluation the headmaster from Winifred Holtby School in Hull described the impact on the children as «phenomenal» and the teacher stated that attainment levels were up. The teacher went on to re-write her own curriculum, based on the experience of working on the project. Some of the children themselves said they now wanted to do GCSE in history because of the project.

Children also seem to be inspired by history itself. One girl said that as Wilberforce had taken his bill to Parliament so many times, she knew that she could change things if she just kept going. A sep-

arate pilot based around a historic citizenship event, rather than a campaign also showed a direct link. Children studied the Holocaust and developed a campaign about war and inequality. They came up with the slogan «I've got the power to be a hero». This was based on the fact that one shouldn't stand by and allow other people's human rights to be eroded. This is quite a powerful statement and linking historic campaigns with modern campaigns does seem to bring more «depth» to the resulting activity.

Taking away the requirement to run a modern campaign on the same theme as the historic campaign, far from weakening the programme actually seems to strengthen it. Children are using the skills they have learnt to do something practical about an issue they care about. This does beg the question that as educators in heritage do we fully understand the power and impact that the objects we care for can have on people? By focusing art work and related educational activities too closely to the stimulus subject we limit the way our audiences can respond to them; rather than bring their whole life experience, or even future aspirations, we are effectively asking them to be selective in their response. This means that for some the power of the object may be lost as we have removed the preferred routes of engagement.

There is now a growing list of campaign topics selected by children on the programme. Some are very local, such as litter and some wider ranging such as war. What is interesting is that they fit exactly into the Government's aims through the Every Child Matters agenda. Consequently there has been a lot of interest in the project from the education sector including the QCA and examination



Figure 5. Campaign Against Bullying. By permission of the British Library Board.



Figure 6. Film Making. By permission of the British Library Board.



boards. The model is seen as a way of using heritage collections to inspire young people into active citizenship and is one way to show how museums and archives can be made relevant to modern life. A further project by Hull Museums and Endeavour High School shows this. This project focused on slavery collections and children who had come as immigrants to Hull. Children produced short films about their own life experiences and used them to develop an exhibition around tolerance and social cohesion «What's Your Story» (fig. 7). The project was co-winner of the Cultural Places section of the Yorkshire and Humber Local Government Awards, winning against competitors drawn from a range of government departments. Sir Keith Ajegbo OBE, the Government Advisor for Citizenship opened the exhibition and comments:

Campaign! Make an Impact uses museums imaginatively for students to explore great historical campaigns while giving the idea of campaigning a local twist by asking students to campaign against injustices in their local communities.

Further work has taken place to make the model as cheap and accessible to schools as possible. Instead of paying for a creative practitioner to run an arts project as a campaign, teachers can work with other school departments such as English, drama or art. It can be used with children of all ages from around eight or nine upwards. The British Library is now partnering with the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council to make the model available to heritage organisations and schools across England. A *Campaign! Make an Impact* website will be launched



Figure 7. What's Your Story? By permission of the British Library Board.

on 27<sup>th</sup> April 2009. It will provide archive material on key campaigns and resource tools with which to run projects. The programme will begin with funded projects

and training both for the heritage sector and schools. I hope you will take a look at this exciting project and think about how you could use it to make an impact.

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