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Who's listening to whom? The UK House of Lords and evidence-based policy-making on citizenship education.

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Citizenship education in England.

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Who's listening to whom? The UK House of Lords and evidence-based policy-making on citizenship education.

Abstract:

The 2017-2019 House of Lords' select committee on Citizenship and Civic Engagement made a number of bold proposals to reinvigorate citizenship education in the UK. However, the public and academic debate surrounding the Lords' report and its recommendations has been startlingly muted. To tackle this lacuna, this article analyses a range of 'policy documents' alongside the Lords' report to make three distinct contributions. Firstly, this article is the first detailed analysis of the Lords' report and what it says about the state of citizenship education after two decades of varying policy narratives and implementation. Secondly, I take the Lords' report as a 'window' onto policy-making under the Conservative and Coalition governments since 2010. I find that the Government approach to citizenship education and affiliated programmes such as the National Citizen Service is out-of-step with the thoughts, experience, and advice of 'the policy community'. By contrast, the findings presented here highlight the potential for the House of Lords to play an important new role in the policy process. Thirdly, this article is methodologically innovative, insofar as I combine qualitative data collection with computational text analysis that is still rare in policy studies undertaken in both education and political science.

Keywords: Education Policy – Citizenship – Select Committee – Evidence – Parliament

More than twenty years ago, the Advisory Group on Citizenship (henceforth AGC) recommended the introduction of statutory citizenship education in the United Kingdom as a policy response to “... rapidly changing relationships between the individual and government; the decline in traditional forms of civic cohesion; the new political context of Britain in Europe; and rapid social, economic and technological change in a global context” (Citizenship 2000 group, quoted in QCA 1998, p.14). These challenges seem equally pertinent in 2019 as they did in 1998, recast in the spotlight of Brexit (see, for example, Clarke et al., 2017; Hansard, 2018). However, the discourse around citizenship education as a policy priority as well as its implementation in schools has waxed and waned considerably over the last two decades. It is in this context that the 2017-2019 House of Lords’ select committee on ‘Citizenship and Civic Engagement’ made a number of bold policy recommendations to reinvigorate *learning for democracy* as a prerequisite to ‘the civic journey’ (Parliament. House of Lords, 2018, p.4).

From a substantive perspective, the Lords’ report is compelling for its direct confrontation of systemic barriers to social mobility and political participation in general, as well as its specific criticism of the failures of successive governments to implement a justice-oriented and active model of citizenship education as a prerequisite to these broader goals. The Lords’ committee recommended, for example, that the Conservative Government stops using culturally loaded terms like ‘Fundamental British Values’; that it creates a statutory entitlement to citizenship education from primary to the end of secondary education that is inspected by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted); that targets are set and effectively resourced to ensure adequate numbers of trained citizenship teachers; and that the National Citizen Service is integrated with citizenship education provision as a necessary feature of its new statutory entitlement (Parliament. House of Lords, 2018, pp.27-50). These recommendations are instructive insofar as they directly support arguments made in a range of *academic* outputs on the limitations of a neoliberal character-based approach to citizenship education between 2010-present (Kisby, 2017; Weinberg and Flinders, 2019) that has in any case been perennially under-developed and under-resourced as a school subject (Keating et al., 2010; Keating and Kerr, 2014).

From a policy perspective, there is considerable discord between the Lords’ report – built from over 250 written submissions of evidence and 58 oral witnesses - and current education policy on citizenship education. This arguably highlights a deeper disconnect between a relatively closed polycentric governance network and a wider policy community of stakeholders and recipients (Exley and Ball, 2011). In this article I am concerned with both the verity of this claim and its implications for citizenship education more broadly, as well as the role of the House of Lords as an unelected yet potentially more responsive legislative body with an increased

responsibility to drive evidence-based policy-making. Put another way, the core arguments advanced and tested in this article condense as follows:

- Citizenship education has not fulfilled its potential as a policy initiative and remains under-resourced and under-developed (A1);
- This is due to practical failures in policy implementation under New Labour but more significant changes in the governance of citizenship education as a concept since 2010 (A2); and
- These failures are made manifest by a Lords' select committee investigation that has engaged extensively in evidence gathering from the policy community in a way that recent Coalition and Conservative governments have not (A3).

In exploring these perspectives, my contribution is three-fold. Firstly, this article is the first detailed analysis of the Lords' report and what it says about the state of citizenship education after two decades of varying policy narratives and implementation. Secondly, I take the Lords' report as a 'window' (Wright and Shore, 2011) onto policy-making under the Conservative and Coalition governments since 2010. I find that the Government's character-driven approach to citizenship education and affiliated programmes such as the National Citizen Service is worryingly out-of-step with the thoughts, experience, and advice of 'the policy community' (Rhodes and Marsh, 1992). By contrast, my findings highlight the potential for the House of Lords to play an important role in the policy process, by engaging with and synthesising expert evidence to make informed policy recommendations. Thirdly, this article is methodologically innovative, insofar as I combine qualitative data collection with computational text analysis that is still rare in policy studies undertaken in both education and political science. In particular I analyse policy documents, select committee reports and evidence sessions, as well as focus groups, to triangulate my approach to the specific topic of citizenship education in a way that is more sociological (i.e. engaging with all those who make 'meaning' out of policy) than authoritarian (i.e. the study of linear and hierarchical policy processes).

I. Citizenship Education 1998-Present

The AGC was convened in 1997 by then Secretary of State for Education, David Blunkett. For Blunkett and the AGC it was citizenship education, introduced as a compulsory element of the national curriculum in 2002, that would change 'the political culture of this country both nationally and locally, for people to think of themselves as active citizens, willing, able and equipped to have an influence in public life and with the critical capacities to weigh evidence before speaking and acting' (QCA, 1998). In particular, the model of citizenship education introduced to

schools in England would focus on three pillars of political literacy, community involvement, and social and moral responsibility (for a full discussion, see Weinberg and Flinders, 2019).

The extent to which citizenship education in England fulfilled this noble aim was initially monitored by the Citizenship Education Longitudinal Study (henceforth CELS), which was commissioned by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) to investigate the impact of compulsory citizenship education on school students between 2001 and 2010. On the one hand, the data gathered by CELS showed that levels of exposure to citizenship education across secondary school significantly predict participants' civic engagement in terms of efficacy, current and anticipated participation, and political knowledge (Keating et al., 2010; Keating and Janmaat, 2016; Whiteley, 2014). Hoskins et al. (2017) also utilise CELS data to highlight a compensatory effect in which citizenship education may mitigate socio-economic inequalities in political participation (for an international comparison, see Castillo et al., 2015). On the other hand, only 59.1% of CELS participants in 2011 (the first cohort to go through school with citizenship education) reported voting in 2010 (Keating and Kerr, 2013, p.3) and the proportion involved in their community declined from 33% in 2009 (when the students were in their final year of school) to just 15% in 2011. Only ~10% of participants from this otherwise 'plugged-in' generation reported talking about politics or sharing information about political issues on social media in 2011 (Ibid., p.6).

The end of the CELS, England's withdrawal from the International Civic and Citizenship Study (ICCS), and the end of subject specific Ofsted reports on curriculum citizenship education, have largely decimated the evidence base to build on these findings. However, the data collected by CELS would indicate that the radical vision put forward by the AGC in 1998 was only partly achieved. The question, then, is why? Weinberg and Flinders (2018, 2019) argue that the barriers and blockages to effective citizenship education in the UK can be distilled to an 'implementation gap' under New Labour and a 'vision shift' under the later Coalition and Conservative governments. Whilst the vision shift will be returned to in the next section, the implementation gap – elsewhere discussed in terms of policy design failures (e.g. Keating and Kerr, 2013) – refers here to the excessively 'light touch' approach to the citizenship curriculum taken by the Labour Government in 2001, and the insufficient resourcing of teacher training towards the end of the 2000s and subsequently. As early as 2006, Ofsted (2006, para. 69) reported that 'only a few schools.... have created a coherent programme which pupils can recognise as an entity'.

The latest report from the Eurydice network (2017) on the state of citizenship education at school – based on data from 42 education systems – also highlights the relative enervation of

policy progress in the UK against innovations or action elsewhere in Europe.¹ Whilst curriculum reforms in the UK have diminished formal programmes of study in England, authorities in Belgium, Greece and Finland have all expanded how long citizenship education is taught as a separate compulsory subject across a child's education. Whilst governments in the UK since 2010 have moved towards 'knowledge-rich programmes of study' in English secondary education (see Gove, 2013), others have provided more time and space for student participation (particularly France and Finland) or provided more specific guidance and support material on citizenship education in schools (particularly Italy, Cyprus and Luxembourg). And whilst UK governments have allowed initial teacher training in citizenship education to dwindle (there were fewer than 50 trainee citizenship teachers at the time of the House of Lords' committee investigation)², the French Community of Belgium, Denmark, Ireland and Luxembourg have all introduced new teacher specialisms in citizenship education. England remains one of only 9 education systems assessed by the Eurydice network where top-level authorities issue no guidance documents on citizenship education (and effective pedagogies thereof) to teachers (Eurydice, 2017, p.81).

The purpose of this section has been to briefly trace the stated aims and impact of citizenship education in England over the past two decades. In doing so, I argue that the policy has not fulfilled its potential (A1), and this has produced fertile ground for the House of Lords' select committee (2018) to conclude:

The Government has allowed citizenship education in England to degrade to a parlous state. The decline of the subject must be addressed in its totality as a matter of urgency. (Parliament, House of Lords, 2018, para. 162)

II.a Citizenship Education as a Contested Policy

If citizenship education in England has been stymied by practical considerations regarding policy implementation, then it has also been impacted by a change in policy discourse since 2010. The key argument of this section is that the potential of citizenship education in England (outlined above) has been attenuated by the Liberal Democrat-Conservative Coalition Government of 2010-2015 and the subsequent majority Conservative governments, who have pushed the policy

¹ Please note that this discussion revolves around the policy implementation of citizenship education in England; elsewhere in the UK citizenship education varies according to decisions taken by devolved administrations (Andrews and Mycock, 2007).

² This figure was cited by Liz Moore, CEO of the Association for Citizenship Teaching, in a recent evidence session for the 2017/18 House of Lords Select Committee on Citizenship and Civic Engagement.

A full transcript can be obtained here:

<http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/citizenship-and-civic-engagement-committee/citizenship-and-civic-engagement/oral/72120.html>

narrative to the ideological right (A2). Weinberg and Flinders (2019, p.186; see also Kisby, 2017) argue that 'this 'vision shift', characterised by the promotion of a more individualised character education at the expense of collective active citizenship, is particularly significant for understanding why [citizenship education] in England is not fulfilling its potential.' The notion of character draws down theoretically from Aristotelian notions of human flourishing and moral virtues (Arthur et al., 2015), but it has also been operationalised in UK education policy generally (and attitudes to citizenship education in England more specifically) as a formula for inculcating citizens' motivation and productivity (cf. Bates, 2019).

It is in the rise and use of the term 'character' that one can chart the distinctiveness of a change in policy post-2010 that has, arguably, undermined the purpose and potential of citizenship education in England. It is worth stressing two important caveats here. Firstly, citizenship education was already burdened by endemic conceptual ambiguity (Tonge et al., 2012). Whilst leading Labour figures, Blunkett and Blair in particular, saw citizenship education as a communitarian response to 'an absence of social capital' (Blunkett, 2001, pp.22-6), the AGC report itself (QCA, 1998, p.8) put forward a civic republican model of citizenship education that focused on redressing 'inexcusably damaging and bad' levels of political literacy and participation. This created a curious philosophical hybrid (see also Kisby, 2009), accompanied by weak practical direction in terms of curriculum particulars, that would later be stretched too thinly by Labour as one of a number of policy antidotes to issues such as community cohesion, terrorism, and far-right extremism (Blunkett, 2005). At the same time, the Conservative Party was never fully in support of statutory citizenship education when it was proposed in the late 1990s. Lord Kenneth Baker's participation with the AGC was not formally endorsed by the Conservatives, who believed it was 'irrelevant at best, harmful at worst' (shadow education Secretary Damian Green, cited in Ashley, 2002, p.15). Whilst the purpose of this section is to stress the discontinuity in citizenship education policy pre- and post-2010, it is also worth acknowledging the context in which such discontinuity (in any form) was possible or even probable.

The character-driven approach to citizenship [education] taken by recent Coalition and Conservative governments is specifically antithetical to a civic republican, justice-oriented vision (promoted by the AGC's chair, Bernard Crick; Crick, 2000, p.82) in which political literacy and participation encourage citizens' identification of *self-in-relation* to the community and wider regional or national societies. This 'vision shift' in policy rhetoric effectively writes out the public (and by implication the political) realm in favour of the private and individualistic:

A 21st century education should prepare children for adult life by instilling the character traits and fundamental British values that will help them succeed: being resilient and knowing how to persevere, how to bounce back if faced with failure, and how to collaborate with others at work and in their private lives. These traits not only open doors to employment and social opportunities but underpin academic success, happiness and wellbeing. (DfE, 2016, pp. 94–95)

This largely anachronistic Victorian notion of character not only draws down on international trends in educational and positive psychology (e.g. Seligman, 2002; for a related discussion, see Bates, 2019), but also uses education in schools as an arena to depoliticise future market and labour volatility by focusing on instrumental traits such as resilience and responsibility at the individual level (see also Weinberg and Flinders, 2019). In many ways, this approach echoes similar conservative approaches to citizenship education seen in far east Asia, where a knowledge-heavy curriculum promotes patriotism and ‘personally responsible’ liberal citizenship (Lai and Byram, 2012), and in the United States where citizenship education is delivered with a service learning model (Ransom, 2009).

This normative reconceptualisation of what citizenship should mean in the UK, and therefore what citizenship education in England should look like and promote, has spurred new policy initiatives that take the focus away from curriculum delivery. The most influential of these is the National Citizen Service (NCS), which received a Royal Charter in April 2017. The NCS works with regional private sector organisations to deliver summer programmes for 15-17 year olds and is, to all extent and purposes, the flagship scheme of the ‘Big Society’ agenda advanced by Prime Minister David Cameron (2010). As such, the NCS received £297 million pounds of investment and a further £1.26 billion has been committed to NCS delivery (2016-21). However, there are key questions about how accessible the NCS is to young people from across society, the extent to which it prepares young people for all the key aspects of citizenship and not just apolitical volunteering or social action, and whether it fits well with existing charitable organisations with a similar purpose (Mills and Waite, 2017).

II.b Evidence-Based Policy-Making 2010-Present

It is one thing to identify the limitations of citizenship education as an education policy in England and the normative ‘barriers’ or ‘blockages’ that directly precipitate those limitations, it is another – and the purpose of the current section – to understand how those limitations might reflect particular approaches to policy-making in education per se. In this regard, I argue that the logic of consultation between policy communities and UK governments, a principle that I take

here as crucial to evidence-based policy-making more broadly, has broken down in the case of citizenship education (A3).

In referring to policy communities I go back specifically to Richardson and Jordan's (1979, pp. 73-74) seminal challenge to the 'Westminster model' of British politics, in which they argued that policy-making relies on a 'community of departments and groups, and the practices of co-option and consensual style'. This definition has informed much later work on policy networks (e.g. Marsh and Rhodes, 1992) and avoids the over-intellectualisation of the term as a metaphor for norms of behaviour or classificatory frameworks of analysis (e.g. Dowding, 2001). This broad conception of the 'policy community' has also been central to the polycentric governance model that arose under New Labour (Ball, 2009). In this model, the responsibility for education shifts away from the state and the boundaries between public and private blur in complex heterarchies of participatory stakeholders (including those who receive, implement, or fund policy). In terms of educational delivery, these complex heterarchies become, according to Exley and Ball (2011), central to the process of policy-making itself: '[n]etworks of knowledge and ideas connect diverse and 'enterprising' state, private- and voluntary-sector actors in the creation of educational policy, with complex, fluid and co-dependent relationships between actors' (Ibid., p.109). By bringing the policy community into the policy-making process, this networked approach to governance *should* encourage better evidence-based policy decisions.

Begley et al. (2019) argue, however, that the role of evidence in the legislative process can be influenced, amongst other things, by *process* factors such as when and where evidence is gathered and *political* factors that encompass the extent of politicking between political parties in the media and in parliament around a certain issue. In the case of citizenship education, reforms to the subject (as part of a broader package of education policies like the Prevent agenda and 'Fundamental British Values'), have arguably been affected by a number of these political factors. As a symbolic and historically Labour-owned policy, it is possible that citizenship education could never easily fit within the everyday principles and frameworks of consensus-driven policy consultation under a new Conservative government. Contrary to the vast majority of government business, the narrow and technical aspects of citizenship education - such as pedagogy, curriculum planning and assessment - are underwritten by a vision for society, political participation, and the purpose of state/citizen relations that is manifestly contested by ideologies on the Left and Right. These arguments are given shape by a character agenda that is grounded in small-'c' conservative and neo-liberal principles of personal responsibility, a minimal state, and traditionalism in terms of subject content and teaching methods (Kisby, 2017; Weinberg and Flinders, 2019).

In developing these arguments, I acknowledge that what constitutes evidence, and even evidence use, is highly contested (cf. Nutley et al., 2007). I openly take the stance here that public policy should be based on careful consideration of, and consultation with, a plurality of actors and opinions in the policy community. It is this process, as one understanding of effective evidence-based policy-making, that I believe has failed in the case of citizenship education and possibly Conservative/Coalition policy-making more widely. It is no coincidence, for instance, that up to 60% of all ministerial meetings across civil service departments between 2010 and 2015 were with particular business and media organisations (Dommett et al., 2017). Arm's length centre-right organisations such as ResPublica and Policy Exchange are undertaking extensive policy activity and are being given greater interconnectedness by online gateways such as Conservative Home, Conservative Intelligence, and the Conservative Education Society (see also Exley and Ball., 2011, p.108). This has arguably created an echo chamber of policy entrepreneurs who are influencing government policy in both tone and content, and undermining a logic of consultation with the core policy community (see also Dicken et al., 2001).

The House of Lords' select committee on 'Citizenship and Civic Engagement' is, I believe, a window through which to study the legitimacy of these academic arguments (A1-A3). On one hand, the Lords itself is a far more professional place than it once was (for a review, see Russell, 2013). A lack of electoral mandates and a greater degree of freedom from party whips gives Peers more liberty than their Commons' counter-parts to explore policy in detail, to contemplate reasoned arguments, and to resist 'populist' urges to rapid responses (Norton, 1993). On the other hand, the Lords' report reflects over 12 months of deep engagement with written and oral evidence from hundreds of civil society organisations and actors in the citizenship education policy community. Should the Lords' report more closely reflect the opinions and experiences of policy stakeholders or recipients than the Government, and should those same opinions and experiences be at direct odds with Government policy, then this may give credence to the academic literature reviewed so far and in turn raises important questions about the role of the Lords itself in the policy-making process.

III. Methods

(a) Data collection and participants

The focus of this article is on the 2018 report of the House of Lords' select committee on citizenship and civic engagement, and in particular its policy recommendations for citizenship education in England. It offers the first in-depth analysis of what the report says about this policy field and how it matches up to the current Government agenda, as well as interrogating the extent

of evidence-based policy-making in the UK legislature. Findings are based on a mixed-methods analysis of policy documentation, focus group data, and oral and written evidence given to the House of Lords' select committee in 2017.

The Lords' report is used here as the departure point for subsequent analyses, and in particular chapters three and four that focus at length on citizenship education and the National Citizen Service (NCS). The second group of data comprises the evidence given by the Government to the Lords' committee. This includes the written submissions from the Department for Education as well as the oral hearing conducted with Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth (Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the Department for Communities and Local Government), Tracey Crouch MP (Minister for Sport and Civil Society), Nick Gibb MP (Minister of State for School Standards and Minister for Equalities); and Brandon Lewis MP (Minister of State for Immigration). In addition, I use the National Curriculum programmes of study for citizenship at key stages 3 and 4 (published 2013) and the new subject content published for GCSE citizenship studies in 2015. Taken together, these documents provide a benchmark for the Government's approach to the policy of citizenship education.

The third set of data in the corpus of evidence relates specifically to those members of the policy community that I term 'policy stakeholders'. Put another way, these are the meso-level agents who are camped permanently around the issue of citizenship education and therefore comprise what Yanow (2000) calls the policy's 'interpretative community'. In total, I collate 35 pieces of oral and written evidence given to the House of Lords' committee by these civil society actors or organisations in the citizenship education policy community. These 35 submissions were extracted from an overall body of more than 250 pieces of evidence. Submissions were *included* in my corpus where they were submitted by stakeholder organisations and individuals that were deemed to have clear expertise in/experience of working in citizenship education or the NCS. Submissions were *excluded* where actors did not have a known affiliation or clear expertise in citizenship education or the NCS (i.e. members of the public who submitted poorly evidenced personal views), or where known stakeholders did not actually submit evidence that was directly related to these topics. Academic evidence was also *excluded* unless it was part of an advocacy group or part of an invited oral evidence session (i.e. the political literacy oversight group of the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Democratic Participation and the Young People's Politics group of the Political Studies Association). The remaining corpus of submissions was then reviewed and stripped of any superfluous evidence that related to non-citizenship education/NCS topics. The full list of these stakeholders can be found in Appendix A.

The final set of data was gathered in focus groups with policy recipients. These actors are different to the stakeholders listed in Appendix A insofar as they are not traditionally seen as members of the policy community by rationalist and authoritarian policy studies that, broadly, scrutinise policies as objective entities emanating from government and governance networks (see Colebatch, 2002; Wright and Shore, 2011). By contrast, I am equally interested in those ‘street level bureaucrats’ (Lipsky, 1980) who ‘make’ policy on the frontline in their interactions with one another. This includes local government officers, teachers, employees of organisations like the NCS, and ultimately those students or young people who receive and ‘make sense’ of the policy of citizenship education. To include these voices in the analysis, I held a series of focus groups in the UK Parliament on the 18th July 2018 – just four months after the publication of the Lords’ report. In total, 50 people attended and participated in these focus groups. The sample population was split evenly by gender (51% were female) but skewed in terms of age (55% were aged 16-34). 52% of participants had taught citizenship education in a school setting and a further 9% had taught it outside of schools. In turn, 37% of participants had themselves been on the receiving end of citizenship education.³ Prior to the event, all participants received a detailed information sheet and signed consent forms to grant permission for their comments to be reproduced anonymously in research outputs.⁴

These policy recipients were recruited through civil society actors and organisations affiliated with the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Democratic Participation (APPGDP), who disseminated an invitation to students, teachers, schools, higher and further education employees, and members of organisations such as the NCS. Participation was, therefore, entirely voluntary. Participants were split into five focus groups of 10, and each focus group spent one hour discussing topics related to citizenship education that arose in the Lords’ report. These focus groups were professionally facilitated by members of the APPGDP’s political literacy oversight group, who were prepared according to a topic guide that covered: (a) the quantity and quality of citizenship education provision in schools; (b) initial teacher training and continued professional development opportunities in citizenship education; and (c) the NCS (its purpose, delivery, and connection to formal citizenship education). All focus groups were recorded and later transcribed.

(b) Data analysis

³ Not all focus group participants agreed to complete the pre-event survey, and therefore these descriptive statistics may over- or under-represent the reported characteristics of the sample population.

⁴ Ethics approval (Ref. 007549) for this study was granted by the Department of Politics at the University of Sheffield.

I analyse these qualitative data using quantitative methods from the field of computational text analysis. This is an exciting methodology with applications across the social sciences, but it remains largely untapped as a resource because of the software-specific expertise required. The importance of computational text analysis has already been demonstrated in communication research (Boumans and Trilling, 2016; Grimmer and Stewart, 2013), but I believe that it also has enormous potential for policy studies that rely on interview data or policy documentation. By contrast to researcher-led coding and content analysis by hand or in software such as NVivo, computational analyses in syntax-based software such as R allow researchers to interrogate larger volumes of qualitative data in greater depth and to present interesting comparative trends across documents. In this article, I analyse the corpus of evidence using the *quanteda* package in R (for an introduction to this software, see Welbers et al., 2017).

After reading the corpus of evidence into R, I pre-processed the data by tokenising the texts (splitting them into single words as units of analysis); normalising each document to modify uppercase letters and strip symbols that might impact the computer's ability to recognise words with the same spellings and meanings; and removed a bespoke list of 'stopwords' (common words in the English language that are not analytically informative). Given the varying lengths of documents in the corpus, I applied weights so that tokens were assessed for their relative frequency in a document rather than directly using their occurrence frequency. I then conducted three separate analyses. Firstly, I analysed the correlations between tokens in all of the texts in the corpus to assess their similarities. To explore these similarities and differences in more detail, I then created a series of keyness plots. This inductive analysis measures the χ^2 association of individual words that appear with greater frequency in one of two individual texts. Finally, I conducted a deductive, code-based analysis of the corpus. I created a dictionary object for two central thematic terms ('active citizenship' and 'character') that have dominated discussions of citizenship education policy over the past 20 years (see section II.a). This dictionary was used to define a priori the specific codes that the computer looked for in each document. Taken together, these three analyses (discussed in more depth in the following section) were used to assess (a) the responsiveness of the Lords' report to the policy community; (b) the congruence between the official policy agenda on citizenship education and the opinions of the policy community; and (c) the specific rhetoric informing these similarities and/or differences.

IV. Analysis

(a) Document correlations

In the first analysis, I compute correlational similarities between all of the evidence gathered in the corpus. As shown in Table 1, this includes curriculum documents and government guidance to schools, the Lords' report, focus group transcripts, and evidence submissions to the Lords' committee by policy stakeholders. In each case, the evidence has been divided to compare documents that focus on formal citizenship education (within schools) and informal citizenship education in the National Citizen Service (NCS). Documents are weighted so that correlations are based on the proportional frequency of tokens (individual words) in each text.

The results of these tests confirm a number of the assumptions advanced in earlier sections of this article. Chapter 3 of the Lords' report on citizenship education correlates, for example, more strongly with the evidence presented by the policy community (both stakeholders and recipients) than the Government (both committee evidence and curriculum documentation). In turn the content of Government documents is weakly correlated with the opinions and experiences of the policy community as expressed in focus groups and submissions of evidence to the Lords' committee. The correlations between the Lords' report and the evidence given by policy stakeholders ($r = .889$) and policy recipients ($r = .778$) are particularly high. This suggests that the Lords' report may not only accurately reflect the expert opinions of private, public, and third sector organisations camped in this policy space, but that it also matches up to the lived experiences of those delivering policy on the frontline. When it comes to documents that focus on the NCS, these trends hold but the differences are considerably more muted and thus indicate greater similarities across the entire corpus. These correlations are indicative at best of synergies between the policy attitudes of these different actors. To explore what these similarities and differences mean in reality, I now turn to specific comparisons between actors' lexicon about citizenship education.

>>INSERT TABLE 1 HERE<<

(b) Keyness plots

One of the most useful techniques in computational text analysis is to compare the term frequencies of two corpora or between two subsets of the same corpus. Here I extract four 'pairs' of documents from the corpus of evidence to compare in more detail using keyness plots. Keyness plots measure the chi-square (χ^2) associations of individual tokens in two or more texts, thus determining differences between the expected frequencies and the observed frequencies of individual tokens in these texts. In Figure 1 I compare the guidance on citizenship studies issued

to schools in England by the Department for Education (DfE) in 2015 and focus groups conducted with policy recipients. There are a number of telling discrepancies in lexicon between the two. On one hand, the DfE guidance document uses more institutional terms such as ‘government’ and the ‘law’, focuses significantly more on ‘individuals’ and their ‘role[s]’ and ‘responsibilities’ than the focus group data, and invokes the ‘UK’ as a term of reference much more than policy recipients when talking of citizenship education.

>>INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE<<

On the other hand, policy recipients in the focus groups use terms such as ‘schools’ and ‘teachers’, ‘lesson[s]’ and ‘specialist[s]’ more than the DfE guidance document. In many ways this is not surprising, given that most participants were students, teachers, or affiliated to schools. However, these differences are instructive insofar as they highlight the apparent sensitivity of policy recipients to their own experiences and, in particular, the need to invest time and resource in curriculum-based citizenship education. As one young person argued:

[G]enerally at my school, I've left now, citizenship was kind of... It wasn't really a subject. Normally it would be taken by PE teachers, cover teachers or teachers who just had a free lesson. Basically it was a do what you want for an hour lesson. Talk to your mates. Get nothing done. So I think that having enough trained teachers...is an idea that the government should commit to.

Policy recipients also talked more about the ‘primary’ sector, where citizenship education does not hold statutory status as a requirement of the national curriculum. This topic was raised in a number of focus groups where participants were keen to stress that (a) young people are citizens from birth, not the age of 18, and that (b) young people are faced with sensitive political issues much earlier in their lives than secondary school. This was encapsulated by one ITT provider:

I train primary school teachers and that's one of the things I get them to do, is to list the things the kids are scared about. It's not maths, English, science. It's Trump, Brexit, knife crime, body image, all those kind of things...[that]...primary schools are not necessarily given the opportunity to deal with.

Equally informative differences can be seen in Figure 2, where I compare chapter 3 of the House of Lords’ report with oral and written evidence given to the committee by the Government

about citizenship education. The Government again focuses more on institutions such as ‘courts’ as well as students’ ‘understanding’ and ‘knowledge’, whilst the Lords’ report talks more about the resourcing and delivery of citizenship education in schools. As Nick Gibb MP told the committee in an oral evidence session:

My view is that the best way to equip young people to participate and to become active citizens...is, first, to make sure they know how the system works, and that is why I changed the content of the curriculum so that it is more knowledge based.

>>INSERT FIGURE 2 HERE<<

This keyness plot arguably teases out fundamental differences between a Government that is concentrated on the substance of a more nationalistic, individualised and ‘British’ form of citizenship education, and a Lords’ report that draws explicitly on ‘evidence’ to highlight policy failings. The jingoism of the Government’s evidence to the committee is worryingly explicit:

[T]he promotion of fundamental British values has turbocharged the importance of citizenship in the curriculum, because that is a very effective way of teaching some of those elements of fundamental British values. (Nick Gibb MP, Minister of State for School Standards and Minister for Equalities)

Figure 3 compares relative word frequencies for the national curriculum on citizenship education and stakeholder evidence submitted to the House of Lords’ select committee. As per Figure 2, it highlights the nationalistic tone of Government policy documentation in contrast to that of a more school-centred, delivery-focused policy community. However, Figure 2 also reveals interesting differences in the style of citizenship education promoted by the current national curriculum and policy stakeholders. The Conservative curriculum of 2013 is not only overtly econocentric and instrumental but focuses on the responsible individual-as-citizen at the heart of the character agenda (see section II.a):

Pupils should be taught about the precious liberties enjoyed by the citizens of the United Kingdom...[and]... income and expenditure, credit and debt, insurance, savings and pensions, financial products and services, and how public money is raised and spent. (DfE, 2013, pp. 2-3)

>>INSERT FIGURE 3 HERE<<

Policy stakeholders do, in contrast, use terms such as ‘engagement’, ‘civic’ and ‘question[s]’ more than the national curriculum document, placing an emphasis on skills and attitudes as opposed to knowledge. Written evidence to the Lords’ committee from the Association for Citizenship Teaching made this disagreement abundantly clear and looked backwards to the value of content about political literacy and participation originally promoted in the AGC ‘Crick’ report:

The changes to the National Curriculum led to an unfortunate narrowing of the subject curriculum for Citizenship. Key aspects of subject content were removed leaving the emphasis on national institutions. This was at the expense of learning about: local democracy; public services and NGOs; freedom of speech; the role of the media in holding those in power to account and shaping and informing public opinion; human rights and equalities; diversity and change in society, including the role of migration; and practical experiences of active citizenship and democratic participation.

These keyness plots have only compared evidence on formal citizenship education thus far. In Figure 4 I compare relative word frequencies for chapter 4 of the House of Lords’ report and the Government’s evidence pertaining to the NCS. This plot shows, in particular, that the Lords’ report talked about the NCS in terms of ‘citizen[s]’, the ‘civic’, and ‘citizenship’ much more than the Government. This is indicative of a stark divergence between the attitudes of these two legislative bodies as to the purpose of the NCS. Whilst the Government maintained that the NCS ‘was not set up as a citizenship scheme, so absolutely, categorically, that was not its purpose’ (evidence from Tracy Crouch MP), the Lords (2018, para. 204) argued that ‘[o]ne way in which the NCS can become more effective is by working closely with schools, and citizenship education appears to be an ideal way for the NCS to do so.’ If the Government does ‘want to make sure that the NCS is involved in all the aspects of democratic engagement’ (evidence from Tracy Crouch MP), then it appears that the specific vision of how the NCS should do so is not currently in alignment with the Lords’ report or evidence from the policy community.

>>INSERT FIGURE 4 HERE<<

(c) Document coding – ‘active citizenship’ versus ‘character’

The final analysis presented here is deductive in nature and complements the previous two analyses by taking a theoretically-driven approach to exploring the differences between texts in the corpus. The concepts of ‘active citizenship’ and ‘character’ have been at the centre of academic studies into both the practice and politics of citizenship education in the last 20 years (for a review, see Kisby, 2017). The former is steeped in civic republican notions of experiential, justice-oriented political participation and was replete in the original AGC report of 1998. The latter inculcates a series of values in the learner that promote personal responsibility, deference to authority, and community service. It has been far more prominent in the policy rhetoric of government ministers since 2010, especially the former Secretary of State for Education Nicky Morgan (Morgan, 2017). Using the Council of Europe’s (2016) citizenship competences and the Jubilee Centre’s (2017) framework for character education, I constructed a coding scheme for these concepts and ran it through the corpus of policy documents.⁵

The results of this coding exercise are reported in Table 2. I would not expect particularly high proportional frequencies given that the computer is searching for individual tokens (Welbers et al., 2017). Some of these results are, therefore, quite impressive and informative. They indicate, for example, that the citizenship curriculum actually has a higher proportion of active citizenship terms in it than other ‘policy documents’ in the corpus, but also a higher proportion of character terms. The preferential attention given to active citizenship as opposed to character in chapter 3 of the Lords’ report, as well as the evidence from stakeholders and the focus groups with policy recipients, is also particularly noticeable.

In spite of the relative differences in the use of these concepts *within* texts, active citizenship terms do predominate *across* all documents related specifically to formal citizenship education. This would imply that active citizenship remains the most apposite conception of school-based citizenship education for each group of actors included in the analysis. However, character terms represent a higher proportion of all tokens in documents related specifically to the NCS for each group of actors included in the analysis, and even appear more frequently in the focus group

⁵ Active citizenship = "community", "engage", "engagement", "participate", "participation", "democracy", "inclusive", "democratic", "active", "cooperate", "cooperation", "respect", "civic", "active", "politics", "openminded", "openness", "dignity", "rights", "responsibilities", "responsibility", "government", "democracy", "justice", "fairness", "equality", "tolerance", "diversity", "culture", "religion", "global", "environment", "sustainability", "interpretation", "ethic", "ethical", "interaction", "cooperation", "questioning", "collective", "power", "structure"

Character = "resilient", "resilience", "work", "character", "development", "develop", "improve", "improvement", "adult", "adulthood", "job", "service", "autonomy", "critical", "curiosity", "judgement", "reasoning", "reflection", "resourcefulness", "confidence", "determination", "motivation", "perseverance", "resilience", "teamwork", "neighbourliness", "service", "volunteering", "compassion", "courage", "gratitude", "honesty", "humility", "integrity", "justice", "respect"

discussions and chapter 4 of the Lords' report than active citizenship terms. This potentially says something important about how the NCS is seen in the policy community, and specifically the power of associated branding that has presented the NCS as a service-oriented programme centred on social action and individual character traits rather than a more politically-oriented citizenship scheme.

V. Discussion

In this article, I set out to explore the House of Lord's 2018 report on citizenship and civic engagement, and in particular to ascertain the extent to which that report reflected a) top-down changes to citizenship education as a vehicle for character education by post-2010 governments, and b) a break-down between the views of the policy community and the current Conservative Government. I find that:

- (a) The Lords' report is more representative of the opinions of the policy community than the Government, or indeed existing curriculum guidance;
- (b) The policy community understands citizenship education as an active, politically-oriented school-based endeavour that requires significant investment (especially in teacher training), whereas the Government is more interested in citizenship education as an opportunity to nurture character and the responsibilities of the individual-as-(British)citizen; and
- (c) The Government's flagship citizenship scheme, the NCS, is understood as a character education scheme rather than a site for active citizenship by all actors in the policy community.

This article does, in the first instance, confirm many of the arguments underpinning claims of a 'vision shift' in the way citizenship education has been constructed as policy post-2010 (A2). Firstly, education policy on citizenship in general (and citizenship education in particular) has moved a long way from the AGC model of civic and political participation at the meso- and macro-levels (locally, nationally, internationally), and towards a more instrumental concept of 'character' that focuses on the responsibilities of the student as a 'good' citizen. In many ways, this approach to citizenship education is indicative of a neoliberal governance model that has, according to Brooks (2019, p.35), stimulated major changes to education policy in developed capitalist economies since the 1970s (see also Mitchell, 2006). I argue that the policy of citizenship education in England, analysed here as one case study in this field of research, reflects both (a) the extension of the market and its associated forms of governance across all areas of social and political life (see also Peck and Tickell, 2002); and (b) important and ongoing contestation between political parties

in government as to *inter alia* what it means to be an autonomous individual in this country, the reach of the state in people's lives, or even ideals regarding the shape and conduct of society.

The documents analysed in section IV also suggest that citizenship education has, in particular, become less of a vehicle for political literacy and critical debate in schools, and more of a policy tool to address concerns about national unity and identity. This redirection of the policy narrative arguably started with Labour's *Diversity and Curriculum Review* (Ajegbo et al., 2007) after the 2005 terrorist attack on the London underground. However, the Coalition and Conservative governments have given this same approach to 'repairing' Britain's social fabric a more nationalistic and individualised tone. This is apparent not only in the new curriculum for citizenship education, but also the evidence given to the House of Lords' committee by Government officials. The introduction of 'Fundamental British Values' as a feature of all schooling and not just citizenship education is particularly instructive here (see also Wolton, 2017). As an extension of the character agenda, 'Fundamental British Values' – as a pre-requisite to life in modern Britain (DfE, 2016; see also evidence from Nick Gibb MP in section IV) – place responsibility on the individual to conform and in turn to conform with a false homogeneity about what it means to be British. Government rhetoric surrounding the 2011 London riots, as well as the 2017 Essential Life Skills package for disadvantaged communities (DfE, 2017), indicates a similarly and staunchly depoliticised, personally responsible notion of citizenship (see also Kisby, 2017). I argue that this approach to citizenship education negates its original purpose, insofar as it specifically characterises young people as passive consumers of a pre-conceived politics as opposed to active critics and participants.

Whilst the findings in this article are interesting in terms of the substantive questions raised above, they also open a black box on the nature of Conservative policy-making in this field. In this respect, I argue that the 'vision shift' in citizenship education has been fundamentally reinforced and facilitated by a networked approach to policy-making in which hierarchies of predominantly centre-right stakeholders have been privileged as participants in the business of advising upon, funding, piloting, undertaking, evaluating and commissioning policy-led education initiatives (see Exley and Ball, 2011; Wright and Shore, 2011). Using computational textual analysis of a range of policy-related documents, I show that the importance attached to traditional academic, technical and stakeholder expertise in the area of citizenship education has been downgraded and replaced by a greater premium on simple, idea-driven policy-making. In terms of citizenship education, I suggest that the Government has, then, failed to speak to broad coalitions of stakeholders and fulfil the promise of evidence-based policy-making (A3).

I do not seek in this article to enter into the muddy process of answering what exactly constitutes evidence ‘mis’use (and the issues of ethics and power that question implies), but rather I outline the contours of a specific case study in which evidence from the broader policy community is not necessarily ‘mis’used but ignored entirely. There is no doubt, as Jordan and Cairney (2013, p.250) assert, that ‘the logic of consultation is often about power and agenda setting, or the exclusion of certain groups and the reduction of political competition.’ It is in this respect that I believe the UK Coalition and Conservative governments of recent years have been guilty of what Anthony Barnett (1999) calls ‘corporate populism’ – put another way, the policy network in this field (and potentially others) has reduced to increasingly limited intellectual and social boundaries, and in doing so any ‘evidence’ has been used strategically to legitimate the ideological and economically-driven premise of a predetermined character agenda (see Nutley, (2007, p.301-307) for more on politicised evidence use). This is not only evidenced by the data analysed in this article but also embodied, for example, in the interconnectedness of influential policy entrepreneurs such as Michael Lynas, who is now Chief Executive Officer of the NCS but previously acted as a senior policy advisor to the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister in the Number 10 Policy Unit (2010-2013).

Yet where recent governments appear to have failed to engage with and take account of the policy community, I find that the House of Lords’ select committee on citizenship and civic engagement has succeeded. Although the representative role of the UK House of Lords is not the explicit focus of this article, I present findings that should act as a fillip to broader studies of that chamber’s policy influence. In this instance, the committee appears to have cultivated a space in which ‘reflexive subjects’ invested in the substance and delivery of citizenship education have been allowed to ‘answer back’ (Giddens, 1991), and the Lords have accurately conveyed that message to the Government in their final report. On one hand, the Lords’ investigation may be seen as a success in and of itself for promoting detailed and constructive communication between stakeholder communities and Parliament. On the other hand, the findings in this article are equally important for what they represent in terms of the symbolic and substantive representation of policy interests by the Lords. Answering the challenge laid down by Bochel and Defty (2012, p.95) that ‘there is very little evidence about how peers act to provide substantive representation’, I provide one policy case study in which civic groups and their interests are better ‘represented’ in the House of Lords than in the Commons. If real policy progress relies on plurality, disconnection and discord within policy networks (cf. Frankham, 2006), then the ability of the Lords to replicate the evidence-based approach seen in this instance, and indeed to leverage their findings to practically influence government policy, may be increasingly important.

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Appendix A – Full list of stakeholders who gave evidence to the House of Lords select committee and were included in the analysis conducted for this article. These submissions can be accessed and read in full online at: <https://www.parliament.uk/citizenship-civic-engagement>.

Oral Evidence:

1. 01 Nov 2017: Evidence given by Sean Harford, National Director for Education, Ofsted; Scott Harrison, Former Ofsted Specialist Adviser for Citizenship; Ryan Mason, Assistant Head Teacher, Addey and Stanhope School, Lewisham.
2. 18 Oct 2017: Evidence given by Dr Avril Keating, Senior Lecturer in Comparative Social Science, UCL Institute of Education; Liz Mourse, Chief Executive, Association for Citizenship Teaching (ACT); Tom Franklin, CEO, Citizenship Foundation; James Weinberg, University of Sheffield
3. 11 Oct 2017: Evidence given by Dr Rania Marandos, Deputy Chief Executive, Step Up to Serve; Michael Lynas, Chief Executive, National Citizen Service Trust; and Matt Hyde, Chief Executive, The Scout Association
4. 13 Sep 2017: Evidence given by Michael Sani, Chief Executive, Bite the Ballot; Ashok Viswanathan, Deputy Director, Operation Black Vote; Professor Jon Tonge, Professor of Politics, University of Liverpool; Matteo Bergamini, Founder and Director, Shout Out UK
5. 11 Oct 2017: Evidence given by Oliver Lee, Chief Executive, The Challenge; Dr Andrew Mycock, Reader in Politics, University of Huddersfield; Dr Sarah Mills, Loughborough University

Written Evidence:

6. Association for Citizenship Teaching
7. Catch22
8. Change that Matters Ltd
9. Children's Rights Alliance for England and Together, the Scottish Alliance for Children's Rights
10. Citized
11. Citizenship Foundation
12. Convenors of the UK Political Studies Association Specialist Group on Young People's Politics
13. DECSY (Development Education Centre, South Yorkshire)
14. Democracy Matters
15. Demos
16. Electoral Reform Society
17. Expert Subject Advisory Group on Citizenship

18. Five Nations Network for Citizenship and Values Education
19. In Defence of Youth Work
20. Joe Hayman
21. Joint submission - written evidence (from The Scout Association, Leap Confronting Conflict, UK Youth, V Inspired, Girlguiding, NCS Trust, The Mix, Ambition, British Youth Council, Citizenship Foundation and City Year UK)
22. Mr David Kerr
23. Mr James Cathcart
24. National Council for Voluntary Organisations
25. National Union of Students (NUS)
26. Political Literacy Oversight Group
27. Step Up To Serve
28. The British Youth Council
29. The Challenge
30. The Political Studies Association
31. The Scout Association
32. The Student View
33. Think Global
34. Votes for Schools
35. VSO

Table 1. Correlation coefficients demonstrating statistical similarities in word use across the corpus of evidence.⁶

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
(1) DfE – Subject guidance for CE GCSE	1									
(2) DfE – Secondary curriculum for CE	0.578	1								
(3) Policy recipients on CE	0.367	0.208	1							
(4) Policy recipients on the NCS	0.178	0.103	0.525	1						
(5) Government - Evidence to the Lords on CE	0.321	0.299	0.552	0.308	1					
(6) Government - Evidence to the Lords on NCS	0.239	0.166	0.296	0.455	0.242	1				
(7) Lords report – Chp.3 on CE	0.431	0.251	0.778	0.378	0.576	0.341	1			
(8) Lords report – Chp.4 on NCS	0.261	0.167	0.388	0.669	0.303	0.505	0.457	1		
(9) Stakeholders – Evidence to Lords on CE	0.518	0.319	0.758	0.417	0.647	0.377	0.889	0.489	1	
(10) Stakeholders – Evidence to Lords on the NCS	0.266	0.203	0.343	0.676	0.349	0.504	0.315	0.606	0.449	1

⁶ CE = citizenship education; DfE = Department for Education; coefficients >.4 are highlighted in bold to indicate moderate-strong relationships (Ratner, 2009); ‘policy recipients’ refers to collated focus group data; ‘stakeholders’ refers to collated submissions of evidence to the Lord’s committee from the policy community (see section II).

Table 2. Thematic coding of the corpus by key terms related to the concepts of ‘active citizenship’ and ‘character’.

Document	‘Active Citizenship’ Overall frequency (relative proportion of all tokens in the document)	‘Character Education’
(1) DfE – Subject guidance for CE GCSE	112 (8.3%)	16 (1.2%)
(2) DfE – Secondary curriculum for CE	33 (8.5%)	14 (3.6%)
(3) Policy recipients on CE	114 (2.4%)	40 (0.8%)
(4) Policy recipients on the NCS	40 (1.9%)	41 (1.9%)
(5) Government - Evidence to the Lords on CE	16 (3.2%)	6 (1.2%)
(6) Government - Evidence to the Lords on the NCS	10 (3.6%)	6 (2.2%)
(7) Lords report – Chp.3 on CE	36 (2.6%)	9 (0.6%)
(8) Lords report – Chp. 4 on NCS	20 (3.8%)	22 (4.2%)
(9) Stakeholders – Evidence to Lords on CE	377 (4.6%)	142 (1.7%)
(10) Stakeholders – Evidence to Lords on the NCS	151 (3.4%)	123 (2.8%)

Figure 1. Keyness plot comparing relative word frequencies for guidance on citizenship education issued to schools in England by the Department for Education in 2015 and focus groups conducted with policy recipients.

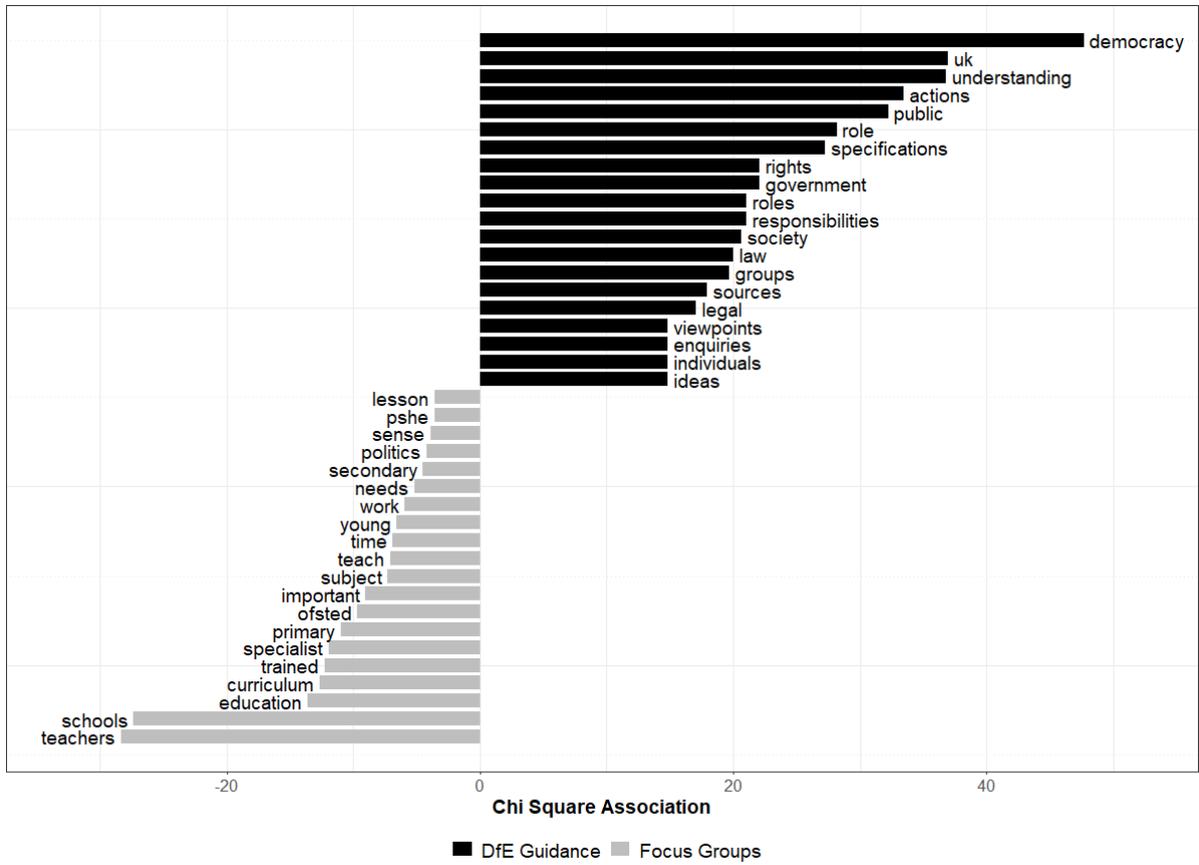


Figure 2. Keyness plot comparing relative word frequencies for chapter 3 of the House of Lords report and the oral and written evidence given to the committee by the Government about citizenship education.

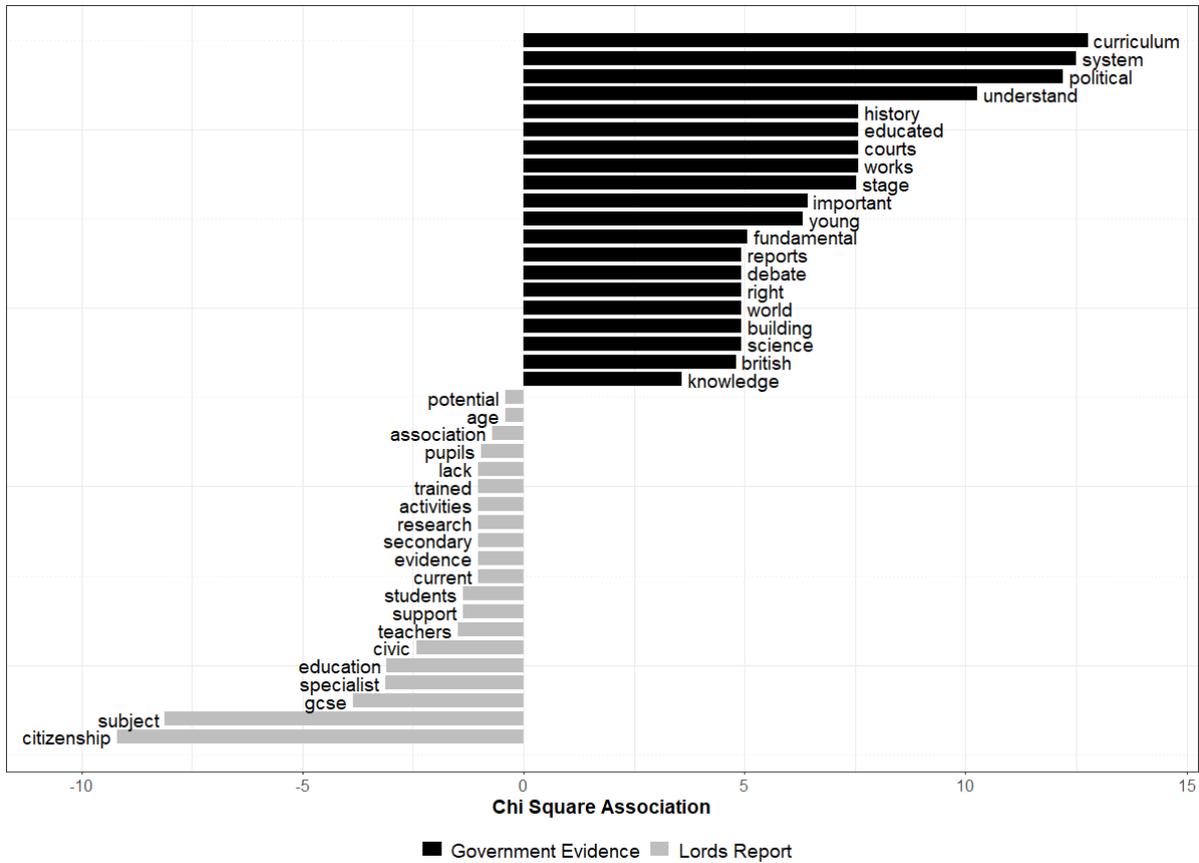


Figure 3. Keyness plot comparing relative word frequencies for the national curriculum on citizenship education and stakeholder evidence submitted to the House of Lords select committee.

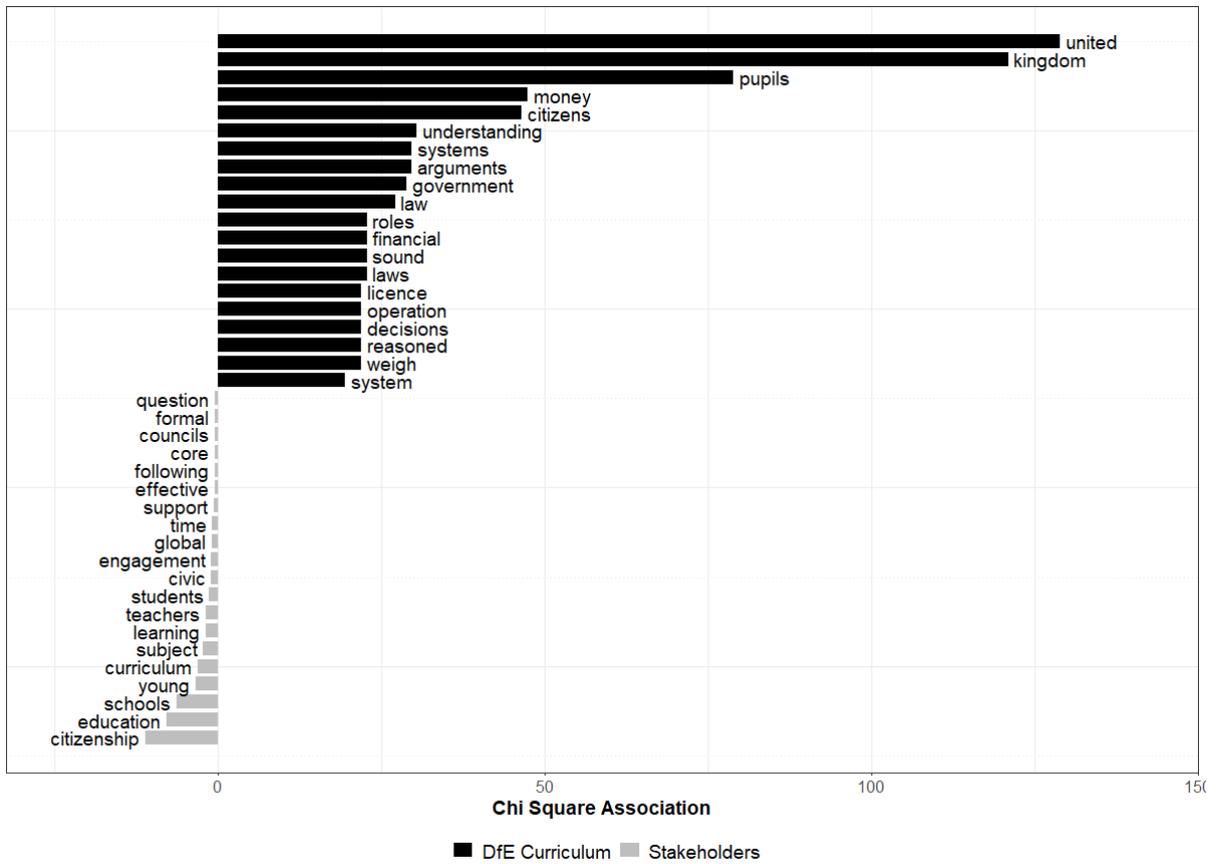


Figure 4. Keynes plot comparing relative word frequencies for chapter 4 of the House of Lords report and the Government’s evidence pertaining to the National Citizen Service.

