Framing the Future or Preserving the past?

A comparative examination of perceptions of citizenship in the Discovering Democracy materials and the views of some Australian teachers, students and their parents about the “good” citizen.

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PERCEPTIONS OF CITIZENSHIP

TEACHERS, STUDENTS AND THEIR PARENTS TALK ABOUT WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A ‘GOOD CITIZEN’ IN AUSTRALIA

Abstract

This study is a discussion of research about perceptions of citizenship by teachers, parents and students in one case study school in Australia. Three issues are explored: the extent of congruence between the three participating groups, implications of their perceptions about citizenship for teaching and learning and strategies for managing effective curriculum innovation in civics and citizenship education. The author argues that before effective citizenship education programs can be developed in schools, the three major stakeholders need to have a shared understanding about what it means to be ‘good citizen’.
The Context of Citizenship Education Debates in Australia

Elisa hopes Joshua will have a sense of duty, and wants him to be respectful, the kind of boy who will make a good husband and father when the time comes.

(Rey and Elisa Busano, and their new born son, Joshua, 10 weeks)

As elsewhere in the world, Australia has undergone intense social change in the past several decades. The globalisation of economies with the resultant loss of our long-held reliance on "the sheep's back" as the major economic export force has had a profound destabilising effect on the psyche of Australians. (Hughes 1994) The long tradition of defining one's sense of civic status through paid work, and more to the point, through the certainty of continuing in work of one's choice, has very rapidly been destroyed in the 1990s by the uncertainties of the global economies. In place of these civic megatrends there is a feeling that life is now controlled by the vagaries of Gross Domestic Product and not by the daily actions of the people. For some people there is a perception of a decline in civic virtue and values most noticeably seen in a community where the loss of social fabric, 'the processes between people which establish networks, norms and social trust', (Cox, 1995) has resulted in a loss of a sense of community and personal alienation and powerlessness. (Senate Committee, 1995; Pascoe, 1996). Anecdotal evidence and frequent letters to the press indicate that many parents, believe themselves to be caught in this vortex of rapid change and uncertainties and living in a risk society. Schools are seen as the appropriate venue to develop in their children a 'sense of duty', like Elisa quoted above, and to rectify social problems so that drug abuse, road safety, sex education and citizenship education can best be tackled by schools, despite teachers’ claims of an already overcrowded curriculum.

What is also clear is that many Australians are beginning to recognise the opportunity to use the lead up to the symbolic centenary celebrations of the federal Constitution in 2001 as an appropriate time to both look back to ‘better days’ and to look forward to debate the kind of society they want. Already in place are some significant elements of this debate: discussions about the nature of our multicultural society, an on-going reorganisation of key economic goals, the establishment of a Constitutional Convention to consider the nature and form of an Australian Head of State and some attempts at developing a national curriculum. The semiotics of the national image we wish to convey at the Olympics in Sydney in the year 2,000 is also a part of the debate. It’s a complex and at times a confusing agenda. So far the debates in the public arena have been largely orchestrated by those groups with immediate vested interests, including politicians, academics and curriculum developers (Meredith & Thomas, 1995).

There have been numerous public reports in the 1980s and 1990s on the nature of the relationship between education, national economic policy and the kind of society we want in the twentieth century. Earlier reports, for example the Auchmuty National Inquiry into Teacher Education (1980), the Blackburn Report (1984), the Report of the Australian Education Council
(1989), the two Reports of the Senate Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training (1989 and 1991), argued that all students (and teachers) needed to be equipped with a sound knowledge of how their country was governed. Implicit in many of the reports was the understanding that this increased knowledge would, in some way, but as yet not articulated, contribute to a sense of national pride and economic well-being.

In 1988 the Senate requested its Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training to conduct an inquiry into "Education for Active Citizenship in Australian Schools and Youth Organisations". One of the six recommendations in the Senate Report (1989) was that the Commonwealth designate education for active citizenship as a priority area for improvements in primary and secondary schooling" (p.48). This report is typical of others in the 1980s in the sense that they tended to be knee jerk reactions to a particular perceived ‘crisis’ at the time and that the majority of the recommendations focused on implementation strategies without actually conceptualising what forms any citizenship education programs might take. Citizenship is seen in these early reports as a noncontestable term and limited to knowledge about government.

The more recent reports, for example the Report of the Civics Expert Group (1994), the Senate Committee Discussion Paper on a System of National Citizenship Indicators (1995), and particularly the current federal government’s policy document, Discovering Democracy (Kemp,1997), have shifted the emphasis to make education a much more direct instrument of economic policy rather than a means of social and economic reconstruction. “.....Our policies aim to encourage greater flexibility on the part of institutions and reduce their dependence on government. We want to give universities greater autonomy and self reliance as customer-focused business enterprises.” (Vanstone, 1996). The difficulty of interpreting the current policy document is that the overt context in which it was launched is not evident. Nowhere in the policy is articulated the assumptions, conceptualisations and ideology underpinning the program. The policy, Discovering Democracy, was launched in the context of the need for citizenship education to act as a tool for improving Australia’s economic situation.

On paper the current national policy document acknowledges the distinction between civics and citizenship and indicates the emphasis on knowledge, skills and values and attitudes will ‘develop capacities to participate as informed, reflective citizens’ (Kemp,1997). Yet the content chosen to develop these capacities is uncontestable, unproblematic and is based on a legalistic, historical and civic notion of citizenship framed within a great events approach to a study of Australian history. The correcting of a civic deficit has become the rationale for the current policy. As Kennedy (1998) suggests this civics deficit approach is not part of the civic realities – the things that matter to young people.

Discovering Democracy represents the centre of a dichotomous situation in Australia where governments are, on the one hand, expecting the good citizen as an individual, rather than as a member of any particular community, to contribute more actively towards national economic goals. Many people on the other hand are responding to change and anxieties by decreasing their expectations of themselves, of the community and of the state. One outcome has been the increasing trend by governments to take the moral high ground by initiating policies which are promoted as being for the ‘common good’. Beyond public expressions of anxieties as often seen in print media the impetus to redefine what it means to be a citizen in Australia in the 1990s and to participate in the good life has mostly come from above from the political arena. Individuals and groups therefore are mostly responding to government policies and are seen by some politicians as being un-Australian.
A major focus of this study, “Perceptions of Citizenship”, was to investigate what appears to be a potential mismatch between expectations of governments, both State and Federal, in Australia in the 1990s in relation to policies about the ‘good citizen’ and the attitudes and expectations of three major players in the implementation of these policies - teachers, parents and students - in a sense representing the community at large. The argument is made that school themselves assimilate the meanings of citizenship to their own dominant cultures and that any unitary or ill-defined conception would be contested not only on the grounds of workability in the school situation, but because the experience or the principles of community in the school are the more compelling conveyers of the meanings on citizenship (NPDP Report,1997). If the reports and policies themselves are bereft of conceptualisations of citizenship then school communities are unable to make a critical appraisal of their culture and educational practice against tested indicators of democratic citizenship and of problematising the ‘understood’.

Common to all the reports and policy documents mentioned above, but particularly noted in the current federal government’s policies, is the belief by federal and state politicians that in the development of citizenship education programs in schools, teachers of the key learning area called Studies of Society and Environment (Board of Studies,1995) are the natural implementors of such programs. The supposition is that by locating citizenship education in one key learning area with teachers who are both committed to and trained in social education appropriate knowledge and skills will be more effectively learned.

The assumption has also been made that teachers of social education will support the approach toward citizenship education taken by governments. ‘Discovering Democracy’ notes that the implementation (but not development) of current federal government policy in the area of citizenship education ‘will include parents, teachers, principals and academics’ (Kemp,1997). At this point in time this has yet to be tested. The history of previous reports indicates that there has been very little input from these three groups.

This study tested this assumption by looking at the attitudes not only of teachers of Social Education but also the whole cohort of teachers in one case study school. Finally, this study will argue that there is now sufficient evidence (Osborne, 1991; Verba,1995, Brennan,1996) to indicate that a whole school approach to the development of citizenship education programs is much more likely to be successful than when a centrally developed curriculum is imposed on teachers without consultation with the school community.

So here lies the rationale for this study. The argument being made is that the assumptions underpinning much of the current government thinking about citizenship education programs in Australia is politically self serving and that governments believe that “most people seem to put it (citizenship) in the same category as clean underwear: a useful and even a desirable thing to have but dull and respectable and not worth talking about.” (Osborne, 1991). The most disappointing aspect of this policy is that there is little discussion about the conceptual elements which might be considered to constitute citizenship education and therefore no explicit acknowledgment of the assumptions and values embedded in this policy. Clarification of key concepts is an indispensable element of theory construction.

This study will argue that the three key players - teachers, parents and students - do in fact have strong and well articulated views about the nature and form of citizenship education programs, but that these views do not match with current government policies. As such it will be argued that the attitudes and expectations of those very people who will implement and/or be the
recipients of government policies which have developed outside of, and are different from, their attitudes will inevitably result in a failure of policy and implementation.

With this broad context in mind four key elements appeared to be missing in most debates about the ways and means of enhancing young peoples’ views about citizenship in Australia in the 1990s.

Firstly, the conceptualisation of what it might mean to be a ‘good citizen’ has yet to be clearly articulated. Often the debate has centred on the arguments about civics versus citizenship. In its worst form, in the past, this debate has resulted in governments simply producing curriculum materials which, by some form of mysterious revelation, will result in ‘good’ citizens being produced. The current Discovering Democracy materials have been accurately described (Kennedy 1998) as “neo-conservative policy texts”.

Secondly, the extent of conceptual understandings and attitudes already held by young school age people about citizenship has been an area of research neglect (Doig et al, 1994), and has largely focused on reports, often generated by the media, of ‘a civic deficit’ (Civics Expert Group, 1994). Conceptual development is not only associated with the acquisition of new content, but also with the increasingly sophisticated processing of previously acquired content, including the adequacy of the informational content, the level of student motivation or interest and linguistic competence. Policy implementation often appears to be predicated on the assumption that the policy-makers know what’s good for students to learn and that this learning takes place in some form of neat lineal construction.

Thirdly, there appears to be no data in Australia concerning the attitudes towards citizenship and citizenship education held by teachers. The great majority of the current teacher cohort have no experience in the teaching and learning in this area. Any proposal to incorporate some form of citizenship education in schools must depend on the active co-operation of teachers, so it is surprising that this data has not been sought. There is significant research which suggests that cultural, organisational and curriculum change is more likely to be effective in those schools where the culture is already receptive to change and where changing curriculum and pedagogy is contingent upon ownership of the process and outcomes by all participants - teachers, students and parents (Guskey and Huberman,1997; Hargreaves,1994). Recent evidence (Prior 1998) indicates that teachers already see the curriculum as being overcrowded, so that the inclusion of another component is unlikely, regardless of its veracity, to be welcomed unless some existing curriculum area is removed.

Fourthly, the impact of parents of school age children on the extent of their support given to government education policy and school curriculum implementation processes has yet to be tested in Australia.

This study therefore has attempted to examine the level of congruence between teachers, students and parents in their conceptualisation of citizenship, their attitudes towards citizenship education in the school curriculum and the implications of these perceptions for both current teaching and learning practices and curriculum renewal in schools.

The Context of the Study

This case study - from one government secondary school in the State of Victoria, Australia - focused on the concepts of citizenship held by four groups in one school community - teachers as a total staff, teachers of Social Education in particular, students from three year levels and lastly, the parents of these students. The focus of the study was to investigate the extent to which the construction of citizenship made by the four groups mirrored the models of citizenship
found in current policy, *Discovering Democracy* and to consider the implications of the extent of this synergy for curriculum change.

The study arose from a larger multi-national research project of teacher perceptions of citizenship, directed by Professor Jeffrey Fouts from Seattle Pacific University. In the larger project, titled ‘Concepts of Citizenship: A Multi Nation Study on the Qualities of Good Citizens and Implications for Schools’, in which researchers from five countries sought to analyse what teachers meant by ‘good citizenship’. Researchers developed a common questionnaire/interview schedule and data from large samples of teachers in each country.

As the project co-ordinator for Australia, the author was able to collect data from 18 schools with a total response of 510 teachers. Questionnaire and interview data were derived from a four part questionnaire devised by Fouts (1995), following on from the work of Gross and Dynneson (1991). It could be argued that the questionnaire is somewhat simplistic in its format, but in its defense, the nature of multi-nation research using the same instrument often requires compromises to satisfy a range of cultural settings.

A seven point Likert scale was used to classify responses and the data was then analysed using SPSS. The publication date for this larger project is late 1999.

**The case study school**

This smaller study arose as a result of one of the schools in the larger project making a request for assistance to revise its curriculum in the area of citizenship education. The staff curriculum committee of the school had noted the fact that the federal government had made citizenship education a priority curriculum area and the questionnaire/interviews from the multi-nation study had aroused interest in the area among teachers.

At the point of undertaking this study, the teachers at the case study school had discussed their current curriculum offerings and had decided it was appropriate to engage in curriculum renewal using the new State Government frameworks and guidelines. To that extent the notion of ‘readiness’ had been reached and any subsequent discussions about amendments to curriculum were seen in a positive manner by teachers.

This study makes the claim that understanding the cultural histories of the key players in school communities shapes and informs the ways in which curriculum and innovation is received and produced. By examining concepts of citizenship among the key stakeholders - teachers, teachers of Social Education, students and parents - it was hoped by the teaching staff that a more informed and holistic communal view could be developed in order to then inform school curriculum policy makers and to audit subsequent policy and programs against State guidelines.

The case study school is located in Victoria which has had 25 years experience in local school control of curriculum. The mechanism for this is the School Council which, by law, must have a majority of members from parents from the school. Other members include teachers, the school principal, members of the local community and students. It is here that school policy is constructed, including curriculum renewal, school budgeting and staffing allocation. It would seem then that there have been considerable opportunities for local school communities as a whole to jointly develop curriculum to suit local needs and that the nexus of ideas between the major players in the school community should be close or at least shared.

Anecdotal evidence indicates that the reality is that in the formation of curriculum, teachers invariably take the lead and parents and students have minimal input. Another reality is that during the past five years there has been a strong swing back to central control of the curriculum via the implementation of State wide frameworks, particularly *Curriculum and Standards Framework 11*, which all school are now expected to follow. The acceptance of this
change of policy varies between schools with some smaller schools, for example, grateful to hand back responsibility for curriculum and staffing to the State. Other schools resent the loss of local control and continue to be reluctant to follow State curriculum guidelines.

The school is 20 kms from Melbourne central. It is a State co-educational suburban secondary school with approximately 800 students and would be described as being in a middle class area and with a ‘normal’ multi-ethnic student (that is by Australian standards). In interviews the female Principal described the school as being ‘traditional’ in the sense of teacher and parent expectations of students wearing school uniforms and following school rules. The Principal and the two Deputy Principals were very supportive of curriculum innovation, however it was felt that there was a need to ensure that the school was recognised by the local community as a strong academic school. Subject choice by students was limited and a ‘traditional’ discipline-based curriculum was directed to tertiary entrance. There is also an expectation that students will probably aspire to go on to tertiary studies. The recently developed School Charter or mission statement stated

“..... school is proud of its academic and sporting success, (and) of the orderly behaviour of its students..... The school intends that students will leave school as independent, lifelong learners, and with the potential for interesting, socially useful, personally fulfilling lives.”

The school is located close to several other schools, including private schools, and, in interviews, teachers readily expressed their concern about keeping up the numbers of students in order for the school to ‘survive’ against strong competition from other local, particularly private, schools.

There were 65 teachers at the school (39 female and 26 male), 10 of whom were teachers of Social Education. Staffing statistics from the Department of Education indicate that the average age of teachers in Victoria is now 47 years and the case study school reflects this situation. Forty seven per cent of teachers were in the age group of 41-50 years and thirty six per cent were aged 31-40 years. This school therefore has a very experienced staff with eighty per cent having more than 10 years teaching experience. All teachers have an undergraduate degree and a teacher training certificate.

The rationale for this selection was primarily pragmatic. The school had asked for assistance to frame its citizenship curriculum, is located near to the researcher’s University and has a long tradition of student teacher co-operation with the University. It was anticipated that there would be positive attitudes about the project. It is not claimed that this school is typical of all secondary schools in Victoria and therefore any extrapolations drawn from the data need to be read with some caution.

**The Research Project - Methodology**

Both qualitative and quantitative were collected in this study. Any questionnaire and/or interviews to be administered in schools in the State of Victoria requires approval from the Department of Education. This is becoming a difficult proposition due to the ever increasing number of requests. Refusal is more often the response. Approval however was gained after protracted negotiations and an issue recognised early in the study was the potential reluctance of teachers to fill in yet another questionnaire, particularly one approved by the Department of Education. However the strategy to gather data from the major stakeholders in the school community - teachers, students and parents - and to link the findings of the questionnaire and interviews with immediate and specific considerations of current curriculum offerings in partnership with the school, persuaded both the Department of Education and the school
community to support the study. Conceptually this model of partnership in research has the potential to break down the often perceived isolationist position of universities (Bickel and Hattrup, 1995) and to enable the practice of participatory democratic decision making.

The initial strategy had been to only use the Fouts’ questionnaire from the larger project. Respondents were asked to assess the extent of their agreement or disagreement on a 7 point Likert scale on four statements. (see below for lists of items) The four areas were -

  * The following characteristics are important qualities of a good citizen.
  * The following have influenced my citizenship
  * I believe the following are a threat to a child’s citizenship
  * I believe that the following classroom activities would be helpful in developing a child’s citizenship,

However, after a small pilot sample study among teachers, it became apparent that the data from this questionnaire alone would not reveal the complexities and problematics of conceptions of citizenship, would not enable a comparative analysis with current citizenship policy models and would be inadequate in terms of the detail of data needed to initiate curriculum innovation in the school.

In an attempt to encourage more extended responses and to reduce the somewhat foreign nature of the original questionnaire wording, a second section was added. This section adopted a scenario approach using, it was hoped, was a ‘typical’ classroom situation dilemma. By constructing a classroom dilemma which had embedded in it issues of ideology, pedagogy and conceptual understanding, it was hoped that the respondents would demonstrate in their writing higher order thinking and have the opportunity to expand their views beyond a ranking scale.


**The Classroom Scenario:**

At the beginning of one of your classes, one of your keener students, Sally, raises the issue of Australia offering refuge for people for war-torn Kosovo. She mentions that she had seen an interesting television program the night before and that she thought the issue was just too important to ignore. Some other students also reported that they had seen this TV program and expressed their interest in the topic. Sally then asks if you will allow the class to engage in some form of activity which would enable students to address the issue.

1. Sally then asks could you stop doing the current topic and have a class discussion on the issue.
2. Sally, showing her strong supporting views, then asks that some time be given over in class to investigate the issue and that one activity be the making of posters suggesting that these could perhaps be displayed at the local shopping centre, as a symbol of student attitudes.
3. Finally, Sally, now in full flight about the possibilities she is suggesting, reveals that she has already spoken to the manager of the local supermarket where she works after school, and that she has said that she will support the display of student work on a Saturday morning provided you, the teacher, attend the display on the Saturday to supervise the students.
The task for all four groups of participants was to imagine that they were Sally’s teacher and to write a verbatim response to each of her three suggestions (keeping in mind the classroom context in which this is happening). They were then asked to write a rationale why they responded in the way they did and then finally to write how, if at all, they thought the classroom scenario raised issues about citizenship education.

All 65 teachers completed the questionnaire. With only some very minor wording amendments the questionnaire was then given to three classes of students from Year 7 (aged 12-13 years), Year 9 (aged 14-15 years) and Year 11 (aged 16-17 years), a total of 62 students. Parents of students in these three classes were contacted by letter written by the researcher and the social education coordinator on behalf of the school and were invited to participate in the project and complete the questionnaire. The number of responses by parents was 27.

Confirmation of written data was obtained by interviewing a sample of teachers (15) and a small sample of students (17) and parents (9). The interviews, conducted by the researcher, were deliberately informal, although audio recorded, and focused on the four items from the questionnaire and the scenario. Participants were given the opportunity to discuss the issues for as long as they wished. However in most cases the conversations were short with interviews lasting about 15-30 minutes. The one exception was the parent group where the group discussion lasted several hours.

Interviews with the teacher group were conducted individually due to the difficulty of finding a common time for a group discussion. Interviews with the other two groups - students and parents - were conducted in groups due to the belief that members of these two groups might respond more freely in a group situation. Interviews of teachers, students and parents were conducted both at the school and at homes. Five additional questions to the Fouts’ questionnaire were asked in order to facilitate ease of conversation.

1. When you hear the word citizenship what comes to mind?
2. When you hear the term ‘good citizen’, what characteristics come to mind?
3. Are/how are you a good citizen?
4. Who helped you acquire these characteristics?
5. Are/how are you rewarded in any way for being a good citizen?

Findings from the Questionnaire

Item 1 The following characteristics are important qualities of a good citizen

Table 1: Percentage Distribution of “Strong Agreement and Agreement” Ratings of Teachers, Social Ed. Teachers, Students & Parents on the questionnaire item on ‘Characteristics that are Important Qualities of a Good Citizen’.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Soc Ed Teachers</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Parents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Y7</td>
<td>Y9 Y11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of current news events</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation in community/school affairs</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptance of a responsible task</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concern for the welfare of others</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moral and ethical (that is good)</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Acceptance of authority by those in power  
8 50 83 33 58 62

Ability to question ideas  
8 60 92 57 67 51

Ability to make wise decisions  
12 60 67 48 47 44

Knowledge about how government works  
4 50 38 19 29 17

Patriotism (love of one's country)  
11 30 46 43 29 32

Doing family responsibilities  
41 50 63 67 41 83

Knowledge of the world  
8 40 54 29 35 19

Acceptance of diversity (variety of people) within our community  
68 60 50 57 63 51

Note: The response rate was 100% on all items on the scale, for each group of respondents. This table shows the percentage of each of the four respondent groups’ response at the ‘Agree’ and ‘Strongly Agree’ points on the seven point Likert scale. Percentages have been corrected to the nearest number.

Although the data from the questionnaire needs to be interpreted with some caution, there are some strong indications as to the direction of the respondents’ beliefs. The most noticeable is the strongest support given by all groups to what might be called the social concerns or social justice characteristics of citizenship.

The three most supported items by all groups were, in order, concern for the welfare of others, moral and ethical behaviour and acceptance of diversity. This acknowledgment of, and sensitivity to, difference, is a foundation for a tolerant community and reflects a strong attitudinal/values orientation.

The second most supported grouping of characteristics might be called the action/participatory orientation of citizenship. Characteristics in this grouping included doing family responsibilities, ability to question ideas, ability to make wise decisions and participation in community/school affairs. Within this grouping are some interesting findings. In all characteristics, teachers of Social Education rated these items higher than the general cohort of teachers and it would be reasonable to conclude that this is a result of the widespread support, in theory at least, for the pedagogy of inquiry learning in which investigation, participation and communication form the basis of teaching and learning in Social Education classes. Another trend arising from this data was the progressive decline in the level of support by students for these items from the high at year 7 to a low at year 11. As would be expected students’ beliefs and conceptual understandings do change with maturation so that students of 12 years of age are still bright eyed, enthusiastic and curious, but by age 17 are somewhat jaundiced about participation and the value of fulfilling responsibilities. Parents of teenage children will tell you this and perhaps this is why the parents in this grouping of items give such strong support to doing family responsibilities.

A third grouping of characteristics might be called civic understandings. Here teachers of Social Education gave some support to knowledge of current events, government and the world, but for the rest of the groups these characteristics of citizenship rated very low. Teachers of other subjects gave minimal recognition to these characteristics and it would be a concern if the current focus by government policies on civic knowledge was then also promoted by a cross discipline or whole school teaching and learning strategy. What is perhaps surprising in this grouping was
the relatively low support given to a global perspective on citizenship by all respondents, including teachers of Social Education. Some explanation might be sought in earlier comments which suggested that in the current climate in Australia of a perception of a loss of social fabric, people retreat to a xenophobic position.

The fourth grouping of characteristics might be called the legalistic/obligatory aspects of citizenship, embracing acceptance of a responsible task, acceptance of authority by those in power and patriotism. The extremely negative reaction to patriotism which often appears to drive current government policy in the form of rhetoric about the ‘common good’ suggested that the ‘if its good for the Australian economy it must be good for everyone’ approach will not be widely accepted by the community. Also the current policy of embedding notions of citizenship in a chronological ‘big Australian events’ approach to the teaching of History will not be supported in schools.

The data clearly indicated that there was a very strong support among all participants for the attitudinal orientation which accepted difference rather than sameness as a civic virtue. There was a broad and inclusive conceptualisation of citizenship in which citizenship is related to a plurality of civic/social domains, rather than restricting it to the political sphere (Ichilov 1990).

Teachers of social education might take some solace in the support given by students to the ability to question ideas. These teachers, too, ranked this characteristic highly and it might be hoped that this orientation would be manifested in social education classrooms by open discussions and inquiry based learning.

The main message from this data appears to be the importance all groups placed on the values dimension of social learning. It would seem to suggest that teachers of social education need to have the knowledge, skills and sensitivity to employ teaching and learning strategies which investigate conceptual elements of citizenship - like identity, tolerance, community, social justice, equity - within the experiences of their students, before launching into an examination of political processes. Social education teachers top ranking of a knowledge of current affairs may have to at least be focused on issues concerning the welfare of others rather than major world political events.

The data also raised the key issues of the nature of classroom environments and whole school forms of governance. Is the teaching and learning about the welfare of others likely to be effective (however you might measure this) in school contexts where the welfare and relationships between members of the school community are based on non-collegial and non-participatory decision making?

**Item 2:** The following have influenced my citizenship

**Table 2: Percentage Distribution of “Strong Agreement and Agreement”**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Influences:</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Soc. Ed. Teachers</th>
<th>Students Y7</th>
<th>Students Y9</th>
<th>Students Y11</th>
<th>Parents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Siblings</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious leaders</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TV and/ or movies</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grandparents/ Relatives</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Guardians</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Principal</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extra curric. activities</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other students</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports coaches</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The response rate was 100% on all items on the scale, for each group of respondents. This table shows the percentage of each of the four respondent groups’ response at the ‘Agree’ and ‘Strongly Agree’ points on the seven point Likert scale. Percentages have been corrected to the nearest number.

There are some obvious connections that can be made from the data from the first two items in the questionnaire. In the first item the personal values dimension clearly emerged as an important element of citizenship. It would appear now that these humanistic qualities - sensitivity to others who are different and in need and in moral and ethical behaviour - were derived primarily from family and then, for students, from friends. Religious leaders play an almost non-existent role for all groups and for students, teachers and principals were minor influences.

Given the multi-cultural nature of our society in Australia and the certainty that teachers will have children in their classes with a diverse range of ethnic backgrounds, the sharing and celebration of difference via teaching and learning strategies that involve families would appear to be an important focus in social education classes. Parents were perceived to be the dominant influence on developing a sense of citizenship and there was a common thread of commonly accepted civic behaviours. The specific contexts in which these behaviours might be learned and experienced may well be very different, for example, in a single parent family context, de facto family context, or in a cross cultural family context. Definitions and location of parent and family may well be problematic. Any attempt to promote a mono-culture (and which one?) is unlikely to succeed. Teachers need to be very cognisant of their own cultural assumptions (mostly coming from their own parents) and to recognise the value of having the families of their students on-side as genuine partners in planning citizenship education programs. The encouragement of parents and family to enter the classroom to share experiences would appear to be a valuable strategy.

The belief by students that the influence of their teachers and the school Principal is relatively minimal in their sense of citizenship can be interpreted in a number of ways. At least 25% of students beginning secondary school believe that teachers and the principal can have some influence, but by year 11 only 12% believe this. Friends and the peer group have taken over as role models. Teachers of Social Education may be well advised to consider some of the strategies employed by advertisers and the media in their efforts to win brand loyalty. To what
extent can teachers ever be role models? And can schools consider a whole school approach - including students, parents and teachers - to articulate and conceptualise citizenship priorities? There is also some ambiguity in these two items. Did students interpret teacher to be as a person and/or associated with some curriculum subject area?

**Item 3:**

_I believe the following are a threat to a child’s citizenship_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Threats</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Soc. Ed. Teachers</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Parents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Television and/or movies</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drugs and/or alcohol</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer pressure</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual activity</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative role models</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family conflict</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School environment</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excessive leisure time</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unearned material rewards</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community environment</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The response rate was 100% on all items on the scale, for each group of respondents. This table shows the percentage of each of the four respondent groups’ response at the ‘Agree’ and ‘Strongly Agree’ points on the seven point Likert scale. Percentages have been corrected to the nearest number.

One claim that can be made is that all the members of the school community sampled from this section of the questionnaire believed that there are threats out there in the community which impact on a person’s civic disposition. Society is not a calm place in which the good life prevails. Teachers in this school, regardless of their subject area, believed that there are a considerable number of threats to a child’s citizenship, but that no one threat was so powerful as to be dominant. Parents on the other hand felt much more strongly about the influence of a wide range of threats. Although teachers are often also parents, they perhaps tend to see threats more dispassionately as being out there in the community and it would have been interesting to have given the questionnaire to teachers to be completed in their home environment rather than on site in their workplace where they might respond through their role as subject teacher. Parents strongly believed that the threats to their children are very real and this is consistent with earlier comments made in this paper which noted some evidence about parent perceptions of widespread loss of the social fabric of the community. Students, particularly the younger ones,
have a very firm belief that drugs and alcohol are the most serious threat to their citizenship and this matches closely with their parents’ beliefs noted in this item but also in item two.

It could be argued that the threats listed could form the basis of a Social Education program. In the context of other knowledge areas being seen as of minor importance as noted in item 1 - knowledge of government, current events, the world - and the strong support given to a social concerns approach to citizenship education programs, teachers of Social Education may well connect this data with the research of Hahn (Hahn 1996) which indicates, in a multi nation study, the focus on public social issues and policies is most likely to enhance students’ efficacy towards effective citizenship.

**Item 4:** *I believe that the following classroom activities would be helpful in developing a child’s citizenship*

### Table 4: Percentage Distribution of “Strong Agreement and Agreement” Ratings of Teachers, Social Ed Teachers, Students & Parents on the questionnaire item on ‘Beliefs about classroom activities that would be helpful in developing citizenship’.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classroom Activities:</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Social Ed Teachers</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Parents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Y7</td>
<td>Y9</td>
<td>Y11</td>
<td>Y7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An activity in which the child learns about the traditions and values that shaped his/her community/country.</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An activity dealing with current events</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An activity in which the child learns about the history and government of his/her country</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An activity in which the child works on a community project with community leaders</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A problem solving activity</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An activity using constitutional and legalistic processes</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An activity that aims at the child’s individual needs and interests</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An activity in which the child looks at worldwide needs and responsibilities</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The response rate was 100% on all items on the scale, for each group of respondents. This table shows the percentage of each of the four respondent groups’ response at the ‘Agree’ and
Consistent with their support for students having a knowledge of current events, teachers of Social Education supported classroom activities dealing with current events and activities in which children work on community projects with community leaders. The extent to which teachers in general and social education teachers in particular thought that an activity in which a child works on a community project was helpful in developing a child’s citizenship was surprising in that both teacher groups did not believe that participation in community or school affairs was an important characteristic of a good citizen as in item one.

To a very large extent the responses from students were inconclusive. Younger students tended to support most strategies while older students were non-committal to all of the activities. In retrospect it is evident that some of the wording is in teacher talk, while in other cases the possible connection between the particular activity and citizenship is well hidden from a student perspective. Parents on the other hand were quick to seize on two types of activities - an activity which aimed at the child’s individual needs and interests (75%) and an activity in which the child learnt about the traditions and values that shaped his/her community and country. (64%)

These two activities need not, of course, be mutually exclusive. It was anticipated that parents would choose the activity which appeared to cater for their child. This choice was also consistent with the support given by parents to the affective attitudinal orientation when they selected the characteristics of a good citizen. The second choice was perhaps chosen because the other options were unattractive in terms of their teacher language. But this is only speculation. Given the across the board support for an affective domain orientation further speculation might indicate that if an activity was included in the list which clearly focused on concern for the welfare of others, tolerance and moral behaviour, then this would have received strong support from all participants.

Findings from the Scenario section of the Questionnaire

Based on role theory, both structural and interactionist perspectives are useful for examining the nature of the role of teacher as citizen. From a structural perspective, citizenship may be regarded as a formal role that is legally defined, for example, by participation in the voting process or in a formal declaration of national citizenship. However this is a very narrow dimension of citizenship with limited expectations of performance. Many other conceptions of citizenship go far beyond this, for example, participatory citizenship. In this study the coding or spheres of citizenship for analysis of data from the scenario section of the questionnaire were adapted from the work of Ichilov’s (Ichilov,1990) ten dimensional model.

Ichilov’s model proposed four directional questions which gave a structure to the scenario.

What are the spheres in which citizens are expected to participate as citizens?
What are the basic orientations that should underlie citizen participation?
What are the legitimate objectives that citizens may wish to achieve through participation?
What are the legitimate means for pursuing these objectives?

Issues raised by these four questions have been classified into a 10 dimensional model which differentiates the various aspects of the role of citizen. The data from the scenario was used to map the teacher responses in order to draw group profiles of citizenship perceptions. On an aggregate level it is possible to show the most prevalent individual profiles within a group.
Ichilov’s taxonomy of citizenship dimensions has important implications for political socialisation and citizenship education. It establishes a framework for analysis of data and the reconceptualisation of the citizen role. This is not to say that citizenship can be viewed as a series of binary distinctions. The framework indicates the realm of choice in citizenship patterns and its complexities enabling teachers and their students to explore the dimensions which best suit them.

(Appendix one illustrates the 10 dimensions of citizenship)

**Total Teaching Staff**

In the first segment of the classroom scenario, prompted by the student Sally’s request for a discussion about Australia’s possible assistance to refugees from Kosovo, most teachers (66%) supported the idea of stopping the current topic for a class discussion on pragmatic grounds. Using Ichilov’s classification model, this action can be coded as being practical rather than theoretical acknowledging actual behaviour rather than just verbal adherence to a principle. The action can also be regarded at this stage of the scenario as supporting a participatory objective expressing dissent rather than consent to the issue.

Some teachers (33%) while welcoming the student’s initiative felt obliged for a number of reasons - pressure of school timetable, outside of their teaching area - to complete the topic at hand. As one teacher commented:

‘...I could not agree to any of these in my subject area - as I must follow a curriculum in maths...’

Prompted by Sally’s request for further action on the issue, a little over half of the teachers (57%) supported the idea of giving over some time in class to investigate the issue. These teachers still supported an action orientation favouring dissent as a legitimate form of participation. However some slippage occurred as some teachers began to consider the need to have voluntary participation, to seek permission from the Principal, to remain publicly uncommitted and to question the role of the teacher in a public place. A typical response from these teachers indicated:

‘...I don’t know whether we can as a school make a political statement...’

**Teachers of Social Education**

These teachers (80%) gave stronger support to discussing the issue raised by the student.

‘...It’s great that you’re so interested...’

Their responses were much more proactive in orientation with reasons stated as reflecting more universalistic notions of active participation, for example,

‘...this is an important issues of concern to all of us...’

These teachers clearly welcomed the classroom situation in which a student raised a controversial social issue for discussion. The student was congratulated for her personal interest. The 20% of social education teachers who could not support the student’s request cited the need to complete the topic at hand and the need to organise an informed debate rather than a spontaneous discussion.

‘...this is a good idea but can we complete the work set for today and discuss the issue next week, when I have had a chance to prepare...’

Social Education teachers (70%) still continued to support the student’s enthusiasm for the topic but picked up on what could become a one-sided view and began to show some hesitation about moving into the public arena of the shopping centre.
‘...a balanced view is needed here - not everyone supports this view...’

**Students**

Students from all year levels gave very strong support to Sally’s request to their teacher to stop the current topic and to discuss the issue of the plight of refugees. Reasons given for this support ranged from the opportunity to avoid serious work (2%) to the overwhelming recognition that the topic was too important to ignore (80%). The range of responses was interesting in that some real insights were displayed of students’ thinking and their conceptual grasp of the issues raised by the topic.

One year 9 student argued that

‘...maybe if someone starts offering assistance others will follow...’

**Parents**

The attitudes of parents to Sally’s request to stop the current topic and to hold a class discussion, varied according to the year level of their children. Parents with children in year 7 gave almost unqualified universal support to the request to hold a class discussion. Parents with children in year 9 had a mixed reaction with 50% supporting the discussion and the other 50% wanting to see the relevance of the request to the current topic or program. Parents with children in year 11 argued in favour of the request provided the teacher maintained a controlled, balanced and relevant discussion.

‘...to lead the conversations to fair comments from all and make sure reports are not one-sided or encourage their own beliefs...’

**Some Issues Raised by data from the First Part of the Scenario**

Teachers may well need to be more cognisant of the strength of views held by both their students and the parents of their students on controversial public issues. Anecdotal evidence from views expressed by some teachers that parents have a narrow utilitarian and vocational attitude to schooling and that areas of the curriculum like social education are seen as peripheral to serious study has been brought under question by this study. Parents do support teachers of social education in their inclusion of broad public issues in the curriculum. Parents are themselves interested in the issues and some are very well informed, perhaps more informed than some teachers. Can these parents be encouraged to participate in classroom discussions? Parents too are well aware of the ethical dilemmas faced by social education teachers in keeping a balanced analysis of controversial issues.

Students’ responses indicated a mostly serious and interested reaction to the inclusion of controversial issues into social education programs. (This is consistent with Verba et al 1995, also Torney-Purta, 1986, Ferguson, 1991, Mellor 1998). A study (Verba,1995) of student ‘civic voluntarism’ in the USA based on 15,000 preliminary interviews and a further 2,500 in depth interviews found that civics courses alone in schools did not play an important role in civic participation. Rather it was found that it was the opportunities for participation in the processes of school governance, together with the opportunities to discuss contemporary political issues of interest to students that were more important. Students reactions to Sally’s request in this study is consistent with their earlier support for moral and ethical behaviour, concern for the welfare of others and the ability to question ideas as being important characteristics of a good citizen.

Given the situation in this scenario where the initiative came from a student and given the evidence from this study that teachers are not rated highly by students as being an influence on their citizenship, it might be argued that the acceptance by social education teachers of a
classroom ethos in which the decision making is based on democratic principles, is more likely to engage student interest and foster civic virtue.

In the next segment of the scenario the teacher was asked by the student, Sally, to consider direct action in a public arena at the local shopping centre by participating on a Saturday in a display of student posters.

**Total Teaching Staff**

Most teachers (80%) considered Sally’s request as beyond their role as teacher, noting the difficulty of giving time on a Saturday, legal restraints, the need for Principal, parent and shopping centre manager permission. Here the language was one of external obligations, conventional means of dissent and theoretical rather than practical adherences. 33% of teachers gave a direct “No”.

‘...I can’t agree to this. I can’t support only one view in the community...
I need to remain publicly uncommitted in this way...'  

**Teachers of Social Education**

These teachers, (100%), for a variety of reasons, could not give support to the request to attend a public display of student work at the local shopping centre. They argued that there were legal constraints, that they had other commitments on Saturdays and that individual students and their parents could attend, but not as part of a school activity. One teacher commented

‘...I would aim for this not to happen as it compromises the apolitical role of schooling. Students however have individual options but this should not be orchestrated (or appear to be orchestrated) by teachers...'  

Few teachers commented on the more universalistic notions of civic action and a minority of teachers (22%) argued that adherence to a prescribed curriculum prevented this form of activity. Of the teachers who supported, at least in theory, Sally’s requests, the prevailing conceptions of civic action revolved around the position of the value of community involvement. A ‘good’ citizen was one who got involved. But a civic minded teacher was one who drew the line at actual active personal participation. Social Education teachers recognised that the raising and discussion of controversial social issues was a common activity in social education programs and was an activity which related to citizenship education.

‘A citizen does take an interest in current events/controversy and has an informed opinion on them.’

However in this instance the scope or sphere of citizenship expressed by social education teachers (90%) was restricted to the political sphere rather than relating it to what Ichilov (Ichilov, 1990) calls a plurality of civic/social domains. A minority of these teachers (20%) argued about the universality of the issues raised in the scenario. For most teachers of Social Education, this scenario was a case of thinking locally not globally and then not acting at all.

For this sample of social education teachers and, in fact for teachers in general, the classroom scenario did not arouse many conceptualisations of citizenship. Within the confines of this small sample of teachers, citizenship orientations can be arranged along a broad continuum. These teachers appear to be humane people with views on the good citizen characterised by tolerance and moral and ethical behaviour. The role of the family as the dominant factor influencing citizenship practices is not surprising given the regular media reports of the rapid decline in public support for other community socialising agencies, for example, the churches and the workplace. However what is surprising is the lack of value teachers often place on the role of parents and school families in assisting them in developing citizenship policies and practices even
though they themselves highly value the role their families played in developing their own sense of citizenship. Teachers clearly perceive a number of threats to their students’ citizenship, including drugs and television, but as the classroom scenario demonstrates they are not convinced that personal active participation in some form of civic activity is a good form of modelling citizenship practices. Theoretical considerations over-ride actual behaviour. Classroom practices may permit some form of student dissenting behaviours but there are clear limits. Teachers rarely conceptualise citizenship practices in the broadest universalistic sense.

Students

Students responses to a request to join with Sally to display their attitudes at a local shopping centre on a Saturday were divided on year level grounds. Students in Year 7 overwhelmingly (75%) supported the activity, the most repeated reason being the importance of the issues and the value in gaining wider support from the community.

‘Yes I would be very proud to support Sally and feel that I was doing something to help the world.’

Students from Year 9 on the other hand did not support the activity. There was a wide variety of reasons for not attending including other commitments on Saturdays, lack of interest in the issue, it was an uncool activity and that it was up to individual action.

‘No, she’ll make a fool of herself’

Students from Year 11 also expressed a range of reasons for and against attending the activity, including a view that Sally was a radical, it was not an effective strategy, and the issue was crucial to Australia’s humanitarian image abroad. A majority (60%) said they would attend.

The initial difficulty for teachers is that students place both teachers and school principals as being of minimal influence on their sense of citizenship. Teachers of Social Education need to employ different arguments related to year levels in order to gain active support from students for community projects. A didactic approach in which students are told to attend or an approach which argues from a position of a universal moral stance are unlikely to be successful for all students. Teachers may well consider cross-age groups and/or focus on younger students initially as part of a long term strategy.

Parents

Parents (85%) did not support the issue being taken to the public arena for a wide variety of reasons. They argued that this activity would not allow the teacher to provide a good role model for their children. They argued that schools should participate in community activities but in such forms as visits to hospitals, old people’s homes, or the stock exchange. These activities in social education were seen by parents as contributing to an understanding of real life experiences and gave an indication to their children of future responsibilities, to

‘Make them alert to the community and community issues.’

Discussions about the role of the school and the place of social education in the curriculum became very prominent in this section of the questionnaire. Parents overwhelmingly put the view that social education needs to focus on the values objective area, in particular, activities which would engender values like respect, loyalty, tolerance, honesty, courtesy, equity. Social Education curriculum should

‘Emphasise equality, non-violence, preservation of public property, awareness of law and order, consideration of other people’s opinion.’
Rarely did parents mention specific topics and/or themes to be included in the curriculum. Mostly they were more interested in suggesting classroom activities, for example, work experience, voluntary service, visits to community service centres. The message for teachers of social education is loud and clear. Parents believe that programs need to be reconfigured to bring a more person-centred approach in which there is more emphasis on the dynamics of personal orientations rather than on an objective impersonal analysis of a social issue.

The final section of the questionnaire asked participants to comment, in an open ended format, on what they considered being a good citizen meant to them. (This was also followed up later in the interviews).

**Total Teaching Staff**

The teaching staff at the case study school perceived a good citizen as being someone whose actual behaviour rather than some form of verbal adherence to principles is based primarily on cognition and not the affective attitudinal orientation. A good citizen is therefore well informed and has a range of appropriate (though unspecified) skills. This good citizen is characterised by recognising a mix of both external motivations, like rules and laws, and internal stimuli, for example, personal value systems. The good citizen is likely to be national rather than global in their orientation and to think more inclusively in the social/civic domains rather than restricting it to the political sphere. A typical comment was

‘I want my students to be thoughtful and concerned people who are interested in human issues in our community.’

**Teachers of Social Education**

In contrast and perhaps surprisingly, these teachers had a less developed sense of what might constitute a good citizen. Responses tended to be couched in terms of the current pressures being placed on social education teachers, in particular, to address the community’s perception of increasing social ills. These teachers found it more difficult to move outside of their current curriculum and to consider the broader questions of the nature of citizenship. Citizenship was not seen to be an integral goal of social education, but rather another topic which had to be somehow fitted into the already full curriculum. There was little evidence of a sense of identity, of location, of community and of participation. A typical response from an interview was

‘a citizen does take an interest in current events/controversy and has an informed opinion on them...’

**Students**

Year 7 level students as a group focused on a limited number of characteristics as the essentials of good citizenship. The most essential characteristic was seen (53%) to be one of law abiding,

‘I don’t know, not getting into trouble, someone who obeys the laws of the country.’

Other characteristics from students at higher levels were of the helping nature, particularly in the community (40%). Most often and usually from students in year 7, the specific nature of the help was not stated.

‘...someone who helps out in the community in their own way...’
The third most common characteristic was of the values and attitudes area. Students commonly (38%) noted that good citizens were loyal, caring, responsible, friendly, honest and trustworthy.

Some other interesting comments included someone who paying taxes, doesn’t litter and ‘...goes to meetings (not all the time) but once a month...’

Parents

Parents were likewise fairly united in their views about a good citizen, although there were some differences between parents with children from different year levels. Parents of children in years 7 and 9 argued strongly that obeying the laws of the country was the essential element.

‘To me, being a good citizen means respecting our laws and the people who enforce them...’

Parents with children in year 11 had a wider range of characteristics with no one characteristic assuming substantial support. The pattern of these included, respect for elders, contributes to the community and moral and ethical behaviour. All groups of parents mentioned the importance of contributing to the community, although how this could be done was mostly left unstated. Commonly a response was

‘One that contributes to the community in a fashion that benefits the community.’

Some Issues that were raised by the final question and in discussions about a ‘good’ citizen.

Teachers’ responses in general tended to comment on the student as a type of apprentice adult and not so much as a citizen in their own right. This came later in adult life. This indicated some difficulty in divorcing their role as teacher from the conceptions of citizenship in the broader community. Teachers mostly saw civics and citizenship as a content to be taught and not as something for students to practice in the safety of school.

Teachers of social education, in this sample, were unable to articulate a comprehensive and well developed definition of citizenship. They were uncertain not only about the content of possible citizenship education programs and the contribution parents and students might make, but also about how to teach them. The interviews revealed that they lacked both confidence in their personal development of theoretical frameworks of citizenship. One teacher lamented,

‘...what do you expect! My undergraduate studies never raised issues about citizenship. The post graduate studies I have undertaken have all been vocationally inspired. It is only in the last couple of years that I have even thought about citizenship in my teaching...’

These teachers also argued that they were working in a political and industrial climate which has been incompatible for several years with notions of citizenship. Continuous changes in curriculum from outside agencies, increasing workloads and uncertain career paths have all redirected their energies away from their sense of readiness to initiate curriculum changes in their classrooms.

‘...I used to see myself as a radical. I liked to discuss controversial social issues with my colleagues and students. Now I am so tired that I rarely think about the broader philosophy of social education. All I want to do is less...’

Teachers and parents rarely made any connections between the ethos of the school and its style of governance and ideas of citizenship. Teachers rarely saw how a democratic pedagogy
might model a democratic community. When raised in discussions, both groups, but in particular parents, supported a well managed classroom where teachers, while being fair, were also firmly in control. As one parent put it,

‘... don’t get me wrong. I am a believer in democracy, but not in the classroom.’

One teacher of social education commented on the top down decision making style in the school, and, in fact in her classroom.

‘...I can see the contradiction, but the reality of managing classes...and the students expect you to do the decision making....’

Students, in this study, often saw citizenship in a negative form. In group discussions where they felt unrestricted by both their teachers and the structure of the questionnaire they frequently commented on the reality of classroom life. Teachers were the power brokers, they were the oppressed. A sentiment familiar to many of us. This sentiment was particularly strong in the middle school years and gives support to ideas about how schools might be restructured in order to align themselves with the needs and interests of young adolescents. Other law enforcement agencies like the police and governments in general were also categorised in this negative manner. Yet when asked about broader social issues, like for example, caring for the environment, euthanasia and problems associated with indigenous peoples, they were passionate, articulate and full of ideas. Students addressed the question from the broadest perspective almost distancing themselves from the equation and arguing in terms of the principle. They wanted to engage in public debate.

**Conclusions**

The school in this case study has been grappling for some time with the issue of curriculum renewal in the social education area and in particular with the question of the inclusion of citizenship education. Leadership of this activity largely rests with the teaching staff. However the extent of the likelihood of ‘successful’ curriculum renewal is shaped by the cultural histories of not only the teachers but also the other major players - students and parents. Teachers at this school remain uncertain about the nature of the contribution parents and students can make in curriculum policy formulation. Teachers in general appear to be also mostly unaware of the cultural histories of their colleagues, so a sense of the personal dynamics of staff decision making is missing together with a lack of awareness of the contributions that non-social education teachers might make to citizenship programs.

The study revealed a number of elements about the conceptualising of citizenship education in the school. Firstly, teachers in general were limited in their understandings of the current debates about citizenship and democratic theory. Teachers of social education in particular freely admitted this deficit noting their lack of formal training in the area. Teachers in general (like students and parents) in this study had a broader conception of citizenship than that expressed in the Discovering Democracy materials which recognised diversity and difference as two key components in their community. However teachers rarely expressed views about the value of developing with students a kind of civic school community, nor did teachers have a broad forward looking vision of the ‘better world’ or the ‘better Australia’ in which a particular type of citizen played a contributing role.

Teachers were strong in their views that a knowledge of government was a very minor aspect of civic virtue. Parents and students agreed on this point. Teachers of social education at this school appeared to be more tied to traditional conceptions which in turn were bound by traditional teaching strategies. Hence learning about current events was seen as the way into
becoming an effective citizen. How this was to happen or how this could be supported by a defensible argument was rarely made clear. Social education teachers appeared to underestimate the interest in and strength of feeling by both their students and parents about the broader elements of citizenship - a sense of identity, a sense of location, a sense of the good life and a sense of active participation in social issues.

This study also revealed some insights into current classroom practices in the teaching of social education. Teachers rarely, or even sought, the experiences of parents (and students) in the development of their programs. Social Education teachers often displayed the more ‘conservative’ approach to teaching and learning. Making a difference was rarely seen as a worthwhile or achievable goal. They did not see the how their classes could model democratic decision making processes. When data from the studies of Verba (Verba 1995) and Osborne (Osborne 1984) were discussed teachers remained sceptical.

This study also indicates that it cannot be assumed that teachers of social education are the ‘logical’ owners of citizenship programs, that they will be any better informed and more practised in citizenship activities or that they will be more willing to act as role models for citizenship ideals than the general teaching cohort. All participants saw the need for some form of citizenship education program in their school. Teachers of social education in Australia have been nominated as the group mostly responsible for introducing citizenship education programs, however neither planning for teacher professional development in citizenship nor writing curriculum materials for citizenship can effectively proceed without thinking about teachers’ understandings of citizenship education.

What then are the preconditions necessary for this to happen? Partly the answer lies in an understanding about change processes. The social education teachers, in the discussions, often commented on the lack of appropriate teaching and learning resources. But curriculum change does not merely happen with increased resourcing. Change is effected by a diverse range of factors including the receptivity of the school community to change and is contingent upon ownership of the process and outcomes of all participants - teachers, parents and students. The case study school now has to consider what it might do, if anything, with the data from this study.

The social education teachers tended to divorce the nexus between product (units of work, for example) and processes (the daily routines and social practices of the school and their classrooms). Effective changes in citizenship programs are more likely to occur when the focus is more on the educative process of citizenship. Teachers are in the middle of the formation of people’s dispositions and competencies for society. They mediate the behaviours of respect for persons and their rights every day (NPDP, 1996). The irony was that teachers at the school were only too willing to admit that they mostly had has little formal exposure to notions of citizenship in their undergraduate degrees and/or in their subsequent reading and thinking. Yet the inclusion of prepared curriculum materials by outsiders, particularly by governments, was seen as being mostly irrelevant to their daily practices.

Finally, this study revealed the lack of understanding held by governments in Australia about the impact of developing a citizenship policy based on political ideology lines rather than on community consensus. Concepts of applied education knowledge, the application of industrial models of production to the education sector and the close alignment of schooling with economic prosperity have resulted in the necessity for a dramatic rethinking about professional development and the implementation of new work programs and practices. By not allowing for discussions about the problematics of citizenship and the nature of national identity (s) Australians may wish
to be, the imposition of a citizenship education program from above deprives the community of a sense of ownership and community.

References


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