Teachers talking civics

Current Constructions of Civics and Citizenship Education in Australian Schools

Kerry Kennedy, Simon Jimenez, Di Mayer, Suzanne Mellor and Janet Smith
## Contents

### Introduction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Issues in civics and citizenship education</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issue 1: How does civics and citizenship education fit into the school curriculum?</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issue 2: What is civics education?</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issue 3: What is citizenship education?</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issue 4: Are civics and citizenship education necessarily in opposition?</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issue 5: Where does Discovering Democracy fit?</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issue 6: Civics and citizenship events and activities</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issue 7: Values and civics and citizenship education</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Case Study 1 — Talking civics in the Australian Capital Territory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The educational context</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The selection of ACT schools and methodology</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telopea Park School (Lycee Franco-Australien)</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canberra Girls' Grammar School</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some general findings and issues for civics and citizenship in the ACT</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Case Study 2 — Talking civics in New South Wales

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The educational context</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Anne's School</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northview Secondary School</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion and conclusions for civics and citizenship education in New South Wales</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Case Study 3 — Talking civics in Queensland

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The educational context</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The case study schools</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The interviewee selection process</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The teachers' views of civics</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion and conclusions for civics and citizenship education in Queensland</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concluding comment</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Case Study 4 — Talking civics in Victoria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The educational context and the three Victorian case-study schools</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The interviewee selection process</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perspectives and issues from schools in Victoria</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Celebrating engagement in active citizenship at Wangaratta State High School</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusions regarding civics and citizenship education in Victoria</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### References

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Appendix I

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australian Capital Territory: Questions that teachers were asked</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Appendix II

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New South Wales: Questions and topics for interviews</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Appendix III

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Queensland: Letter faxed to all interviewees</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Appendix IV

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Victoria: Conversations about Civics, An A.R.C. Policy Study: Interview Schedule</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACTDEYFS</td>
<td>Australian Capital Territory Department of Education, Youth &amp; Family Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACT</td>
<td>Australian Capital Territory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANZAC</td>
<td>Australian and New Zealand Army Corps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BoS</td>
<td>Board of Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cit. Ed.</td>
<td>Citizenship Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HSIE</td>
<td>Human Society and Its Environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HTA</td>
<td>History Teachers Association of New South Wales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K–2</td>
<td>Kindergarten to Year 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K–10</td>
<td>Kindergarten to Year 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K–12</td>
<td>Kindergarten to Year 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KLA</td>
<td>Key learning area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOTE</td>
<td>Language Other Than English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>New South Wales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P–7</td>
<td>Preschool to Year 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P–12</td>
<td>Preschool to Year 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P–10</td>
<td>Preschool to Year 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QLD</td>
<td>Queensland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOSE</td>
<td>Studies of Society and the Environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIC</td>
<td>Victoria</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The research reported here is the product of collaboration between a team of researchers and teachers in the Australian Capital Territory, New South Wales, Queensland, and Victoria. The focus of the research was civics and citizenship education. Its purpose was to seek a better understanding of how teachers are responding to recent civics and citizenship education initiatives. It was recognised to be an important opportunity to hear the voices of teachers in an area of the school curriculum that was both new and very public. The research, conducted during 2001, took the form of “conversations” between the researchers and between them and school teachers and principals. Those conversations are reported here in the form of State/Territory based case studies. In the following section, an overview of the case studies is provided in order to highlight the main lessons that can be drawn from the cases.

Civics and citizenship education is now a component of all State/Territory curriculum frameworks. The Commonwealth’s Discovering Democracy Program has provided considerable support through curriculum materials development since 1997, and professional development since 2000. Yet for teachers, civics and citizenship is just one more requirement in an often overcrowded and demanding curriculum. Teachers cope with these demands in different ways as indicated by their comments in the following quotations:

We have been involved in developing the students as citizens for a long time … the responsibility for citizenship falls to all of the departments within the school, to the pastoral care system, and particularly to the RE department. The responsibility of civics falls to the History and Social Science departments … I don’t see them as meshed together … citizenship will be really clear in each of the school’s programs, but I don’t think that civics is likely to head any further than it has to (Louise, St Anne’s)

Barbara indicated that “my view of civics and citizenship isn’t just the Australian flag and national anthem”, although she agreed that these and other symbols of Australia are important for students to learn. These “basics” had a nationalistic, Australian focus, specifically on its symbols and its system and process of government. However, Barbara’s view of civics clearly had a global dimension, which focused on such things as Australia’s involvement on global matters and how the country considers itself to be part of the global village. One way that Barbara recently explored this in her classroom was to elaborate the role of Australia’s Department of Defence, its recent peace-keeping efforts in East Timor, and “how important Australia’s military tradition is to creating our identity as to who we think we are as Australians in general”. Another way that her global focus of civics has been incorporated into current teaching was through a recent writing exercise, drawing on empathy, where students had to write about immigration and how they thought it would impact on them as a resident of a small community, both positive and negative. [Barbara, Northview Secondary]

---

1 This was part of a project funded by the Australian Research Council. What follows in this publication represents the views of the researchers.
My understanding about the civics part of it is that it’s an understanding of how our government operates, so it’s more an academic situation than the citizenship, which revolves around what students might do, what they might contribute to society. [June, Northview Secondary]

The teachers say that it is very difficult to teach this area to the students at “Bramberly” because of the community’s expectations and values. (Queensland Case Study)

It is clear from the teachers who participated in this study that there is no commonly held view of civics and citizenship education and that different contexts often require different approaches. This does not mean there is a lack of commitment. On the contrary, teachers have quite distinctive visions for civics and citizenship education:

…whilst civics and citizenship education is an important component in most schools, it often resides in the hearts and minds of individual teachers rather than existing as a formalised and explicit part of the curriculum.(ACT Case Study)

She says that while she has probably never used either word with the students she has taught during her 25 years of teaching, she does focus on relationship skills in her classroom all the time. For example, she spends a lot of time teaching students how to co-exist in groups, how to treat each other with respect, and developing their interpersonal skills. (Vivienne, Innis State School)

Both primary schools value decision-making, problem-solving and negotiating as important learnings for their students, and they are explicitly taught, with a view to achieving particular attitude formation and values objectives. (Victorian Case Study)

For teachers who took part in our conversations, civics and citizenship education represented a range of activities ranging from formal instruction in aspects of Australian government and history to classroom, school and community activities that involved students in decision making, problem solving and community development. What this means is that there are still many questions to be asked and issues to be negotiated as teachers and schools continue to grapple with civics and citizenship education as a component of the school curriculum. The next chapter in this book will explore some of those issues in greater depth.

It is important for policymakers, researchers, academics and the community to listen to the voices of teachers because they are the ones who have the responsibility for preparing future citizens and they are the ones who interact on a daily basis with those future citizens. They create the school contexts in which civics and citizenship education can be played out and embedded in the lives of students. It is a significant role and one that deserves greater attention than is currently the case in policy discussions. Hopefully, this publication will help to ameliorate this situation.

Kerry Kennedy
Simon Jimenez
Di Mayer
Suzanne Mellor
Janet Smith
**Issue 1: How does civics and citizenship education fit into the school curriculum?**

“The government and non-government schools in the ACT that are engaged in middle schooling teaching and learning practices are typically using integrated curriculum models. In these schools, civics and citizenship tends to be integrated between the Studies of Society and the Environment (SOSE), English and Health/Physical Education KLAs [Key Learning Areas].”

“In ACT primary schools, civics and citizenship also primarily fits into the Studies of Society and the Environment KLA [Key Learning Area], but is also commonly integrated with any of the other seven curriculum KLAs.”

“Civics and citizenship in ACT secondary schools is generally located within the Studies of Society and the Environment (SOSE) KLA and is therefore based on the *Studies of Society and the Environment Curriculum Framework*.”

“In NSW, History and Geography have become the subject areas through which civics is to be incorporated into the formal school curriculum.”

“Thus the Studies of Society and the Environment syllabus provides opportunities for exploration of many issues associated with civics and citizenship education.” (Queensland)

Most, though not all of the civics and citizenship education curricula work in these three schools, has been achieved “through the medium of the SOSE curriculum.” (Victoria)
Issue 2: What is civics education?

In all States/Territories, civics education is taught as part of Studies of Society and the Environment (or its equivalent) or History and/or Geography.

Teaching civics can be engaging and relevant for students if the right teaching strategies are used. Role-play, drama, debates, class parliaments, interviews, community visits and guest speakers are just some of the ways that civics content can be taught.

“Our children just don’t know enough about how our country works”

“All three teachers would most likely agree… that some ‘basic’ and politically-based content is necessary. Each teacher spoke of wanting students to understand their rights and responsibilities, which implies a need to focus on some content that is technical in nature, such as rights, responsibilities, and how these have derived in Australia through various political and social movements.”

But not all teachers agreed:

“Teachers in the two primary schools did not think civic knowledge is very important”

Some examples of civics education

Primary
- Kindergarten — Rules and the child as a member of a group;
- Year 3 — Who rules? Types of governance and citizenship;
- Year 4 — Rules and laws;
- Year 5 — The people make a nation; and
- Year 6 — Men and women in political life.

Secondary
- “Examples of Discovering Democracy based, integrated units include United Nations, Government and People Make a Nation.”
- “Topics in the Year 11/12 subjects such as Political Studies, Media Studies and Asian studies.”
**Issue 3: What is citizenship education?**

**Informal curriculum**

**Citizenship education**
Can promote participation and involvement

**What students can do to experience what it is like to be a citizen**
‘The teachers believed these were ‘citizenship dispositions’, something they saw as different from and more important than ‘civics’.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In class</th>
<th>In school</th>
<th>Out of school</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Negotiated curriculum and assessment</td>
<td>Student Representative Council</td>
<td>Youth Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class parliament</td>
<td>Citizenship Awards</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**What schools can do to promote citizenship skills**

‘Aboriginal Reconciliation Group’

“Consistently, each teacher identified the pastoral care and social justice system as the most clear example of citizenship activities at the school”

“Student participation in the Rock Eisteddfod Challenge and the Croc Festival”

“Aboriginal Day” (It seems to me that this is civic/knowledge… at least as much as it is citizenship… feeling about indigenous culture requires knowledge. It fits within the definition on the next page in the civic ‘cloud’)

“Monthly dinners that the school hosts for parents of Aboriginal students as another example of a citizenship activity at the school”

“Leadership is a live debate in all three schools”

“I would not think to teach them the mechanics of the Australian system. [That] would not necessarily make them effective citizens”
Issue 4: Are civics and citizenship education necessarily in opposition?

**Civic education**
Knowledge, skills and attitudes about democratic institutions and cultures

Provides the knowledge base for civic understanding

**Citizenship education**
Experiencing democracy in class, throughout the school and in the community

Provides the experiential base for democratic participation

They must be interactive
- Knowledge and experience inform each other
- Practice and theory are reinforcing
- Values need to be lived out
**Issue 5: Where does Discovering Democracy fit?**

Schools and teachers will make decisions about where to use resources and how relevant they are in particular contexts. There is little doubt that for many, although not all, teachers who took part in these conversations *Discovering Democracy* Curriculum Materials have a role to play in civics and citizenship education programs.

**ACT**

“appear to be widely used”

“Good system level support”

“Most schools were enthusiastically using the *Discovering Democracy* materials and all teachers were most familiar with the materials”

**NSW**

“Teachers at St Anne’s knew of the materials but had not used them

As Barbara said, “for resources, I think [*Discovering Democracy*] has played a role, but most of that has come from our personal investigation of it … I wouldn’t say that [*Discovering Democracy*] has gone whole school at this point in time”

**Queensland**

“The *Discovering Democracy* project has had some impact in Queensland schools. In 1999, as part of the intersystemic Queensland *Discovering Democracy* teacher professional development project, two booklets were produced — Linking *Discovering Democracy* and Studies of Society and Environment in Queensland Schools: A planning and professional development guide, one for Years 4–7 and another for Years 8–10. The main sections of these booklets provide a matrix which matches *Discovering Democracy* units with the Queensland SOSE outcomes, provide additional resource references, and explain links with the prior syllabuses which the SOSE syllabus is replacing/connected to (i.e. History, Geography, Study of Society and the Environment, Citizenship Education and Business in Years 8–10)”

“The department has continued to use the *Discovering Democracy* materials as the basis of one of the compulsory integrated core units in Year 8. Martin says the department have worked with the unit and *Discovering Democracy* materials to make things a bit more ‘user friendly’. He thinks that, as it is, the kids find it all ‘a bit dry and a bit dull’. The department is working towards two integrated core units in Year 8 — one focussing on History and Civics and the other focussing on Geography and Civics. They are trying to integrate civics into both areas and make it more meaningful than having it out on its own”
“Rhonda has been the driving force in this development and passionately believes Discovering Democracy is ‘a fabulous resource’”

“The teachers were aware of the Discovering Democracy kit but have been unable to locate it in the school. They reported they had been searching for it over the past month since they thought it could provide some resources for one of the units they were developing for the following year. Donna is aware of and has used resources available via the websites (EQ and Curriculum Corporation)”

Victoria

“The arrival of the Discovering Democracy kit was the first the teachers in the three schools knew of the Discovering Democracy policy and program”

“They had made little regular use of the Discovering Democracy materials, which lie languishing somewhere in the library, I guess!… We can always ask the librarian… However staff at all three schools had ‘dipped into’ Discovering Democracy resources, with the two primary schools having used only the Federation unit”
Issue 6: Civics and citizenship events and activities

These were many and varied and often reflected the unique contexts of particular schools.

ACT

“Negotiated assessment”
“Conseil de classes”
“Democratic elections for Senior Council and school leadership positions”
“Boarding House citizenship activities”
“Aboriginal Reconciliation Group”
“Bastille Day”

NSW

“Student participation in the Rock Eisteddfod Challenge and the Croc Festival”
“Aboriginal Day”
“Monthly dinners that the school hosts for parents of Aboriginal students”
“Student Representative Council and its reward system”
“Consistently, each teacher [at St Annes] identified the pastoral care and social justice system as the most clear example of citizenship activities at the school”

Queensland

“The school has a ‘Student Council which works quite well at a school level but the kids also think that “oh well” … as a Student Council they wonder just how much impact they have when it gets to real decisions anyway”

“The teachers talked briefly about the School Council and the Student Council but lamented that students often didn’t get involved either due to a lack of commitment or because the issues were irrelevant to them and/or they felt not empowered to really influence things”

“Rhonda and her class have also instigated a Citizenship Award in the school”

Victoria

“Leadership is a live debate in all three schools. The key issues were seen to be how to:

• Offer opportunities to engage in leadership activities to all, not just some, students;
• Make decision-making ‘real’, how to have it be about things that matter to students;
• Keep a range of decision-making processes complementary, not conflictual or overlapping;
• Acknowledge and affirm citizenship successes, even if small, in such a way as to retain in students a sincerity and thoughtfulness about the leadership tasks;
• Avoid creating division or complacency within the student community, especially when supporting ‘difference’;
• Connect and reinforce the concepts of ‘leading’ and ‘responsibility’ (more an issue with younger children and those cultures inexperienced with leadership).

“Since 1999, the Rural City of Wangaratta has had, as a Committee of its full Council, a Youth Council, on which students from the school (Year 9 and 10 students) have been representatives and had a range of responsibilities, including mayoral”
Issue 7: Values and civics and citizenship education

Values are an integral part of civics and citizenship education

Values
- Democracy
- Racism
- Social Justice
- Aboriginal Reconciliation
- Rights
- Responsibilities

These concepts, all of which are referred to in the conversations that were held for this project, require teachers to have an explicit understanding of and commitment to the values that underpin them.

This will not be easy for some schools:

“Very few, if any, of the teachers indicated that their schools had specifically discussed or named the values that they espoused, and upon which the civics and citizenship programs in their schools could be laid. It is probable that in the absence of a set of negotiated and clearly articulated school values, individual teachers may fall back on their own values and mores”

“And for others, there may be a need to make explicit what is currently implicit”

“Each [teacher] agreed that citizenship was a fundamental part of the school’s ethos due to formal and informal structures that have long been established at St Anne’s”
Curriculum in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) education system is largely school-based and secondary students are prepared for the ACT High School Record and Certificate in Year 10, and the ACT Year 12 Certificate. Assessment for the Year 12 Certificate is based on continuous internal assessment with no external examination.

The choice of school-based curriculum in the ACT results in a huge variety and diversity of curriculum offerings and makes it somewhat difficult to generalise about where civics and citizenship fits into the school curriculum. In ACT government schools and in the schools administered by the Catholic Education Office, curriculum is based on the ACT Curriculum Frameworks and the Across Curriculum Perspective Statements documents. The ACT curriculum frameworks are system level curriculum documents developed for the eight Key Learning Areas (KLAs) of knowledge and experience. Although the majority of ACT schools develop their own curriculum based on these ACT documents, a small number of ACT schools align themselves with New South Wales, and therefore draw on NSW curriculum documentation.

Civics and citizenship in ACT secondary schools is generally located within the Studies of Society and the Environment Key Learning Area and is therefore based on the Studies of Society and the Environment Curriculum Framework. The government and non-government schools in the ACT that are engaged in middle schooling teaching and learning practices are typically using integrated curriculum models. In these schools, civics and citizenship tends to be integrated between the Studies of Society and the Environment, English and Health/Physical Education Key Learning Areas.

In ACT primary schools, civics and citizenship also primarily fits into the Studies of Society and the Environment Key Learning Area, but is also commonly integrated with any of the other seven curriculum Key Learning Areas.

Discovering Democracy materials appear to be widely used in ACT schools. A full time Discovering Democracy officer is shared between the Department of Education, Youth & Family Services (DEYFS) and the Association of Independent Schools. A Curriculum Officer in the Catholic Education Office is also responsible for civics and citizenship education in ACT Catholic systemic schools.

The DEYFS also employs a full time Curriculum Executive Officer in the area of civics and citizenship education. DEYFS anticipates that civics and citizenship education will be integrated through the ACT Studies of Society and the Environment framework, all the Key Learning Areas and is ideally suited to the ACT Essential Learnings, which have been developed for the ACT High Schools for the New Millennium Project. The DEYFS website notes that in the ACT, civics and citizenship education areas of study include:
• Democracy and government;
• Being Australian; and
• Citizenship.

The selection of ACT schools and methodology
A series of informal conversations about civics and citizenship education took place with a number of ACT schools before a choice was made about which schools would be chosen for more formal interviews. Following these informal conversations, two ACT schools were selected as productive sites in which to conduct and record formal conversations with teachers. One of these schools was a K–10 French/Australian bilingual government school and the other a K–12 Anglican independent girls’ school. These two schools were selected because of their commitment to civics and citizenship education, the diversity they offered and their willingness to participate in the project. Over a two-month period, conversations were recorded with a total of 10 teachers in these two schools.

Both the informal and the formal interviews were most productive and yielded rich data and insights. The informal pre-conversations played a most important role in setting up the final recorded conversations. These initial conversations with principals or longstanding teachers in the school pointed to the most appropriate teachers for the recorded conversations. The final recorded conversations provided not only invaluable insights about civics and citizenship education, but more broadly, they touched on the teachers’ views of the role of schools in the community and on the place of values education in the curriculum. Interestingly, after the conversations with teachers had been recorded, several of them contacted the interviewer to say how helpful the conversations had been in progressing their own thinking on civics and citizenship education and in enabling them to articulate issues which they had been grappling with.

The people who were chosen for the recorded interviews were not chosen as necessarily being representative of the staff at that school. Rather, they were each seen as contributing a particular perspective on the history of civics and citizenship education in their school.

Many wonderful and creative programs and ideas were evident in the civics and citizenship arena in each school. Some issues and challenges were very similar across the schools, particularly those associated with the organisation of civics education. However, there were also differences between the schools. Most noticeably, each school had responded in unique ways and had developed particular programs to meet the specific needs of its student body and community, particularly in the area of citizenship education. Some of these exciting initiatives will be highlighted later in this chapter.

Telopea Park School (Lycee Franco–Australien)
The school context
Telopea Park School/Lycee Franco–Australien is a binational French–Australian K–10 school, which was established in 1984 as the result of an international agreement between the governments of France and Australia. It has a current enrolment of approximately 1100 students (approximately 440 primary and 660 secondary students). Of these, all primary and approximately one fifth of secondary students follow the English–French bilingual program, while the remainder of the secondary students follow an English language program.
Telopea Park School is administered as part of the ACT Government school system. It is accountable to the French and Australian authorities as well as to the ACT Department of Education, Youth & Family Services (DEYFS). The curriculum in the primary section is a harmonised French–Australian curriculum. The French curriculum has been adapted in part to take into account local requirements but still conforms in general with the programs and official instructions of the French Ministry for Education. In the same way the Australian curriculum has been modified to take into account French requirements but also satisfies the broad requirements of the DEYFS. Students that attend Telopea Park come from Canberra, other Australian states and from many countries around the world. Over a third of the students were born outside Australia. Many students are temporary residents whose parents have been posted to Australia; others are on exchange or are international private students. A fifth of the students speak a language other than English at home including about 8% of the students who come from France or French speaking countries.

As expressed in its vision statement, Telopea Park School has a commitment to excellence in education and in all fields of endeavour by challenging students to develop the skills and personal qualities needed to live successfully in a complex world. The school values and celebrates linguistic and cultural diversity and students achieving their personal best through a broad range of educational experiences. Accordingly, civics and citizenship education forms part of this broad range of educational experiences.

**Interviewee selection at Telopea Park School**

Initial conversations with both the Principal and the Deputy Principal provided understandings of the broad directions and characteristics of the school and identified staff to be interviewed. Formal conversations and recorded interviews took place with three staff — two in the secondary and one in the primary. These staff were:

- Head of the Studies of Society and the Environment Department (currently acting as Deputy Principal)
- A French teacher of secondary History/Geography (Histoire et Geographie), and
- A Year 3 and 6 classroom teacher.

**Civics and citizenship happenings at Telopea Park School**

It is apparent that a great deal is happening at Telopea Park School in the area of civics and citizenship education. The primary school curriculum contains many civics and citizenship units, which are largely located within Studies of Society and the Environment. Some of the primary Studies of Society and the Environment topics dealing with civics and citizenship themes are as follows:

- Kindergarten — Rules and the Child as a Member of a Group;
- Year 3 — Who Rules? Types of Governance and Citizenship;
- Year 4 — Rules and Laws;
- Year 5 — The People make a Nation; and
- Year 6 — Men and Women in Political Life.

In the secondary school, students follow two separate streams. Students in the French stream follow a 50% French/50% English program with French, History–Geography, Mathematics and Science taught in French by a French trained specialist teacher and the rest of their subjects
in English taught by Australian teachers. In both streams, civics and citizenship is mainly addressed in Studies of Society and the Environment (Histoire et Geographie), which is compulsory from Years 7–10. It is also addressed in a Year 10 Legal Studies elective.

The civics and citizenship programs are greatly enhanced by the multicultural base of the school and the co-existence of the French and the Australian cultures. The Discovering Democracy materials are widely used in both primary and secondary sections and supplement other civics and citizenship initiatives and programs. The Student Representative Council has a long tradition at Telopea Park as a forum for democratic participation for students. Three civics and citizenship related initiatives at Telopea Park School will be described in greater detail:

• Bastille Day celebrations;
• Conseil de classes; and
• Negotiated assessment in the curriculum.

**Bastille Day celebrations**

The community of Telopea Park School enthusiastically participates in Bastille Day celebrations on 14th July each year, to acknowledge the French Revolution and the uprising of the French people against their oppressors. At Telopea Park, French and Australian staff and students participate in Bastille Day performances, plays and displays. The celebrations are based around the notions of democracy and “Liberty, Equality, Fraternity”, highlighting the value that the French place on living in a democracy.

Each year the celebrations have a significant impact on the Australian students and teachers. Nick, a teacher at the school said the following about the celebration of Bastille Day at Telopea Park School:

> It really does come through clearly on Bastille Day that this is something that means a great deal to the French, that this is something that happened 212 years ago now and it’s still living for the French… They’ve actually had to … fight for freedom, whereas we got it on a plate.

> The French, I think because they’ve had a Revolution, in ways they’re still living in their Revolution. You can see that every Bastille Day. The French really love the idea of civics and that’s one of the reasons I suspect they do it better than we do.

**Conseil de classes**

Conseil de classes (or class councils) take place in each of the French stream classes at Telopea Park School and are based on the model that operates in French schools. These meetings take place twice each year. Students and staff review the progress of the class and of each student in the class.

Conseil de classes is a democratic forum in which curriculum issues and the progress of the class and of individual students are discussed. The meetings are chaired by the Proviseur (the Head of French Studies, who is nominated by the French Government and has responsibilities for the French teachers and the bilingual program). Only the class teachers attend the first meeting, to enable discussion of student welfare. However, at the second Conseil de classes, the following are present:

• The Proviseur (chair);
• two student representatives from each class (elected by peers using an absolute majority model);
the class teachers; and
- two parent representatives (chosen by the Principal from a P&C Association list).

Staff and students at Telopea Park believe that Conseil de classes is an excellent model of democratic process and that it ensures the needs of all students are noted and addressed.

**Negotiated assessment in the curriculum**

Telopea Park School has recently implemented negotiated assessment for all subjects across the secondary school and students are routinely given the opportunity to engage in conversations with their teachers about their assessment. As each teacher prepares their course outline for their units of work, they discuss all aspects of assessment with their students. This includes timing (to prevent too much assessment falling due at the same time), type (to allow for multiple intelligences) and weightings (to determine whether all or some of students’ assessment items will be counted). Such negotiations enable students to become active participants in a more democratic curriculum process. In addition, staff at Telopea Park are also increasingly negotiating the curriculum content with students. Feedback from students on negotiated assessment is very positive and they greatly appreciate the opportunity for participation in a democratic process.

**Canberra Girls’ Grammar School**

**The school context**

Canberra Girls’ Grammar School is an Anglican, independent K–12 school. The school is non-selective and has a current enrolment of approximately 1550 students on two campuses (approximately 430 primary and 920 secondary students). The infants’ section is co-educational from K–2, and Years 3–12 are single-sex. Boarding facilities are provided for approximately 90–100 students in Years 7–12.

As expressed in its Mission Statement, the school aims to empower each student to achieve their potential, develop a sense of social responsibility, grasp life’s opportunities, adapt to change and to build strong value systems. One of the stated core values of the school is to take responsibility for ourselves and for others:

- as citizens of our community and our nation;
- sharing a sense of social responsibility and understanding of others’ needs; and
- belonging to a range of communities, school, boarding, family, local and world.

It is within this context that civics and citizenship education is embedded in both the curricular and co-curricular activities at Canberra Girls’ Grammar School.

**Interviewee selection at Canberra Girls’ Grammar School**

Initial conversations took place with the Principal and other senior members of staff to gain an understanding of the place of civics and citizenship in the school, and to identify which members of staff should be formally interviewed. These preliminary conversations included the Principal, Head of Senior School, Head of Junior School and the Director of Curriculum. Seven formal recorded interviews (four secondary, two primary and one boarding) were conducted with the following teachers:
• Head of Boarding House, Senior School
• Head of Department of History
• Head of Department of Geography
• Head of Department of Humanities
• Deputy Head of the Junior School
• The *Education for Citizenship and Media Studies* teacher, and
• A Year 6 classroom teacher.

**Civics and citizenship happenings at Canberra Girls’ Grammar School**

Canberra Girls’ Grammar School clearly provides a vast array of curricular and co-curricular offerings related to civics and citizenship education. The primary school curriculum includes a large amount of civics and citizenship education. Some of these are units of work that are located within Studies of Society and the Environment, but others are *Discovery Democracy*/civics and citizenship topics that integrate other KLAs. Examples of these *Discovery Democracy*-based, integrated units include United Nations, Government and People Make a Nation.

In the secondary school curriculum, civics education is mainly addressed in History, which is compulsory for students in Year 7 and elective in Years 8–10. Students also have further opportunity to study civics and citizenship topics in Year 11/12 subjects such as Political Studies, Media Studies and Asian studies. In addition, students in the Boarding House are able to participate in an additional layer of citizenship activities. There are also many co-curricular civics and citizenship related activities offered in the junior and/or senior schools such as the Amnesty International group, debating, Duke of Edinburgh Award, Student Representative Council, a Russian Exchange Program, the Pastoral Care system, the Buddy system and extensive charity work which occurs in the school. In addition, the senior school has developed a Year 11/12 Political Studies course that is unique in the ACT. Five civics and citizenship related initiatives at Canberra Girls’ Grammar School will be described in greater detail:

- Democratic elections for Senior Council and school leadership positions;
- Boarding House citizenship activities;
- Aboriginal Reconciliation group;
- Education for Citizenship; and
- *Discovery Democracy* units as themes for integrated curriculum in the junior school.

**Democratic elections for Senior Council and school leadership positions**

All student leadership positions in the senior school are democratically elected. Approximately 10 years ago, a committee was set up at the school to develop a system for the staff and students to democratically elect the Senior Council. The Senior Council is comprised of the School Captain and Vice Captain, and the Captains of the Boarding House, School Houses, Music, Sports, Chapel, Debating, Drama, Yearbook, the Student Representative Council Chairperson and two additional Council members without specific responsibilities.
At the outset of the voting procedure each year, Duty Statements are drawn up for each position and students are required to formally nominate. If a student wishes to nominate for a position she must sign that she has read the Duty Statement, and must complete a written statement addressing the criteria as set out in the Duty Statement. This statement is distributed to voters and photos of all candidates are displayed in a prominent position within the school.

Before voting takes place sessions are held with all voting groups outlining:

• the responsibilities of voting
• what to look for in leaders
• the roles of the different positions, and
• the people standing.

Voting is not compulsory and students and staff are discouraged from voting if they do not know the candidates. Postal votes are accepted, but must be submitted before the main votes. A modified preferential voting system is used with one vote per person. On the day of voting, the school is set up as a polling booth and students participate in the whole process, including students acting as scrutineers.

It is evident that a student election model such as this serves to simultaneously provide a democratic and transparent voting procedure for students and staff, and to educate students on voting procedures in a democracy.

**Boarding House citizenship activities**

The 90–100 students at Canberra Girls’ Grammar School who live in the Boarding House are involved with additional citizenship activities. These include:

• Boarders attend a series of meetings that provide them with the opportunity to communicate and participate in a variety of democratic forums. The Boarding House runs a Boarders’ Council with representatives from each year group and also provides all students with the opportunity to attend whole of Boarding House meetings.
• A very successful buddy system is in place to support new and younger boarders.
• An integral part of life in the Boarding House is the opportunity for students to participate in a range of charity and citizenship related activities such as Red Shield, Anglicare and Youth in the City.
• As Canberra Girls’ Grammar School is an Anglican school, boarders also attend weekly Chapel where they are encouraged to develop Christian values such as tolerance and compassion, which are seen as essential when belonging to a community and participating in meaningful relationships.

**Aboriginal Reconciliation Group**

The Aboriginal Reconciliation group is a discussion group which was established several years ago for students who believe that Australian society would be enriched by better relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians. Over the years, this group has provided a forum for students and staff to discuss issues and to participate in activities aimed at bringing about reconciliation. It has also served as an awareness raiser for the rest of the school about reconciliation issues. Some of the activities which students and staff in this group have participated in include:
• making a reconciliation quilt;
• signing a sorry book;
• visiting the Aboriginal embassy;
• hearing guest speakers on topics such as the stolen generation;
• distributing ribbons for Aboriginal Reconciliation Week; and
• speaking at school assemblies about reconciliation issues.

One important activity that the group participated in was the construction of a reconciliation quilt made by students and staff. Mary, the teacher who co-ordinated the Reconciliation Group said the following about the making of the quilt:

> When I got the patches, everyone had done something different… they’re all the same size but they were every colour and pattern that you could find… it had a sort of vigour and excitement that was great. I said to the school when I held it up “It’s like Australian society, it’s got all that diversity”. The kids really responded to the quilt, they thought that it was lovely.

**Education for citizenship**

The Education for Citizenship Program is an established and vital part of the school curriculum at Canberra Girls’ Grammar School, and is compulsory for girls between Years 7–10 at the school. Over the years, various models and formats have been used in the Education for Citizenship Program. The most recent program had the following citizenship themes:

- **Year 7:** *Caring for what's around us* — plants, animals, the environment, our country, people in our community, people in other lands.
- **Year 8:** *Being a wise consumer* — budgeting, buying food and clothes.
- **Year 9:** *The social scene* — peer groups, relationships and sex, drugs, health, conflict resolution and teenagers and the law.
- **Year 10:** *Being a responsible voter* — political system, excursions for electoral education, Parliament House, ACT assembly.

Annual evaluations indicate that the majority of students and staff believe that students have learnt a great deal about citizenship during the Education for Citizenship Program.

**Discovering Democracy units as themes for integrated curriculum in the junior school**

In Year 6 of the Canberra Girls’ Grammar School junior school, *Discovering Democracy* themes are used for integrated units of work which are incorporated in Science, English and Studies of Society and the Environment. Examples of these integrated units include United Nations, People Make a Nation (with focus on Government) and People Power (with focus on the Stolen Generation and Reconciliation). Students evaluate each of these units as part of the assessment process and this evaluation includes the role of the teacher. Students report high levels of satisfaction with these integrated units, and particularly enjoy the inclusion of role plays, excursions, and guest speakers.
Some general findings and issues for civics and citizenship in the ACT

The following issues and findings have emerged as a result of both the formal conversations with the two schools previously mentioned, and informal conversations with a large number of ACT schools.

Importance of civics and citizenship in ACT schools

The conversations with teachers in ACT schools provided ample evidence that there is a great deal of productive and thoughtful activity taking place in the area of civics and citizenship in the ACT. All of the teachers who engaged in formal or informal conversations greatly valued civics and citizenship education and were actively engaged in seeking new spaces in the curriculum for students to learn about civics education and to participate in citizenship activities.

Where does civics and citizenship education reside in the ACT curriculum?

Because curriculum is school-based in the ACT, there is very little consistency between schools in the ways in which curriculum is organised, and curriculum content varies enormously from school to school. Therefore approaches to a curriculum area such as civics and citizenship vary greatly between schools and are less likely to be mandated or formalised in the curriculum.

Consequently, whilst civics and citizenship education is an important component in most schools, it often resides in the hearts and minds of individual teachers rather than existing as a formalised and explicit part of the curriculum. Whilst such an arrangement can be seen to be a strength in terms of the passion and enthusiasm individual teachers may bring to bear on civics and citizenship issues, it can also be viewed as a potential weakness. When teachers who have been responsible for civics and citizenship education in a particular school retire or move to another school, the impetus is often lost and the program can lose momentum as its content and outcomes may not have been made explicit or formalised in the curriculum. In schools with high rates of staff turnover, areas such as civics and citizenship education may ‘fall between the cracks’. Succession planning would also seem to be needed in civics and citizenship education, as many of the teachers who carry the strong vision and passion for this area tend to be in the final years of their teaching careers.

Civics versus citizenship education

There appear to be differences in the ways in which civics education and citizenship education are conceptualised and reflected in the school curriculum. Whilst civics education appears to be reasonably well documented and articulated in the curriculum, citizenship education is less often documented and is more likely to remain implicit and assumed. Civics education seems to be largely viewed as the responsibility of the school’s Studies of Society and the Environment or History curriculum areas. In contrast, citizenship education is less likely to be seen as belonging to a particular faculty or curriculum area of the school. Consequently citizenship activities are more disparate and very few people hold the ‘big picture’ or scope of all of the events that are taking place in the school associated with citizenship.
Usage of *Discovering Democracy* materials

Most schools were enthusiastically using the *Discovering Democracy* materials and all teachers were most familiar with the materials. The civics component of many of the schools’ programs was frequently written around the *Discovering Democracy* materials. Whilst weaknesses in the materials were readily identified by most of teachers, they nevertheless praised other elements and used them widely to supplement their own resources. One potential problem which emerged with the widespread usage of the *Discovering Democracy* materials in schools, was that teachers could easily be lulled into a sense of security that they had ‘done’ civics and citizenship, when in fact they had used the materials to assist with civics education, whilst more general citizenship issues may not have been addressed.

Values education and civics and citizenship

As a result of the various conversations with teachers, it became evident that the civics and citizenship program offered by each school will be predicated upon a particular set of values or beliefs. This is particularly the case for citizenship education, as it touches on and assumes beliefs such as an individual’s responsibility for others in a society and their role and agency in society. Civics and citizenship education cannot merely be viewed as an additional layer that is placed on a blank slate or on a neutral or uncontested base. The base or foundation on which it is laid must be negotiated and articulated before citizenship education can have an appropriate sense of direction or cohesion.

Very few, if any, of the respondents indicated that their schools had specifically discussed or named the values that they espoused, and upon which the civics and citizenship programs in their schools could be laid. It is probable that in the absence of a set of negotiated and clearly articulated school values, individual teachers may fall back on their own values and mores. For example, teachers may reflect their particular values about democratic rights or the importance of helping others. Whilst many teachers carried a strong sense of vision and commitment to civics and citizenship, these were not linked to a whole school vision or set of values. Several teachers inferred that citizenship education is values based and assumes a particular set of values and mores, but these did not appear to have been explicitly negotiated, discussed or articulated in their schools. It would seem that more debates are urgently needed on the values upon which civics and citizenship education is to be founded in each school.

Civics and citizenship literacies and competencies?

Negotiating the terrain of civics and citizenship education appears to require a certain literacy or set of literacies for staff and students. Is there in fact a civics and citizenship literacy and, if so, what might this entail? Additionally, is it possible and/or desirable for schools to encourage students to develop a set of civics and citizenship competencies? If so, what might these competencies include?

Student agency in civics and citizenship

Whilst students in schools appear to be extremely active and eager participants in civics and citizenship programs, there seems to be very little evidence of student input into curriculum content or planning of school directions in this area. It is possible that conversations about civics and citizenship are also needed with students in schools in order to determine their hopes, aspirations, experience and needs.
The following chapter presents case studies of two very different schools in New South Wales (NSW). One is a comprehensive state school located in rural NSW, 800 kilometres from Sydney, and the other is a Catholic independent girls’ school, located in suburban Sydney. Conversations took place in July and August, 2001, in one-on-one discussions lasting between one and two hours.

The chapter begins with a brief review of syllabus development in New South Wales in the context of civics and citizenship, focusing on the subjects of History and Geography. The two case studies are then presented in separate sections, in order to reflect the unique context, issues, and concerns that arose from each school setting. These case studies elaborate teachers’ views about civics and citizenship education, citizenship, the perceived visibility of citizenship activities at each school, and teachers’ awareness of Discovering Democracy. The chapter concludes with a summary and potential implications of the findings.

**The educational context**

**Curriculum response to civics and citizenship education**

The influence of national initiatives in civics, such as Discovering Democracy, is evident in NSW educational policy over the past five years, notably in the Board of Studies’ (BoS) civics Framework for K–10 in 1996, and the establishment in 1998 of state-wide testing in History, Geography, and Civics, as part of the NSW Year 10 School Certificate. The K–10 framework delineated three content areas for civics: Australian identities; rights and responsibilities; and decision-making and democratic purposes. Each area was accompanied by focus questions “to promote the development of these skills in all students K–10 in New South Wales” (BoS, 1996 p. 2). These content areas were later established as “key civics and citizenship concepts”, and subsequently embedded within revised History and Geography junior syllabuses in 1998 (BoS, 2000a).

The creation of a combined Year 10 School Certificate test in History, Geography and Civics provides further evidence that civics was on the New South Wales government’s agenda following the Civics Expert Group’s (1994) report Whereas the people … and the subsequent launch of Discovering Democracy in 1997. Trialling of this test began in 1998 and as of 2002, was mandatory for all Year 10 students. As there exists no independent civics course in the NSW K–10 curriculum, the civics component of the test was to be originally assessed through the existing 1992 syllabuses of both Geography and History. This decision was taken because elements of civics were believed to be already found within these current 1992 syllabuses (BoS, 1998a). It is interesting to note that each of these syllabuses were either under review or

---

2 The Board of Studies is a state government agency responsible for syllabus development and state-wide assessment of Year 10 and 12 government and non-government school students.
subsequently revised when this statement was released by the BoS. As of February 2000, cultural identity, cultural diversity, equality, and justice were the established civics themes within the combined History, Geography, and civics test (BoS, 2000a).

In NSW, History and Geography have become the subject areas through which civics is to be incorporated into the formal school curriculum. History, much more than the subject of Geography, has experienced significant change over the last 10 years, above and beyond the inclusion of specific civics themes within the revised syllabus (Halse et al., 1997; Young, 1993, 1998). While not exhaustive, the following points summarise some of the sentiment surrounding the changes to the History syllabus and reaction to the inclusion of civics into History:3

- A content-driven syllabus was replacing the flexibility of the incumbent 1992 syllabus. (History Teachers Association (HTA), 1998a)
- Civics was driving the rationale for changes to the syllabus. (HTA, 1998a)
- Uncertainty about what content areas and topics History would have to sacrifice if civics was included in its syllabus. (Cameron & Lawless, 1997)
- A concern that including civics within History could produce a syllabus that was integrated, rather than exclusively focused on History. (Mootz, 1998)
- An ongoing lack of understanding regarding History teachers’ beliefs about civics and the applicability of their existing pedagogy in the context of civics. (Young, 1998)
- A fear that an exclusive focus in Years 9 and 10 on Australian History might deter students’ further interest in History beyond Year 10 because of pervasive feelings that students do not enjoy Australian History. (Cameron, 1997; Halse et al., 1997)
- Concern that a hybrid Year 10 test might confound History’s unique status, because of its association to both Geography and Civics. (Cameron & Lawless, 1997)
- Evidence that a majority of History teachers surveyed agreed that their subject contributed to citizenship. (Halse et al., 1997)

The 1998 junior History syllabus was eventually released to schools in November 1998, and by March 1999, it was made public on the BoS website.4 Mandatory content for Stages 4 and 5 were World History and Australian History, respectively. The syllabus designated 100 hours for the teaching of each, with Stage 5 exclusively covering Australian History from 1901 to the present day (BoS, 1999a). The 1998 syllabus addressed civics as

not a separate entity … but flows from the study of key features of Australia’s political, social and cultural history. The citizenship education terms and concepts outlined in the Board of Studies Citizenship Education Framework for K–12 are embedded in the syllabus content … through the study of History, students explore people’s experiences, using the past to inform and reflect on the present and how they may take an active role in shaping a more equitable society (BoS, 1999a, p. 8).

Within the 1998 syllabus, civics is specifically referred to in a section describing values, where students are asked to develop a “commitment to informed and active citizenship”, through the understanding of various democratic institutions; rights and responsibilities,

---

3 Many of these sources derive from the History Teachers Association and are not intended to be representative of History teachers’ views across NSW. The intent here is to illuminate those issues of greatest salience to a specific stakeholder group within the community of History teachers.

4 www.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au
respect for varying viewpoints, lifestyles, languages and belief systems; peaceful resolution to conflict; and participation in society both as an individual and in groups (BoS, 1999a, p. 16).

In comparison to History, the changes to the Geography Stages 4 and 5 syllabus and the inclusion of civics and citizenship education were met with significantly less criticism. Similar to History, the 1998 junior Geography syllabus addressed civics in the following way:

Civics and citizenship education is not a separate entity within the syllabus but flows from the study of key features of Australia’s physical and human geography … through a focus on the spatial and ecological dimensions of geographical phenomena, students consider how individuals, groups and governments make decisions and the role they can play as active citizens in a democracy. Students investigate contemporary geographical issues to explore why spatial and ecological differences exist and how they may take an active role in shaping a fairer society in the future (BoS, 1999b, p. 10).

In a recent assessment of the 1998 Geography syllabus and its implementation, the BoS identified several issues, some related to civics and citizenship education:

- The volume of content and skills to be covered in the time available was seen to preclude depth and extension of student learning.
- Teachers were clearly in need of additional resources in order to support civics and citizenship in the context of Geography.
- Teachers felt that the nature of civics and citizenship education continued to be unclear in the syllabus content (BoS, 2002).

Besides these difficulties, a scan of two journals from the Australian Geography Teachers’ Association and the Geography Teachers’ Association of NSW (Geographical Education and Geography Bulletin, respectively) revealed little reference to the inclusion of civics and citizenship education into the Geography Stages 4 and 5 syllabus. This is not to say that civics was seamlessly incorporated into teaching and that Geography teachers did not experience any difficulties. Instead, in comparison to the outcry, public debate, and criticism of History syllabus change and the inclusion of civics in the same period, integration issues from Geography were less publicised and Geography teachers were considerably less vocal.

This brief overview of syllabus change in junior Geography and History provides a brief insight into the context within which the teachers participating in Conversations about Civics have been working in the past four years. The following sections present teachers from St Anne’s School and Northview Secondary School and the conversations we had about civics and citizenship, the perceived visibility of citizenship activities at each school, and teachers’ awareness of Discovering Democracy. The names of schools and teachers have been changed to ensure their anonymity.

**St Anne’s School**

**The school context and interviewee selection process**

Set in a suburb of Sydney, St Anne’s is an independent Catholic secondary girls’ school, offering full-time tuition to 900 students. The school site is impressive, sitting on a large, quiet block of land running parallel to a major city road, amongst many trees and a large grass sports field.
St Anne’s belongs to a network of Catholic schools. Acceptance to the school is not predicated on either religious faith or success on an entrance exam. However, one senior teacher at the school estimated that between 80–90% of students are Catholic. The school has a student population of 900, with 150 students in each year. There is a boarding community of 150 students, made up primarily of students from rural NSW.

Three teachers at St Anne’s took part in the *Conversations about Civics* project:

- Louise, Director of Learning, 8 years experience, former History teacher
- Sue, Curriculum Coordinator, 22 years experience, teaches Geography and Business Studies
- Mary, History Head of Department, 25 years experience, teaches History

Louise recommended that I approach Sue and Mary and each participated willingly.

At time of discussion, teachers at the school indicated that they had not yet incorporated civics into either History or Geography. However its incorporation would occur once the 1998 junior History and Geography syllabuses were formally adopted at the school in term 1, 2002.

Conversations took place on a one-on-one basis. Typically, it began with teachers describing what came to mind when they thought about civics and citizenship education and what citizenship meant to them. Majors themes that derived from these conversations are elaborated upon in the following sections.

### Civics education: Skills vs content

The importance of developing skills versus learning specific content tended to dominate discussions about teaching students about citizenship. Teachers talked about the necessary skills needed to achieve their ideals and visions of citizenship. These were often contrasted with critical reference to content-specific aspects of civics, such as learning about the machinations of Australian politics. The types of skills and content areas that teachers discussed are summarised in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Citizenship skills</th>
<th>Civics and citizenship content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Independent thinking</td>
<td>Rights and responsibilities within own society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical analysis of situations and ideas</td>
<td>Knowledge of personal and public interests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive and productive group interaction</td>
<td>Local and global affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal skills</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-directed learning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision-making skills</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tolerance and acceptance of multiple views</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect for different cultures</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5 See Appendix II for a summary of the interview guide.
Louise, the Director of Learning, who trained as a History teacher, said she wanted students to become independent thinkers who were able to critically “analyse the world”. In her view, focusing on critical literacy skills could facilitate students’ independence in learning and analysis. Mary, the Head of History, also felt that independent and self-directed learning was essential for citizenship and the skills to foster this included analysis and literacy.

Both Louise and Sue, the Curriculum Coordinator, felt that students should learn about themselves and be able to recognise their own abilities. However, both also believed that students had to move beyond a focus on self and to consider citizenship roles in a much broader context, such as their role in the wider community and in a global society. Sue believed that students should be given opportunities to realise that public versus private interests can often be in conflict; because of this, she felt it was imperative to examine “what makes us make the sorts of decisions that are best for the country, rather than focusing on yourself … I think it’s important we ask teenagers to look at that … to look outside themselves”.

In part, Mary, the Head of the History department, also shared this view on the importance of defining public and private interests, but emphasised that it should be from student’s perspectives, looking at interpersonal and group relationships. She felt that a class focusing on citizenship would help students learn “what it takes to be an effective member of the group … [how to] feel wanted, to feel as if they’re free to work within the group and be supported by the group … [and to understand] how to make a contribution within the group”. Mary’s consideration of citizenship skills had a focus on self, but on an ‘effective’ self in relation to a small community or group, and how a person might support the group and positively co-exist within it.

Sue discussed effective citizenship as the ability to make an informed decision, having considered, researched, analysed and accepted that many other opinions can co-exist on a particular issue. For Sue, this “intellectual process” was imperative for every citizen and incorporated an ideal of effective communication in order to produce action: “I think one person can make a little bit of difference but a group of people can make a lot of difference — a group of like-minded people. So you’ve got to know quite what that is and why you think that way”, to then be able to act and to do something about it.

**Citizenship education: Content acquisition**

In conversations, teachers were much less emphatic about the importance of teaching specific content than they were about wanting students to acquire a relevant set of citizenship skills. Louise, the Director of Learning, was the most vocal in wanting students to learn citizenship skills versus learning ‘civics’ content. The basis of this distinction appeared to emanate from the goals and conceptions that she cherished for the subject of History.

Louise felt that in History, there are two ‘camps’ of History teachers. The first camp advocate the importance of learning content for the sake of content, such as the bushrangers or other familiar Australian-based content. She felt that this content was too often taught to students without a critical consideration as to why it was ‘essential’ for them to know. Here, Louise echoes Kingwell’s (2001) discussion of society’s growing reliance on rhetoric, or the ‘already-thought’, “that stock of nicely turned phrases and easily digestible notions [such as globalisation] that, slipping neatly into the comfortable categories of a shared complacency, too often passes for critical thinking” (Kingwell, p. 19).
According to Louise, the second camp of History teachers advocate providing students with “tools and skills … to be plugged into the other things that they do” in their lives. She firmly located herself in this latter camp. Based on recent syllabus directions, revisions to the Year 10 School Certificate, and the implementation of the combined History, Geography, and Civics test, Louise worried that civics could become overly concerned with exposing students to content, such as political machinations and other traditional and technical knowledge, at the expense of skill development.

When Mary described how she might organise a lesson that would deal with citizenship, she similarly rejected the importance of teaching traditional political content: “I would not think to teach them the mechanics of the Australian system. [That] would not necessarily make them effective citizens”.

In comparison, Sue valued some “basic knowledge” in civics, such as knowing the different levels of government, or the difference between legal and policy makers (legislative) and legal enforcers and overseers (judiciary). She referred to this as “pre-knowledge” and rationalised its importance in the following way:

> When you go to vote, how do you know what that’s going to mean, how it’s going to affect you, if you don’t understand that we have different levels of government … there are processes involved [in our society], and you have to know what those processes are to be able to make an informed decision about what’s happening in your society. I would regard that as pre-knowledge.

For Sue, this knowledge can add to and facilitate students’ conceptual framework within which they then consider other aspects of their world. Galston (2001) similarly argues that the acquisition of ‘civic’ knowledge has been attributed not only to more informed decision-making, but also to one’s ability to more easily integrate new political information and one’s ability to sustain consistent political views, across issues and across time.

In fact, all three teachers would most likely agree with Sue that some ‘basic’ and politically-based content is necessary. Each teacher spoke of wanting students to understand their rights and responsibilities, which implies a need to focus on some content that is technical in nature, such as rights, responsibilities, and how these have derived in Australia through various political and social movements. As History teachers, it is likely that Sue, Louise, and Mary would also see the implicit value of ‘basic’, ‘pre-knowledge’, or traditional knowledge as a way to facilitate student understanding of Australian History, since it can contextualise aspects of Australian social, political, and citizenship development.

Teachers’ emphasis on skills rather than content when discussing civics is grounded, in part, in their conception of citizenship and the associated need to develop and possess certain skills. However, another reason for this emphasis on skills could be a result of the recent changes to the junior History syllabus. As indicated previously, syllabus revision throughout 1998 resulted in a junior History syllabus that had a greater emphasis on content, in comparison to the 1992 syllabus. Teachers at St Anne’s had not yet incorporated the revised syllabus into their teaching. As Mary indicated, while she was interested in civics and exploring how it could fit within History, civics was on the ‘backburner’ because of other more immediate demands on her time, “civics to me is definitely on the backburner at the moment … it’s not that it’s unimportant to me, it’s just that other things at this time have a greater priority”. Thus, their inclination to favour skills rather than (potentially unfamiliar) content when talking about citizenship could be a result of attempting to manage the as yet unknown content demands of civics in this new History syllabus.
Visibility of citizenship in the school

In order to better understand teachers thoughts about civics and citizenship, they were asked what sorts of activities happened at the school that they thought reflected citizenship. Each agreed that citizenship was a fundamental part of the school’s ethos due to formal and informal structures that have long been established at St Anne’s. These are discussed in the following sections.

Citizenship visibility through formal and informal school structures

In terms of formal structures and the visibility of citizenship, each teacher pointed to the school’s emphasis on social justice, its community outreach, and its aim to broaden each student’s perspective of the world around them, largely through the school’s pastoral care system.

A key component of the pastoral care system is the ‘house’ system, with one aim to make each student better known as an individual within the school. Each house has a social justice captain who works with the social justice coordinator on staff. Louise indicated that social justice has been fundamental to the school’s mission since its inception. Through this mission, students take part in such activities as helping the homeless around the city, assisting in local soup kitchens, spending days at a time working in a specific context of homelessness or need, or creating Christmas baskets for families.

In Year 11, students select a particular community from those that the school’s religious affiliate is supporting or working with and raise money on its behalf. According to Louise, these fund-raising activities are a way to educate students (and staff) about a particular community — its culture, customs, religion, developmental needs, and so forth. Every two years, a group of students then visits and works within one of these communities, typically in a developing country. The most recent trip involved students assisting the construction of a kitchen to help feed the poor in a Latin American country.

Consistently, each teacher identified the pastoral care and social justice system as the most clear example of citizenship activities at the school. Informally, Louise and Sue also felt that the school’s Religious Education (RE) program indirectly reflected citizenship. As Sue said:

*The RE lessons here are not bible lessons, but they are often spirituality [lessons] and [focus on] your sense of self in the world and where do you fit and what does that mean for other people if you’ve got this opinion. And they will particularly focus on other religions.*

Louise also felt that the staff goal-setting process, undertaken each year, has typically had a citizenship orientation, largely because of the overt focus on social justice, “I would say that at least one of our goals set every year [would embrace] things like tolerance and the need to understand people who are different, and celebrate diversity”.

Citizenship in school subjects: ‘I have always taught citizenship’

When asked if they thought they had taught civics in the past (a purposely leading question), teachers’ responses shed additional light on the extent of civics perceived to exist in the formal school curriculum. With regard to Australian and Modern History, Mary queried, ‘I’m wondering which one [topic] I wouldn’t have taught civics in … if civics is the mechanics of being a citizen, of being a member of a group, then I would think that we would do it in almost every topic’. Mary believed that History, Geography, Commerce, and English literature would be the most likely subject areas in which civics could be easily identified.
Sue believed that “I have always taught citizenship … because there are so many areas that you could look at in terms of what makes us a functioning, moral society … what makes us make the sorts of decisions that are best for the country, rather than focusing on your self”. She felt that General Studies was the ‘best one’ for citizenship because the content explored topical areas facing Australian society, such as the republican debate, Aboriginal land rights, and election issues. Sue also felt that Geography had many relevant civics areas, such as the outcomes of human intervention in the environment and the need to address responsibility for the global commons (e.g. oceans, polar regions, and the atmosphere), each of which “forces students to think more on a world citizenship basis”.

While Louise felt that she had not “ever explicitly taught citizenship”, she argued that teachers implicitly teach it, “in the way that you set up your classroom, in the way that you show the national and global context of the things you teach, and in the way that you encourage students to interact with each other and with you”. At St Anne’s, she felt that citizenship had always been taught, “even though those people who are responsible for developing civics programs might not agree”.

To Louise, the 1998 syllabus changes to both History and Geography were seen as an ‘extra layer’ of civics that the school would incorporate to “match the syllabus requirements”. But Louise clearly distinguished between civics and citizenship (as did the Civics Expert Group in 1994) and how the school would manage the two:

We have been involved in developing the students as citizens for a long time … the responsibility for citizenship falls to all of the departments within the school, to the pastoral care system, and particularly to the RE [Religious Education] department. The responsibility of civics falls to the History and Social Science departments … I don’t see them as meshed together … citizenship will be really clear in each of the school’s programs, but I don’t think that civics is likely to head any further than it has to.

Here, Louise considers civics as a syllabus formality, as content that has to be written into programs, and as an outcome of change that has been “foisted” upon two school departments. Citizenship, on the other hand, is something that Louise felt has guided the school’s mission and is something that transcends subject matter and subjects. From Louise’s conversation, it seemed that civics could get in the way, or temporarily distract the school and its teachers, for whom and where citizenship has always been considered as a guiding principle.

**Perceived room for improvement**

Only Sue offered ideas for improving the schools’ current focus on citizenship activities. She strongly supported the school’s current social justice efforts and its work with communities around the world. However, she stressed the need to focus more on the local community, at younger ages, so that students could appreciate the hardships that exist in their own community and city:

Until Year 12, we don’t do that really confronting exposure. I would like us to be doing something closer to home, where maybe the outreach is with an Aboriginal community … it’s easy to talk about reconciliation when you’re keeping it at arm’s length. I think we need to confront them a bit more, because it’s really an important issue for Australia … it’s easy to blame other people for their own situation if you don’t have anything to do with them, so we need to be a bit more involved in that.
The importance of confronting students with the reality of their community and city context is similar to Sue’s belief that students need opportunities to confront competing ideas and claims, such as the status quo or a government position. Putting students in these situations of potential cognitive dissonance is fundamental to Sue’s conception of teaching about citizenship, therefore enabling students to make an informed decision, having considered, researched, analysed and accepted that many other opinions can co-exist on a particular issue.

**Discovering Democracy at St Anne’s**

One goal of Conversations about Civics was to explore teachers’ awareness and views of Discovering Democracy, and where possible, to understand how this national program in civics was being implemented in schools across the country.

Mary and Louise were both quite familiar with Discovering Democracy and to some degree, with the resources. Both knew that the kit had been mailed to schools across the country and confirmed that it had arrived at St Anne’s. In August 2001, two of Mary’s staff had attended an in-service specifically on civics and citizenship and Discovering Democracy. Their task was to report to the History department in October 2001 about what they had learned, “treasures they might have to impart to us.” Mary expected that she would examine the materials and “use it if we think it’s beneficial to us”. However, at the time of our conversation, she had not looked closely at any of the resources.

As a former head of a History department, Louise recalled thinking that the resources looked “fantastic and that there were some interesting things in there”. However, Louise was unsure if either the History or Human Society and Its Environment departments at St. Anne’s were using it (they were not). Despite the extent and quality of resources, Louise believed that the program had “died”, and from her perspective, had not had much of an impact on either of the two schools she had worked at in the past five years. She felt that without constant reminders to staff that the resources existed, and without a clear link to any particular subject area, the resources often went unused and forgotten by staff.

It is possible that once the 1998 junior History syllabus is incorporated into the school’s formal curriculum and teachers begin to actively consider how they will address civics and citizenship objectives and prepare students for the Year 10 test in History, Geography, and civics, some of the materials from Discovering Democracy may be incorporated. Clearly, however, at the time of our conversations, these three teachers were not consulting or using any of the resources in Discovering Democracy.

**Northview Secondary School**

**The school context and interviewee selection process**

Located in rural New South Wales, Northview Secondary School is a comprehensive co-educational state school with a student population of 450 and approximately 45 staff members. Teachers estimate that the school’s Aboriginal students account for 20 percent of the student population and indicate that staff turnover was high at Northview Secondary School.

---

7 A situation that arises when an individual discovers that his or her beliefs are logically inconsistent or contrary to a given concept, phenomenon, or situation (see Bickmore, 1995).

8 Unfortunately, talking to these staff or attending the presentation was not feasible.
School. In the previous year, 16 of the 45 staff left the school. Similar to other parts of Australia, high turnover has been identified as a problem facing some schools in rural and remote communities (Tomlinson, 1994).

The town of Northview has a population of 10,000 and it is the main business base of the region. While the predominant economic activity in this region is farming, mainly cotton, sunflower, canola, soya, and pecan nuts, the town’s economy also relies in part on tourism. The town’s Aboriginal population is roughly equivalent to that of Northview Secondary School (about 20%). When conversations took place, there were two State High Schools in Northview and 11 State Primary Schools in the surrounding area.

Unlike St Anne’s, Northview Secondary School had already implemented the 1998 junior History and Geography syllabuses, and as one teacher commented, “in our syllabus, we now have civics and citizenship in all Geography and History areas. We’re teaching civics as an actual component”.

During conversations with teachers at Northview Secondary School, it became apparent that there was much uncertainty about the future of the town’s other State High School, Westview. One of the main reasons for this uncertainty was due to a constant decline in student numbers at Westview over the past decade. It appeared that the town’s demographics could not support two High Schools. In the past, the two schools had been able to co-exist, sharing resources, schools subjects, and timetables. One of the more striking differences between the schools was that Westview’s Aboriginal population comprised more than 65% of its student body of 250 students. Teachers at Northview indicated that one solution being pursued was to amalgamate the two schools into one ‘super’ school.

Four teachers at Northview Secondary School took part in the Conversations about Civics project:

• Barbara, 3 years experience, teaches Geography and History;
• John, Head of Human Society and Its Environment (HSIE), 4 years experience, teaches History, Geography, and Business Studies;
• Joanne, 8 years experience, teaches Geography, History, and English;
• June, Deputy Principal, Curriculum, 15 years experience.

Teachers were recommended to me by the Principal and the Head of the HSIE department.

Teachers’ conceptions of citizenship

Unlike teachers at St Anne’s, teachers at Northview Secondary School discussed civics and citizenship in very different ways. To preserve the unique conceptions that they held, teachers’ thoughts about citizenship are presented in separate sections.

Barbara

Trained as a History/Geography teacher, Northview Secondary School is Barbara’s first full-time teaching appointment. This was her third year teaching at the school. When asked what came to mind when she thought about civics and citizenship education, she elaborated certain ideals of citizenship. For Barbara, a key component to citizenship was an individual’s responsibilities to the group, community, or society to which they belong: “[It’s about]
recognising everyone else’s attributes, getting along as a country, feeling pride in who you are and what you are a part of, and accepting people, whether it’s in Australia or globally”. Thus, one aspect of citizenship responsibility has a cultural dimension: citizens must first be aware, and then learn to understand, appreciate and be tolerant of other people and cultures. Another aspect of her conception of citizenship responsibility is the importance of effectively working together with different people in a community in order to solve problems together.

When asked where these ideas about citizenship came from, Barbara ascribed them to her subject-matter background and training: “I say it’s because I’m a human geographer and I like investigating people and how they interact with their environment, more than just about the environment itself”. As other research has demonstrated, subject matter background can play a powerful role in how teachers consider their own and other subject matter, as well as how they account for their conceptions of citizenship (Jimenez, 2001; Wilson & Wineburg, 1988).

Barbara indicated that “my view of civics and citizenship isn’t just the Australian flag and national anthem”, although she agreed that these and other symbols of Australia are important for students to learn. These “basics” had a nationalistic, Australian focus, specifically on its symbols and its system and process of government. However, Barbara’s view of civics clearly had a global dimension, which focused on such things as Australia’s involvement on global matters and how the country considers itself to be part of the global village. One way that Barbara recently explored this in her classroom was to elaborate the role of Australia’s Department of Defence, its recent peace-keeping efforts in East Timor, and “how important Australia’s military tradition is to creating our identity as to who we think we are as Australians in general”. Another way that her global focus of civics has been incorporated into current teaching was through a recent writing exercise, drawing on empathy, where students had to write about immigration and how they thought it would impact on them, both positively and negatively, as a resident of a small community.

One reason that Barbara felt students should learn about the ‘basics’ (e.g. how government works) is to facilitate their understanding of where and how change in society is enacted, which for Barbara was mainly in the public sector. She felt that civics would allow students to be “effective users in society, to be able to contribute as much as you can”; learning the ‘basics’ could facilitate this contribution, at least in the public domain. While Barbara also felt that citizenship could be enacted beyond the public domain, for example, by recycling one’s garbage or even smiling at someone, her conception of citizenship appeared to be dominated by concerns for cohesion, maintaining positive community relations, and ensuring conflict-free relationships.

John

John, the Head Teacher for Human Society and Its Environment at Northview Secondary School, has four years of teaching experience. He undertook teacher training as a mature-age student, having previously worked in management at a public utility for more than 15 years. Similar to Barbara, John moved to the town of Northview to gain full-time teaching experience, given that fewer positions existed in his hometown. As he indicated, being the Head Teacher with so few years experience is more typical of a school in a rural community than in an urban centre.

When the conversation turned to what civics education meant to John, his beliefs and ideals about citizenship were not easily identifiable, particularly in comparison to Barbara. Clearly, John had difficulty elaborating his thoughts about civics and citizenship. Some fundamental
attributes of citizenship that John referred to were the importance of respecting and tolerating people from other cultures and communities and the importance of feeling ownership of one’s rights and responsibilities in a particular community. These responsibilities resembled a social contract between the individual and his or her surroundings, as John felt that people should feel a sense of obligation not only to the community, the public sector, and to other citizens, but also to the environment and to the economy.

June

June has been at Northview Secondary School for the past two years, working as a Deputy Principal in charge of curriculum. Among her many responsibilities, she oversees the school’s timetable, acts as a liaison between department heads, advises students on course selection, and plans university visits.

When asked what she thought citizenship meant to her, like John, June also focused on a local level enactment of citizenship: “helping the community would be something that I would put as citizenship”. The attributes that she felt were important for citizens included responsibility and self-confidence. She saw a visible separation between civics and citizenship, similar to Louise at St Anne’s:

"My understanding about the civics part of it is that it’s an understanding of how our government operates, so it’s more an academic situation than the citizenship, which revolves around what [students] might do, what they might contribute to society."

June identified a number of ways in which a citizen might contribute to society, including “doing things for people who are perhaps less fortunate, actually reaching out to other people … it comes from themselves and it’s voluntary”.

Civics and citizenship education at Northview Secondary School

One goal of talking to teachers was to understand where they thought civics was visible in the school. While teachers identified school subjects as one area where citizenship and civics was visible to them, they also referred to several activities, policies and programs that fell beyond formal subject areas. It became clear that teachers could more readily identify examples of citizenship-related activities in these aspects of the school, and that these aspects comprised both cultural and social dimensions of citizenship.

Formal curriculum: Civics in school subjects

June felt that while individual departments at the school, specifically, the Human Society and Its Environment department, would have “quite an emphasis in their area on civics and citizenship, [in comparison to] the school as a whole, I don’t think it’s a major focus”. However, as the proceeding paragraphs will illustrate, there are clearly aspects at the school that reflect citizenship, not only to Barbara and John, but to June as well.

At the time of discussions, the focus of Barbara’s Year 8 and Year 10 Geography classes was global. It is not surprising, therefore, that Barbara was able to offer examples of citizenship in her teaching, and that she felt that civics was a good fit to her subject area, since “you’re always looking at making sure kids understand the cultures and values and understanding those things from other nations”.

Importantly, however, and as Barbara herself points out, the 1998 junior History and Geography syllabuses were released in her first year of teaching. Unlike teachers from St Anne’s, who were teaching well before the 1998 syllabus was introduced, Barbara has not known any other syllabus for History and Geography, and therefore has no basis on which to compare it. As a relatively recent high school graduate, in comparison to teachers at St Anne’s, she does not recall learning the things she now teaches that she considers civics. In fact, “most of my knowledge about those basic civics things I learnt when I was in primary school”. Perhaps it is also unsurprising that one of the main reasons Barbara thinks civics has been introduced into the curriculum is because of a current lack of opportunities to learn about the basics of civics.

John identified several subject areas within the 1998 Geography syllabus that he felt reflected civics education, which helped clarify his conception of citizenship:

what it is to be in a community … look at different communities around the world, and then we build in what are human rights, basic rights and needs, responsibilities. There’s a lot of social aspects, even in Business Studies, where you’re looking at business management, you’ve got to deal with environment issues, and other social issues [such as] social responsibility of business … how one’s actions will impact on somebody else.

When asked if topic areas in the Geography syllabus matched his beliefs about what civics education should entail, John agreed, but similar to Barbara, he indicated:

I've been freshly trained [as a teacher] and that's what I've been trained to accept and believe without really stepping back and then questioning it at this stage. I believe yes, it covers it, but I'm still in the early stages of development as a teacher.

He projected that in 10 or 15 years time, he might reflect on his present beliefs and be in a stronger position to identify possible shortcomings, not only of the syllabus’ treatment of civics education, but of his own conceptions of civics.

On the surface, these areas in school subjects reflect fairly traditional conceptions of citizenship — rights, responsibilities, interaction with government, or as Barbara refers to it, the ‘basics’. However, as the following paragraphs demonstrate, when these teachers consider citizenship beyond their subject areas, the scope and possibilities for providing students with opportunities to enact citizenship roles widen considerably. Their conversations reveal that their ideas about citizenship are driven by cultural and social aspects, not only from a school perspective, but also from the context of the town.

**Beyond school subjects: Cultural and social aspects of citizenship**

Both June and Barbara identified student participation in the Rock Eisteddfod Challenge11 and the Croc Festival12 as excellent examples of citizenship activity at the school. These festivals, according to Barbara, expose students to other cultures in Australia and develop “awareness and respect for someone else’s culture rather than the ordinary everyday, no respect for culture you sometimes see

---

11 The Rock Eisteddfod Challenge is a national student competition, set in a drug- and alcohol-free context, showcasing original student dance, drama, design, and musical performances.

12 The Croc Festival occurs in regional and remote communities and celebrates youth culture. The festival involves indigenous and non-indigenous youth in such things as visual and performing arts, sports clinics, and career markets.
in towns like this”. One Croc Festival project was the construction of a park bench that the whole town could use. June felt that this project provided students with an understanding of societal contribution, a key component of her view of citizenship.

June also referred to Aboriginal Day at Northview Secondary School as something that reflected citizenship. On this day, the school’s Aboriginal students lead a formal assembly, which is then followed by several demonstrations of indigenous culture, including dancing, music, and food. The town’s Aboriginal community is invited to participate in this function, regardless of whether their children attend Northview Secondary School. One goal of Aboriginal Day, according to Barbara, was for students “to see the values that are incorporated within the Aboriginal culture, which they may not be aware of”.

Each teacher referred to monthly dinners that the school hosts for parents of Aboriginal students as another example of a citizenship activity at the school. These dinners served a social as well as a cultural outreach function. Here, parents and teachers came together for an informal dinner, which John felt was an excellent way to improve relationships between the school and the indigenous community: “a lot of Aboriginal parents don’t feel comfortable coming into the school … the dinners [allow you] to sit down and talk with the parents, you start forming a bond with them and they’ll start to know you a little bit”.

The school’s Student Representative Council and its reward system were other programs that teachers offered as examples of citizenship at the school. The latter is referred to as a ‘goals system’, where students progress through a tiered-system, from level A to expert based on comprehensive criteria. For example, participating in charity, representing the school on the debate team or soccer team, or volunteering time at the school canteen, earn students a number of points per activity, which leads to various awards and recognition in school assemblies. Each level carries with it certain expectations of student conduct. As John explained: “if they’re level A students, they’re not expected to make racial comments, to cause problems or bullying … [they’re expected to] be in uniform, and to try and achieve the best of their ability”. The merits that teachers identified of this program — positive interpersonal relationships between students, recognising and rewarding students who espouse certain values and who contribute to the school — were very similar to the citizenship attributes that each idealised.

**Perceived barriers and enablers to civics and citizenship education at Northview Secondary School**

**Isolation and resources (Barrier)**

Despite the town’s population and relatively strong economic base in comparison to its neighbours, Northview’s rural location and isolation from regional centres was perceived to be a constraining variable in delivering civics and citizenship education. Barbara was the most vocal in this regard. On the one hand, she was satisfied with the extent of civics and citizenship that she was able to bring into her own classroom. On the other hand, she was less satisfied that the school as a whole was doing ‘enough’ with regard to citizenship. In her opinion, the two major factors that contributed to this were isolation and a lack of human and financial resources. As Barbara said:
… it’s hard because a lot of the things that go on that I would like my kids to be involved in are not in this district. You have to go to Sydney to participate in things, you have to go to other places to be involved in it … to be able to do those things in a small school, and for someone [like me] who has only 2.5 years teaching experience may not be someone you want to take your teenage kids … you’ve got to have head teachers, busses, and the costs are exorbitant, so you don’t get the opportunity to participate in as much as you’d like to.

Barbara’s frustration is evident here. A lack of resources and distance between the school and more central and populous areas, meant less access to other high school students and guest speakers. She was left with a feeling that her students were missing out on opportunities and that given her position and available resource, there was little that she could do. Barbara hoped that “my enthusiasm holds out for my topic area and my subject … [when I] get back to [my hometown], then I’ll take them to Sydney and be involved in that sort of stuff”. With limited resources and relative isolation, there is a perception that opportunities for Northview students to engage with other students and cultural exhibits are much more scarce in comparison to more urban and affluent schools.

**Town context: Underlying racism in Northview (Barrier)**

During conversations, each teacher either directly or indirectly referred to the prevalence of racism in the town of Northview. When asked to name things that she thought reflected citizenship, Barbara first turned to racism: “One of the problems in this town is that the racial harmonies are not always at their best, which is really sad. Sometimes you think it’s improving and other times it isn’t”. It is not surprising, therefore, that Barbara cited the importance of teaching cultural tolerance in citizenship. As a beginning teacher, the context of the town’s racism clearly plays an influential role in Barbara’s conception of citizenship and what she believes students need to understand as citizens.

John also referred to tension between the town’s Aboriginal and non-indigenous population: “There’s a lot of race issues in town. There’s a lot of problems on a racial basis even to the extent that there are two Aboriginal missions and there’s problems within these communities”. For John, a key factor in citizenship was a sense of tolerance and respect for other cultures, similar to Barbara. While believing that teaching tolerance and acceptance was important, John felt that the prevalence of racism actually made it more difficult to discuss such things as Reconciliation or rights and responsibilities: “Invariably, [a discussion] turns back to racial issues because of the racial issues that exist in the community”. John argued that some students are more able to handle such a discussion than others, and because of this, at times “we try to avoid the race side as much as we can”.

John felt that his own “cultural baggage” was another reason for avoiding the race issues. He explained:

> I have cultural baggage, my own mind set about what is right and wrong. When I come to an area like Northview, one of the things I’ve got to now step back and say, ‘I haven’t been brought up in a community where there is a lot of mixed races and racial problems, that there are a lot of [negative] feelings between different groups’ … I couldn’t understand the racial views of a lot of the kids in the school when I first came here that after 2 years, I can most certainly understand that it exists.
John discussed his “cultural baggage” almost like an internal monitor of his own cultural understanding and sensitivity. It reminded him to be wary of standing on a “soap box” when talking about the merits of getting along and tolerating other cultures without fully appreciating the context in which many students grew up and without appreciating the potential dissonance between family and school views on cultural tolerance. Clearly, John felt that his teacher training had not adequately prepared him to deal with this and that this was an important area of his ongoing development as a teacher.

**Leveraging the salience of town issues (Enabler)**

The small size of Northview and its population meant that many local issues had a direct impact either on students or on their families. For example, a current proposal to construct a by-pass to redirect highway traffic away from the town would have an economic impact on the town’s local businesses, and therefore, to many students’ parents. Further, the proposal to amalgamate the town’s two high schools is expected to impact on students’ lives so much so, that they are represented on the steering committee, which has been tasked to explore and recommend solutions and provide feedback on this issue.

With the exception of race, it is evident that teachers at Northview leverage these and other community issues by discussing them in the classroom and by stimulating students to voice their opinions on them. For example, Joanne’s English class embarked on a letter writing campaign to the local newspaper to raise issues that were important to them. Joanne recalled that some of these letters were eventually published because the students were raising local issues. In another example, John recalled that his students, with his support, organised a petition to lobby the local council to provide a safe space in which to skateboard.

The unique context of Northview allows real-life examples of citizenship issues to be discussed and experienced by the students, and for students to understand how they can contribute to the decision-making process beyond the classroom.

**Discovering Democracy**

Teachers expressed varying degrees of familiarity with Discovering Democracy materials. John, Barbara, and Joanne each described a Discovering Democracy program that was written and submitted to the NSW Department of Education and Training in 1999 for a grant of $5000. The project had a dual focus on improving both literacy and students’ understanding of civics and citizenship. The program was to be implemented across all school subjects. One of the resources produced was an “ABC of civics and citizenship issues and ideas”. Included under ‘A’ were such things as Act, Amnesty International, ANZACs, Army, Acceptance, Australian identity. This resource was designed to familiarise students with civics and citizenship terms and to be used as stimulus material for discussion. The program, which formed the key component of the school’s grant proposal, was successful and the school was awarded a grant of $5000.

Teachers commented that the program had never been implemented across the whole school, in part because of timetable limitations for literacy. The current status of the program and its eventual opportunity for adoption was not known. It is perhaps no coincidence that the teacher who led the grant application was also no longer at the school. As the Erebus Consulting Group (1999) found in its evaluation of Discovering Democracy, a teacher champion
is an essential part of any new program’s implementation and continuity. However, Barbara indicated that a recent Access Asia program had been modeled from the Discovering Democracy proposal, which aimed to improve students’ understanding of different parts of Asia.

Aside from using Discovering Democracy materials to create the literacy program, teachers did not indicate that they drew explicitly on the kit when resourcing civics and citizenship. As Barbara said, “for resources, I think [Discovering Democracy] has played a role, but most of that has come from our personal investigation of it … I wouldn’t say that [Discovering Democracy] has gone whole school at this point in time”.

On the perceived relevance of Discovering Democracy, John commented, “it was like, we've got to go in this direction, we've got to teach these areas, and here's an area where we can pick up a lot of information … that helps us in the teaching of it”. Reflecting on how they worked with the resources, it was evident that teachers tended to take an uncritical view of Discovering Democracy, as they did not elaborate any perceived limitations of the materials or content. One function of this uncritical view, particularly for John and Barbara, could be their relative inexperience as teachers. Again, their training and teaching experience has been solely in the context of the 1998 Geography and History syllabuses, which, in part, were revised to incorporate civics and citizenship. In general, it did not appear that teachers at Northview Secondary School were using materials from Discovering Democracy.

**Discussion and conclusions for civics and citizenship education in New South Wales**

- Through programs, policies, and informal activities at St Anne’s and Northview Secondary School, students, teachers, and schools enact and enable citizenship roles (decision-making, understanding responsibility to groups, etc.).
- Structures beyond the formal school curriculum establish an environment in which students can engage in citizenship activities at schools. For example, for teachers at St Anne’s, this is most evident in its social justice and pastoral care program, and for teachers at Northview, through dinners with Aboriginal parents, student participation in Croc and Rock Eisteddfods, and the student award scheme.
- While teachers report some familiarity with Discovering Democracy, it was not being used by the teachers participating in Conversations about Civics.
- Above and beyond the difficulties of contending with new and potentially unfamiliar content in civics, geographic isolation and resource limitations (including financial and human resources) are also barriers, especially at Northview Secondary School, to delivering civics and citizenship opportunities.
- In addition, the social context at Northview Secondary School and within the town itself are further challenges with which teachers must contend when discussing citizenship-related themes, such as tolerance, cultural diversity, and respect.
- When civics is considered in the confines of academic subjects, or reflected upon as a result of syllabus revision, teachers tend to associate civics content with traditional and technical areas. However, when teachers consider civics and citizenship education beyond the classroom, they are clearly able to suggest creative and unique ways in which citizenship roles are enacted at each school.
• For some teachers, there is some uncertainty and tension regarding the inclusion of civics into their subject area. Goodson characterised individual school subjects, like History or Geography, as unstable environments, “politically and socially constructed” by individual actors, seated within the equally unstable environment of the school curriculum (1992, p. 52).

• Teachers develop a “version or vision” of school subjects which they validate and attempt to enact within the context of internal and external affairs (Goodson, 1992, p. 52). At times, teachers’ versions of their subjects are developed and enacted in competing relationships between these internal affairs and external relations.

• Conversations with teachers revealed that some teachers see a potentially harmonious relationship between their subject and civics, while others see potential disharmony.

• For some teachers at St Anne’s, the basis of this disharmony rests on perceived potential incongruity between the school’s own policies on citizenship development and the outcome of recent syllabus change. The revisions to History and Geography syllabuses are seen to have ‘foisted’ new content requirements in these subject areas to fulfill an official view of civics. These revisions and subsequent content requirements are not yet perceived as adding significant value to the school’s existing citizenship policies and its mission of citizenship development.

• A successful national and state program aimed at citizenship and civics must be flexible enough to respect and draw upon existing versions of citizenship. It must recognise and be able to complement the myriad beliefs, policies, programs, and activities that already exist and that currently provide students with opportunities to enact citizenship roles.

• A challenge for a program such as Discovering Democracy is its ability to effectively communicate to teachers the practical link between syllabus content and action and activities that reflect citizenship (either already in place at a school or as potential activities that a school might adopt).

• Another challenge for Discovering Democracy and for civics in general is to recognise that teachers around the country are likely to be at different stages of reflection and comprehension of what their own subject version is and how civics might be integrated within this.
The educational context
Like many other states and territories in Australia, Queensland is in the midst of much curriculum reform. A range of new syllabuses is in various stages of development, trial and implementation by the Queensland Studies Authority. It is responsible for P–12 syllabus development for all school systems in Queensland. Additionally there are a number of system-wide and school based reform projects across the state.

Studies of Society and the Environment (P–10)
The Years 1–10 Studies of Society and the Environment (SOSE) syllabus was to be implemented in all Queensland schools by the end of 2002. The expressed key values of the Studies of Society and the Environment syllabus are:
• democratic processes;
• social justice;
• ecological and economic sustainability; and
• peace.
Social and environmental inquiry processes of investigating, creating, participating, communicating and reflecting are foregrounded.
All new P–10 syllabuses developed in Queensland incorporate the cross-curricula priorities of literacy, numeracy, life skills (including citizenship skills), and a futures perspective, and incorporate an outcome-based approach. The learning outcomes for the Studies of Society and the Environment Key Learning Area (KLA) are organised into four strands:
• time, continuity and change;
• place and space;
• culture and identity; and
• systems, resources and power.
Thus the Studies of Society and the Environment syllabus provides opportunities for exploration of many issues associated with civics and citizenship education.

Senior syllabuses
In Queensland, there is a range of traditionally separated subject areas in the senior years of schooling (Years 11 and 12), e.g. Ancient History, Geography, Legal Studies, Modern History, Study of Society. Each area has its own syllabus and school assessment and moderation procedures.

CASE STUDY 3
Talking civics in Queensland

13 The Queensland Studies Authority commenced on 1 July 2002 and replaces three previous bodies: the Queensland School Curriculum Council, the Board of Senior Secondary School Studies and the Tertiary Entrance Procedures Authority.
**Discovering Democracy**

The *Discovering Democracy* project has had some impact in Queensland schools. In 1999, as part of the intersystemic Queensland *Discovering Democracy* teacher professional development project, two booklets were produced — *Linking Discovering Democracy and Studies of Society and the Environment in Queensland Schools: A planning and professional development guide*, one for Years 4–7 and another for Years 8–10. The main sections of these booklets provide a matrix which matches *Discovering Democracy* units with the Queensland Studies of Society and the Environment syllabus outcomes, provide additional resource references, and explain links with the prior syllabuses which the Studies of Society and the Environment syllabus is replacing or connected to (i.e. History, Geography, Study of Society, Citizenship Education and Business in Years 8–10).

In November 2000, Queensland developed another intersystemic project *Discovering Democracy: Partnerships at the Local Level* which is scheduled to run until June 2004. The project has the following timeline and foci for each year:

2001 — Raising the profile of *Discovering Democracy* in Queensland (including professional development activities for teachers, development of a website, opportunities for teachers to share best practice on-line/in print/face to face workshops, and a *Discovering Democracy* summit);

2002 — Whole school approaches to *Discovering Democracy* (continuation of 2001 activities with an added emphasis on developing and reporting school-based civics and citizenship education programs);

2003 — Developing Local Partnerships (increased emphasis on partnerships with other schools and community resources; support to localise *Discovering Democracy* for indigenous students and resources that promote Reconciliation); and

2004 — Sustaining *Discovering Democracy* for the future (development of sustainable project activities).

**New Basics Project**

Education Queensland has embarked on the New Basics project. New Basics are new curriculum organisers and refer to four clusters of practices considered essential for lifelong learning by the individual, for social cohesion, and for overall economic wellbeing. They are:

- Life Pathways and Social Futures (Who am I and where am I going?);
- Multiliteracies and Communications Media (How do I make sense of and communicate with the world?);
- Active Citizenship (What are my rights and responsibilities in communities, cultures and economies?);
- Environments and Technologies (How do I describe, analyse and shape the world around me?).

In conjunction with a focus on New Basics as new curriculum organisers, there is a focus on Productive Pedagogies and Rich Tasks. Productive Pedagogies are classroom strategies aimed at contributing to improved learning and social outcomes for students, and Rich Tasks are problem-based activities which allow students to demonstrate their learning and social outcomes, designed to have relevance and power in everyday life and new worlds of work.
Thus, the current context of schooling in Queensland provides many opportunities for issues associated with civics and citizenship education to be incorporated into the curriculum of all Queensland schools.

The case study schools

The Queensland schools invited to participate in this project were approached because they represented a cross section of ‘ordinary’ schools, representative of different sectors (primary/secondary), different locations (rural/outer urban/urban/inner city), and different socio-economic areas. The aim was to converse with teachers with a broad range of views and experiences in relation to civics and citizenship education. Teachers from Dunkin State High School, Innis State School and Bramberly State High School agreed to participate in the Queensland study.\(^\text{14}\)

Dunkin State High School

Dunkin State High School is a government secondary school (Years 8–12) situated in an inland regional town in southern Queensland. The town is known for its agricultural production and rural manufacturing. It is the major regional business base for the area, but has recently suffered an economic downturn due to the closure and relocation of two significant industries in the town. The community (over 90% of whom are Australian born, with the remainder from mainly English speaking backgrounds) comprises a cross-section of occupations mostly linked to farming or related industries.

Recent downturns in both primary and secondary industries in the town have impacted on the town’s population and consequently the school’s student population. The school’s enrolment has dropped to about 600 from over 700 in the previous year. The school was established on its present site in the 1950s and is the longest established secondary school in the district. About 75% of secondary students in the area go to Dunkin State High School, with the remainder attending a Catholic secondary college in the town or going to boarding school in other towns and cities. The students attending the school are drawn from a wide geographic area. The make up of the student population has changed over the past two years with 17% of the student population now nominating as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, and an increasing number of itinerant families moving in and out of the town in search of employment. This has been a significant change for the school and they have been motivated to provide a curriculum which they believe meets the changing needs of their student population.

The school has implemented a national curriculum framework in Years 8–10 where all students study English, Mathematics, Science, Studies of Society and the Environment, Health, Physical Education & Personal Development, Technology, The Arts, and, LOTE — Japanese. Year 8 students study all these learning areas. At the end of Year 8, students select the key areas of focus they will study during Years 9 and 10. In the senior school (Years 11 and 12) there is a range of Board of Senior Secondary School Studies registered subjects as well as a number of non-Board subjects. The school also has a strong vocational education program including the School-Based New Apprenticeship Scheme. Dunkin considers itself a strong academic school.

\(^{14}\) All names of schools and teachers are pseudonyms.
and advertises that the school’s overall success is higher than other schools of a comparable background, and that the numbers of students completing Year 12 and choosing to pursue a tertiary path are above the state and like-schools’ averages.

The new P–10 Studies of Society and the Environment syllabus was due to be implemented at Dunkin State High School in January 2002, beginning with the Year 8 cohort. When the conversations were held in 2001, the school had adopted a semi-unitised approach to curriculum offerings in the Junior School. In Year 8 and Semester 1 Year 9, students studied three Core units (Introduction to History, Introduction to Geography, and Discovering Democracy). In Semester 2, Year 9 students were free to choose from a selection of units designed to allow them to either specialise in one discipline or choose a multi-disciplined path. They could choose to study History, Geography or civics units, or they could choose a combination.

**Innis State School**

Innis State School is a P–7 government school in the town of Innis in southeast Queensland. It is a community in transition with high unemployment because of the recent erosion of its traditional manufacturing base and mining industry. The local government area includes a number of distinct zones: an established and highly stable central urban area with an aging population; surrounding rural agricultural districts with a stable and largely mono-cultural population; a small but relatively wealthy rural residential area; and a high growth corridor towards Brisbane with a growing and mobile population. This last area includes significant groups of recent migrants from non-English speaking backgrounds, indigenous Australians, and single parent families. Innis State School has a school population of just under 400 students. The teachers believe the student population reflects the demographics of the surrounding community described above. The area around Innis State School is described as a low socio-economic area.

**Bramberly State High School**

Bramberly State High School is a government secondary school (Years 8–12) located in a small township in the midst of a conservative farming community of Anglo-Celtic origins, in the rural district surrounding Innis. The school has just over 600 students who come from the township, the surrounding farming area and from a nearby defence force base. School enrolments have been falling during the past 18 months due to economic hardship in the farming sector and some relocation of defence force personnel.

The Years 8–10 curriculum is unitised and students are required to select a minimum number of units from each of the eight Key Learning Areas (KLAs). Six units, or subjects, are studied each semester before a student begins another six units the following semester. So that this can happen, all subject departments have organised the Years 8–10 courses of study into semester-length units. Each of these units is set at a specified level of difficulty though some may encompass all three levels in one unit:

- Level 4 — an introductory or beginning level;
- Level 5 — an intermediate level;
- Level 6 — a more advanced level, equivalent to Year 10 work.

Students plan their course of study by selecting units from those offered by subject departments, making sure that they meet the minimum requirements of the Key Learning Areas. To help students make their choices, students in Year 8 study a compulsory Foundation course, which is a general course of study, based on all Key Learning Areas.
The interviewee selection process
After discussions with the principals at each school, and then obtaining consent from the teachers selected, details regarding the project, the interview process and the topics were faxed through to them prior to the conversations. (See Appendix 3.) Generally the conversations addressed the identified points but not necessarily in the order listed on the fax. The conversations were audio taped, transcribed and then subjected to content analysis.

In all, seven teachers from the three schools were involved in the audio taped conversations:
- Martin, a Social Science Department teacher at Dunkin State High School;
- Rhonda and Vivienne, upper school teachers at Innis State School;
- Grant, Linda, Donna and Carly, Social Science department teachers at Bramberly State High School (a group conversation).

The teachers’ views of civics

Martin, Dunkin State High School
Martin is Acting Head of the Social Science Department at Dunkin State High School. The department has 12 staff teaching across a number of different subject areas. He has been teaching for 12 years: 2 years in a school in outer Brisbane; 5 years at a central Queensland country school; and the past 5 years at Dunkin State High School. He completed a 3-year preservice teacher preparation specialising in Social Science/English secondary teaching.

Martin believes that the school structure (‘egg crate’ classrooms) provides a challenge to reforms such as introducing technology and networking the classrooms. He is trying to integrate technology into the Social Sciences.

Martin describes the school and the town as ‘predominantly white Anglo-Saxon’ and changes in both the demographics associated with additional cultural groups moving into the town and the increasing importance attached to learning an Asian language, have caused some tensions for the school. He believes that this is coming more from the parents rather than the students themselves … ‘they are saying what they hear their parents say, and often their parents’ views are uninformed’.

He says this provides a particular challenge in teaching social sciences at Dunkin.

Martin seemed to find it difficult to outline his personal views about civics and citizenship education, but readily described what was happening in the school, and in particular within the formal curriculum as guided by the syllabus. Martin sees opportunities for civics and citizenship education within the formal school curriculum. He also thought that most of the school staff would agree that civics and citizenship education is the domain of the Social Science department not the school as a whole; everyone else ‘has got their own thing to do … they’ve got to get through their curriculum’.

He suggested that ‘citizenship education has always had a bad reputation. Traditionally it’s been a subject that kids who don’t want to do History or Geography … and being compulsory through to Year 10 … we get kids at the lower end. So teaching Cit. Ed. [Citizenship Education] has always been a struggle for teachers. And the content you’re looking at is often ‘too academic’ for them’.

At Dunkin, the Social Science department has tried a different approach, ‘We have a number of units that cross across these boundaries and cover a number of different areas — they might have a primary focus on say Geography but also cover History and Cit. Ed. Kids have a choice of 3 or 4 each semester’.
Individual teachers develop units and there is little time for collaboration. These units are quite highly structured and planned in detail because the school often has to get teachers to teach in the Social Sciences when they have had no preservice preparation in that area. The department is trying to encourage students to work across subjects such as, for example, using one piece of assessment for two subjects.

Martin says ‘Talking about government can be very dry so we try to localise the content and make it relevant … We try to concentrate on local things… I’m very interested in civics but I do find that with what we’ve got in the junior school at the moment [i.e. in the syllabus], it’s very dry’. He says it is very difficult to get students interested in politics and in voting and believes that it is not inherently interesting for students. Dunkin school feels the isolation from Canberra and Brisbane. They know that Parliament House in Canberra has a good education program but Dunkin students simply can’t afford to get to Canberra and the visits by the Parliamentary Education Office don’t happen as far west as Dunkin. The same political party has held the local parliamentary seat since the 1950s so he says this contributes to the general disinterest in politics. There’s a general feeling of inevitability about politics in Dunkin, ‘the kids can’t see much point in talking about it because nothing ever changes’. Martin thinks that in Brisbane or in some of the marginal seats, students are generally more politically aware and therefore teachers have more ‘to work with’.

Dunkin State High School is just beginning to implement the Studies of Society and the Environment syllabus. In the junior school, teachers use the inquiry based learning approach from the senior syllabuses, as the basis of their planning and teaching. In terms of the outcomes focus associated with the new Studies of Society and the Environment syllabus, Martin says they are ‘holding back’ for the moment because they believe there is no clear direction on how to report to outcomes. Therefore they are still using their previous reporting framework which incorporates:

• knowledge and understanding;
• interpretation and analysis;
• decision making; and
• communication.

The previous Head of Department was very involved in Discovering Democracy activities and the department has continued to use the materials as the basis of one of the compulsory integrated core units in Year 8. Martin says the department has worked with the unit and Discovering Democracy materials to make things a bit more ‘user friendly’. He thinks that, as it is, the kids find it all ‘a bit dry and a bit dull’. The department is working towards two integrated core units in Year 8 — one focusing on History and civics and the other focusing on Geography and civics. They are trying to integrate civics into both areas and make it more meaningful than having it on its own.

Martin had difficulty nominating activities or projects outside the formal school curriculum which he believed develop civic knowledge and citizenship outcomes. The school has a ‘Student Council which works quite well at a school level but the kids also think that oh well … as a Student Council they wonder just how much impact they have when it gets to real decisions anyway’. The school recently moved to 70 minute lessons and Martin believes that was a great opportunity to involve the Student Council in the decision making process but this was not done.
'It’s unfortunate that with this change in structure [timetabling] that there wasn’t as much consultation I think with the kids as there could have been … they could have seen how things develop … I don’t know, perhaps it was a lack of time.’

The Student Council’s role at Dunkin involves dealing with student grievances ‘things like uniform … they also tend to do more fund raising types of things to put more services back into the school … refrigerated water cooler’. In the future, Martin says that he would ‘like to get kids more actively involved in looking at the process of how democratic decisions are made. … Trying to explain that [democratic processes] is very difficult … they need to see how democratic processes work … see we’ve got a local Youth Council which is quite good but is geared more towards 16, 17 upwards. They’ve been quite involved in running local events … like they’ve had Croc-fest the last couple of years … they actually run and organise that … it’s quite popular. So that’s the Youth Council doing that … now it would probably be good if we could get more junior school students involved in that but they want only from 16 upwards’. 

Rhonda and Vivienne, Innis State School

Rhonda teaches at Innis State School and has been teaching there for 11 years, the last 7 years in upper primary. She is passionate about the importance of civics and citizenship education, ‘our children just don’t know enough about how our country works’. She strongly believes that people should be well informed and that currently this is not the case. She says she sees evidence of this when she works on the election booths:

‘…and of course you get all these people coming in and a) they don’t want to vote, and b) they don’t know how to vote, and c) they don’t have a clue what’s going on … and you think this is pathetic you know … and um and I think this is just dreadful. And so on a personal level I think everyone should know how our country is run … you know the basics of democracy … and be informed who the candidates are, what they stand for, what their policies are … so basically that’s a personal thing. And on the other hand I suppose I’m also into being part of a community … um … that you just can’t think about yourself all of the time … that you’ve got to be aware of other people in the community. And then on a global level, you know, do your little bit. I know you can’t do that much perhaps but every little bit helps … and just have the awareness I think.’

She believes that students are currently more aware in respect of these things than students she has previously taught:

‘particularly since September 11 … it’s been really amazing how that’s really thrown them from living in Innis to being aware of the global context … and it’s just happened overnight … massive change … they’re talking about the Afghans, they’re talking about the Taliban, they’re talking about the Muslim religion … and the whole human rights issue … and the whole world has just been aware of that. And I mean it’s just been fabulous for discussing these things … they’re suddenly globally aware’.

Rhonda says her interest and passion for civics and citizenship education has only recently developed due to a new family member being actively involved in politics. This experience has impacted on her teaching. She reports that when the new Studies of Society and the Environment syllabus came out, ‘I was delighted because there’s such a focus on it’. Rhonda has been involved in facilitating in-service sessions for teachers on the new Studies of Society and the Environment syllabus and acting as an online facilitator for the program.
She has been involved with Discovering Democracy since its early days — she ‘did the course and helped to disseminate the packages around schools and so on’. She thinks, that for Queensland, the Discovering Democracy materials were probably a little early since the new 1–10 Studies of Society and the Environment syllabus had not been developed at that time. She says there was a lot of resistance and disinterest about Discovering Democracy initially from teachers because it didn’t seem relevant in terms of the then current syllabus. She agrees that Discovering Democracy ‘links very nicely’ with the Studies of Society and the Environment syllabus and suspects that if the materials were arriving in Queensland schools at the time of the conversations, they would get a very different reception. When she first started using the materials some years ago she used the middle primary materials with her upper primary class because they had ‘no background … but now that a couple of other teachers are using it I can build on that’. The upper school staff have recently spent some planning time sorting out which year level will teach which area of Discovering Democracy and this will be implemented next year. She is delighted about this. Rhonda has been the driving force in this development and passionately believes Discovering Democracy is ‘a fabulous resource’.

Rhonda runs her classroom using democratic processes. ‘Any decision that has to be made we have a majority rule … so we vote … you know, come up with all the options and they vote … and they have accepted now that the majority rules’. Her class have student meetings every month. For Federation Day, she and her class wrote and performed a play for the school which told the history of Federation.

Rhonda also oversees the school’s Student Council:

‘… and we now run that along official lines … you know the meeting procedures, motions, seconders … all that stuff. The kids take minutes. The kids also run meetings with the junior classes and they bring back to the Student Council any issues or worries that the little people might have.’

In 2001, the Student Council decided they would sponsor World Vision, so the school vice captains participated in the leadership training day run by World Vision ‘and all the children chose one thing they would go without for 48 hours … to raise money’. The students visited all the classes in the school, gave talks and showed videos to make all the students aware of issues to do with landmines, child labour and UN charter of children’s rights etc. The Student Council also runs ANZAC Day ceremonies and gives information talks around the school. However Rhonda is concerned about how much power the Student Council really has. There was a recent issue with jewellery where the Student Council provided a recommendation, but the school administration did not accept their recommendation, citing safety concerns as the reason.

Rhonda and her class have also instigated a Citizenship Award in the school. They have developed criteria associated with being a good citizen. Every student has a copy of the criteria to check how they are going as a good citizen and at the end of the year a past principal is invited to present the Citizenship Award shield. This award is highly prized by the students. For the following year, she had plans to start a Citizenship Award for each year level and each year level will work out their criteria.

Rhonda also runs the election for school captains etc ‘and we run that … the way a proper election goes … you know we go through the stages … so we have the knowledge … they work out … they’ve got their campaign managers and they’ve got their policy speeches … campaigning … I have some election booths so we use them … and they run all that’. Rhonda’s class visits the local Council and the local MLA
(Member of the Legislative Assembly) visits the school often ‘...she gives out the badges and we go and have morning tea with her at Parliament House’. Next year they plan to visit the Law Courts, which have just begun an education program.

Even though Rhonda admits that she is probably the ‘driving force’ with respect to civics and citizenship issues in the school, she believes that the school as a whole recognises and values outcomes associated with civics and citizenship education. She thinks that there is a need for ‘someone to be the driving force ... with anything’. She believes that it is important for a focus on civics and citizenship education to be school-wide, not just in one or two classrooms. She agrees that she is very passionate about civics and citizenship education and believes that this passion is evident in her teaching, and thus encourages enthusiasm in her students:

'It made my little heart go warm ... you know, when we were talking about going to Parliament House earlier in the year ... we were talking about who we might see there ... they were going 'oh wow!' ... you know it's like going to a rock concert! ... and we're going to see politicians! [laughter] ... you know ...

I thought something's going right here [laughter] ... it was just so lovely you know ... they'd walk in and say who's that? and who's that? ... they were absolutely rapt!'.

She also believes that a supportive administration team within the school is essential. She agrees that this area has possibilities for integrating the curriculum — it's not dry if you 'live it' in your classroom and in the school.

In the future she would like to have closer links and develop substantial community-based projects with the local Council. She'd like to have the students involved in something happening in the community and have the students involved in taking it through to local Council ‘it's all that empowerment stuff ... you know making them realise that they can make a difference'.

Vivienne is also an upper primary teacher at Innis State School. She has been teaching for 25 years and is challenged in her work by the rate of educational change and the behaviour management issues she now has to deal with. While she considers civics and citizenship education important components of the school curriculum, she sees this as yet another thing that has to be included, ‘it's caught up in the maelstrom of all this other stuff'. She says that while she has probably never used the words ‘civics’ and ‘citizenship’ with the students she has taught during her 25 years of teaching, she does focus on relationship skills in her classroom all the time. For example, she spends a lot of time teaching students how to co-exist in groups, how to treat each other with respect, and on developing their interpersonal skills. The development of these skills underpins everything that happens in Vivienne's classroom.

Vivienne recalls that in her own schooling the word ‘civics’ was used at the Catholic school she attended, ‘we were taught it was related to how to behave, how to behave in the world. It was related to your religion’. Thinking about it later during the conversation she offers a definition, ‘civics, I suppose, is all the things that happen in a democracy to make the world work well, then citizenship is how each individual applies those civics ...’. She goes on to think about her own schooling and its grounding in religious beliefs about how people should treat each other, and then thinks about her current role in a government school and concludes that the ‘lack of a reference point’ (i.e. in religious beliefs) is a challenge when trying to develop some of the skills necessary for citizenship:

'It was related to your religion. I haven't got that base here, so we have to base it on being nice to one another and the code of behaviour, with no other reference point at all except a code of behaviour and the reward that comes at the end or a consequence that comes if you don't ...'. She concludes ‘Do I teach civics? No. Do I deal with the kids trying to be good citizens? Yes'.
Vivienne explains some of the things she does in her classroom to develop citizenship skills, highlighting the importance of what she calls a ‘reference point’:

‘I use the Code of Behaviour at this school as a reference point, particularly to treat each other with respect, because that’s the one they fall down on … and that’s citizenship, isn’t it … teaching treating each other with respect whether you’ve got a reference point of religion or not, it makes the world go round better’.

Vivienne is familiar with the *Discovering Democracy* materials and she intends using them in her classroom activities in the future. She has been working with the upper school staff and Rhonda to plan the use of the materials for the following year. It is intended that the units will be integrated into the Social Studies curriculum and introduced in a developmental way across the years in the upper school. That way each teacher will know what the students have covered the year before and will know what to teach, in order for the following year’s teacher to build upon.

**Grant, Linda, Donna and Carly, Bramberly State High School**

This was a group conversation involving all four teachers. Grant is the Head of the Social Science Department. Linda trained as an English/Drama teacher but has been teaching English/Studies of Society and the Environment at Bramberly for some years. Donna, who is in her first year of teaching, teaches predominantly Legal Studies, and Carly is an English/Studies of Society and the Environment teacher in the second year of contract work.

At Bramberly State High School, approximately a third of the teachers are contract staff. This is of major concern for the Social Science department because of the lack of continuity. In the department staff room they keep a list of teachers who have passed through the department — so far, 56 teachers in six years; as they say, ‘transfers are big business here’.

The Social Science department developed a range of social science units for Years 8–10 last year and now with the new Studies of Society and the Environment syllabus they have had to develop and write new ones. The teachers reported feeling under strain as a result of this. Originally they had compulsory Studies of Society and the Environment for Years 8–10 and the subject was unitised: a History unit, a Geography unit, a Social Education unit and a Special Interest unit. Now students complete one introductory and integrated Studies of Society and the Environment unit and then two more mandatory units. The remainder of their study involves selecting from a suite of integrated Studies of Society and the Environment units. The teachers have concerns that because of this choice, they are not sure that all students are covering what they consider essential learning. In addition, Linda is worried that they are focusing too much on the process of learning and are in danger of neglecting content knowledge … ‘they have to be lifelong learners but they don’t have to actually KNOW anything when they leave … do they know the name of the Prime Minister?’.

However Grant believes that all the outcomes outlined in the new Studies of Society and the Environment syllabus address issues of civic knowledge and citizenship. He is currently developing a History–based unit that looks at civics issues. He believes all the new units they are developing incorporate in a very real and obvious way, outcomes associated with civics and citizenship education. Likewise, Donna teaches Legal Studies and believes that much of her Legal Studies objectives also achieve important outcomes related to civics. Even though they have developed integrated units, they suspect that the students like to be able to know when they are doing ‘History’ and when they are doing Cit. Ed. [Citizenship Education], for example.
Linda sees purposes associated with civics and citizenship education as developing ‘the knowledge to be a productive, worthwhile, contributing member of the community … um the knowledge to know how to do that’. Grant added ‘whereas the department [of Education] and those people who create the policy and the syllabuses are looking along the path of active citizenship … that by the end of X number of years at school, with the emphasis on civics and citizenship being embedded in a variety of subjects … that at the end of it, the kids will be far more active in terms of being members of society’. However he is not confident of this happening because ‘lots of kids are turned off the realities of politics and all of the things associated with a social conscience … it’s not part of their culture or sub-culture’. The teachers say that it is very difficult to teach this area to the students at Bramberly because of the community’s expectations and values:

‘the whole new [Studies of Society and the Environment] syllabus looks at issues of peace and the environment … and you’re talking to a group of farmers and children of defence force workers … they are all into war and killing things! You know, you walk through the playground and you hear about how many pigs they shot on the weekend … and how many trees they can knock down before anyone notices … how much DDT dad’s got buried under the shed … they’re not interested in …’

The teachers also feel a challenge associated with students only being interested in things that are of immediate and direct relevance to them, ‘they don’t have a sense of the future … everything is immediate to them’. They believe that the students need structure and need to know exactly what they are being required to learn for assessment purposes. They suggest that the students like to have a textbook. ‘These kids have no ability to act independently or be responsible for their own actions’. The teachers all acknowledge that they probably hold different attitudes and belief systems than the students, ‘like the whole notion of social justice … if you talk about the issue of the boat people, you know there are many students here who see absolutely nothing wrong with the way they are treated … so how do you…?’

The teachers suspect that other members of the school sees civics and citizenship education as a Social Science department responsibility, like literacy is seen as the responsibility of the English department and numeracy the domain of the Mathematics area. They also believe that it is not an area highly valued by the rest of the school. They lamented a lack of both time and money to develop their units and feel that Social Science loses out in the scramble for scarce resources in the school. The low socio-economic background of the students also impacts on what they want to do, such as for example, not being able to go on excursions.

The teachers were aware of the Discovering Democracy kit but had been unable to locate it in the school. They reported they had been searching for it over the past month since they thought it could provide some resources for one of the units they were developing for the following year. Donna is aware of and has used resources available via the websites for Education Queensland15 and Curriculum Corporation.16

The teachers talked briefly about the School Council and the Student Council but lamented that students often didn’t get involved either due to a lack of commitment or because the issues were irrelevant to them and/or they felt not empowered to really influence things.

---

15 http://education.qld.gov.au
16 http://www.curriculum.edu.au
Discussion and conclusions for civics and citizenship education in Queensland

This section summarises themes emerging from these conversations about civics and citizenship education that took place with the seven teachers. While this is a very small sample and even though the aim was to explore in-depth the views and practices of the teachers involved in the conversations, it is none-the-less possible to discern some directions or themes emerging from the teachers’ stories outlined in the previous section.

Civics and the curriculum

Even though all teachers agreed that the development of civic knowledge and citizenship outcomes was very important, many had difficulty articulating their personal views of civics and citizenship. However, they were very comfortable and articulate explaining what they were doing in their classrooms and in the school.

The secondary teachers talked about civics and citizenship education predominantly within the context of the formal curriculum and in relation to the mandated syllabus. They thought that other school staff would also agree that civics and citizenship education was the responsibility of the Social Science department, just as literacy would be viewed as the domain of the English department. In contrast, the primary teachers involved in conversations highlighted the importance of a whole school approach, involving an integrated approach across Key Learning Areas and across year levels, with a major focus on citizenship outcomes within the school community.

Thus, while civics and citizenship education could potentially become the shared purpose of the whole school, the balkanised nature of departments and subject teaching areas in secondary schools seemed to mitigate against this happening. Likewise the secondary teachers often talked about the content that needed to be addressed in the formal curriculum (related to politics and government) and the associated challenges of doing that, while, in general, the primary teachers talked more about more generic skills for citizenship development, such as co-existing in groups, treating each other with respect, tolerance and acceptance.

Discovering Democracy and Studies of Society and the Environment (SOSE)

The teachers agreed that the current Queensland Studies of Society and the Environment syllabus provides lots of opportunities for developing civic knowledge and citizenship outcomes in an integrated way relevant to the students’ interests. However, they cautioned that learning outcomes associated with civics and citizenship education needed to parallel what teachers are already being asked to report on, as directed by mandated syllabus documents, otherwise teachers would see them as ‘add-ons’ to an already overcrowded curriculum. Despite this, Discovering Democracy materials have been well received and utilised. Of particular note was the view that the Discovering Democracy materials align with the outcomes of the new Queensland Studies of Society and the Environment syllabus. Generally, the teachers selected and used aspects of the materials as resources for their formal curriculum programs within their school or department.
The student context

Some teachers felt somewhat restricted in what they could hope to achieve in developing civic knowledge and citizenship outcomes by the characteristics and values and attitudes of their students, their families and the broader school community. They expressed a desire to make the learning more relevant to the students, and the need to involve them in this process. Simply telling them about it and focusing on content is ‘too dry’. However these teachers said they often found it difficult to make the learning relevant to the students’ personal everyday lives, while at the same time trying to broaden their outlook to more national and global considerations.

There was a view that within some adolescent cultures and sub-cultures, political issues and having a social conscience are not valued. Furthermore, there was some feeling that secondary students like to know what ‘subject’ they’re doing and exactly what content knowledge they need to ‘know’ for assessment purposes. Thus, activities outside the formal curriculum, such as Student Councils, needed to involve the students in making decisions about ‘real’ issues. Students need to feel empowered and know that their decisions will be acted upon.

Concluding comment

There is a sense in these teachers’ conversations that the value and status of civics and citizenship education in a department or school, and consequently the promotion of it in formal and informal co-curricula activities, is dependant upon someone being a ‘driving force’ in the school or department, someone who is passionate and committed to these outcomes. However, the departure of such a person from the school would also likely impact upon the ongoing and coordinated nature of a focus on civics and citizenship issues in that school. Often it is teachers’ personal interests, prior experiences and backgrounds which impact upon whether they take up the challenge of foregrounding civics and citizenship education beyond that prescribed by the mandated syllabus.

It can also be noted that many of the teachers involved in these conversations reported afterwards about the benefit to them of being involved in the conversations. They agreed that talking about the issues helped them clarify their own thinking on civics and citizenship education, and indeed helped them progress their thinking and consider future options to pursue.
The educational context and the three Victorian case–study schools

The Curriculum Standards Framework is the dominant curriculum document in Victoria, driving the delivery and focus of all curriculum. Colloquially known as the CSF, it had its first iteration before civics and citizenship education developed as a serious focus of curriculum and learning outcomes. However, in 2000, the revision of the CSF was undertaken and in December its successor CSF1 was published. It has outcomes across eight Key Learning Areas (KLAs), and although Civics and Citizenship Education outcomes are attached principally to KLAs of English, Studies of Society and the Environment (SOSE), Health and Physical Sciences (HPA), they are flagged as existing in most of the KLAs.

The CSF1 Overview document outlines the Civics and Citizenship Education objectives as:

The CSF aims to help students to become active and informed citizens. This requires them to develop understanding about key elements of Australia’s legal, economic and political systems. It requires an understanding of the history of the country and its people. It requires an understanding of the values that the community shares and an awareness of the rights and responsibilities of citizens. Much of the underlying knowledge of civics and citizenship is found in the SOSE key learning area. Opportunities to explore elements of the attitudes and values associated with developing active citizenship occur across key learning areas.

This is the document, which had been the focus of much professional development during its early implementation, which was in effect at the time of the conversations the researcher had with practitioners and principals for this study.

Two primary schools were selected (one a Catholic Parish School, and the other a larger State Primary School) in a small seaside/rural township. Both serve the ‘same’ community. The State School has implemented a number of explicit civics programs across the grade levels, and received awards for its work. The Parish School has included civics in some of its integrated units, through the Studies of Society and the Environment (SOSE) component of those units.

One State Secondary School was selected. It serves a regional, rural community and has consciously adopted a ‘whole school approach’ to implementing a range of cross-curricula and specifically-focused civics and citizenship programs, both in and outside classrooms. This school’s program was one of the 25 schools supported under Phase 1 of the Victorian Discovering Democracy Professional Development Strategy, where schools were funded ‘to explore ways of developing teaching and learning approaches based on the Discovering Democracy materials’. The school used funding received under the Victorian Discovering Democracy Grants to Schools Program, to support those programs to achieve whole school goals.
As part of that Professional Development Strategy, this school’s Grants Schools program was written up in the publication *Discovering Democracy in Action: Learning from School Practice* (Holdsworth et al., 2000) This publication was part of the Victorian government’s formal evaluation of the implementation of *Discovering Democracy* (conducted in each state as required by DETYA).

**The interviewee selection process**

Interviews were conducted with a range of school personnel, and an interview schedule was constructed for interviewing teaching staff. The sequence of questioning was not closely adhered to, but it indicates the ‘ground’ covered in all the interviews conducted for this study in Victoria. (See Appendix IV)

- **State Primary School**: Interviews were conducted with the Principal, and the Grade 5/6 teacher, being the teacher with the responsibility for the extension program and social justice perspectives in a range of programs in the school. Informal conversations were also held with a number of other staff.

- **Parish School**: A phone conversation was held with the Principal and a joint conversation was held with the five classroom teachers in the school about how they have implemented civics in their planning and teaching of the integrated studies units at the Grades 3–6 levels.

- **State High School**: Interviews were conducted with the Studies of Society and the Environment Co-ordinator, the Principal, and the Assistant Principal with responsibility for Welfare and Discipline (and student representation).

**Perspectives and issues from schools in Victoria**

**Knowledge of Discovering Democracy**

The arrival of the *Discovering Democracy* kit was the first the teachers in the three schools knew of the *Discovering Democracy* policy and program. They had not been part of a wider discussion and most of them did not realise such a conversation was taking/had taken place. Thus the kit was, for them, ‘uncontextualised’ by any discussion of the *Discovering Democracy* policy’s learning objectives etc. Their context was the school and their past teaching experience. Therefore, for the staff of these three schools, discussion of civics and citizenship education policy occurred solely within the school community, mediated only by those curriculum or other concerns or orientations they already had in place. Interpretation of the policy was confined to their own community’s goals, values, and preferred learning outcomes.

**General response to Discovering Democracy**

The first thing to be said about the *Discovering Democracy* resources is that they were not well known by most teachers in late 2001. They had made little regular use of the *Discovering Democracy* materials, which ‘lie languishing somewhere in the library, I guess!… We can always ask the librarian…’

Teachers who knew the materials said the materials convey an uncontested view of civics and citizenship, of Australian History, and often commented that they ‘don’t fit our *Studies of Society and the Environment program*’. The materials were seen to be firmly located in the Studies of
Society and the Environment curriculum area, and as being formal curriculum. There was a ‘proper way to use these materials and little flexibility’. They commented that no materials were written for junior primary levels.

However, staff at all three schools had ‘dipped into’ Discovering Democracy resources, with the two primary schools having used only the Federation unit. The Federation unit did ‘help us fill in gaps in our own knowledge’, so this Discovering Democracy objective was achieved for the primary teachers. ‘It enabled us to stay one step ahead of the kids’. There have been additions made to the Discovering Democracy suite of publications since the end of 2001, though none of them focus on junior primary level.

**Specific concerns with Discovering Democracy**

Teachers in the two primary schools did not think civic knowledge was very important, but both groups thought ‘rules and regulations’ in relation to the students’ own school environment were important. One school did a unit on the school’s Rules & Regulations, and the other had a range of structures and activities which connect to these kinds of school-specific civic knowledge, such as the Student Representative Council.

The information which the Discovering Democracy materials foreground as important to learn and know, is not always consistent with what teachers agree or value. ‘They speak about an Australia I don’t recognise’. Even where these facts or data (or the interpretation of them) are accepted, teachers did not see them being effectively related to civics’ process objectives, because primary teachers don’t believe that these young children will retain more specific ‘civic’ information or data. Examples from the Federation unit were given to support this argument for non-retention of civic information. What the children had ‘remembered from this unit were the flags they had designed, with their own personal icons built into the flags’ designs’. The information about the Australian flag, and the history of Federation had been ‘lost’. In part this issue seems to be one of pedagogy. Teachers did not see the data (i.e. the facts) as the important curriculum.

**Citizenship dispositions as learning outcomes**

Both primary schools value decision-making, problem-solving and negotiating as important learnings for their students, and they are explicitly taught, with a view to achieving particular attitude formation and values objectives. The view of history as uncontested narrative, and the certitudes involved in the telling of the stories in the materials were not seen as contributing to this kind of learning. Some of the teachers questioned the manner of the telling in the materials, by identifying facts which they knew from elsewhere, sometimes from their own experience. Thus a disquiet was expressed as to how they might be able to use the materials to convey to their students the ‘value of being different’, ‘why its important to question uniformity’, when the materials generally suggest only a dominant view of events.

The teachers said that the Discovering Democracy materials had not assisted teachers in these three schools to affirm the values and learning activities they regard as most important. The civic attitudes and values (see Prior’s Dimensions 2–5 — Appendix IV) are the concern of all the primary teachers. In the second primary school there was also considerable explicit attention given to Dimension 6. The teachers believed these were ‘citizenship dispositions’, something they saw as rather different from and more important than civics.
The secondary school staff thought both civic knowledge (as constructed by *Discovering Democracy* and Prior, though it was believed these were different constructions of the terms) and citizenship outcomes were important. Their first approach, with the Grant Schools scheme was to conduct an audit of the civics being taught through the formal curriculum across the whole school. From this they concluded we ‘were already covering the civic knowledge territory quite adequately’.

However, the school community wanted a greater emphasis on citizenship values and dispositions to be achieved, both through the formal curriculum, and through school-based decision-making processes (i.e. those which were already functioning were to be augmented).

Thus it must be concluded that in these three schools the *Discovering Democracy* program has meant little change to teaching programs or pedagogy in civics because these predated the program. Indeed, *Discovering Democracy* does not explicitly address the pedagogy issue in civics.

All staff in all three schools saw the achievement of civics and citizenship learning outcomes as encompassed by the Prior Six Dimensions, as ‘legitimate and achievable learning outcomes of a successful civics and citizenship program (curricula and extra-curricula) in a school. Dimension 1 (even as defined) was seen as limited, and Dimension 6 was seen as ‘hard to achieve… but we should be trying much harder’.

### Positive impacts of the *Discovering Democracy* Program

The existence of the *Discovering Democracy* Program had resulted in civics and citizenship policies becoming an agenda item at school policy meetings. Teaching staff and Principals (and other school community groups when invited) were able to re-examine their civics and citizenship policies, within their normal curriculum and administration reviews. It empowered the staff to raise curriculum and social questions and to engage the parent community in that discussion, in ways that might not have otherwise been possible. By raising the profile of civics and citizenship, school communities were able to interpret the civics and citizenship objectives in ways that made sense to their community. One school won a grant to do specific innovative civics and citizenship curriculum work, and another trialled and instituted new processes for students being involved in school decision-making, and established a range of extension activities for children.

Most, though not all of the civics and citizenship curricula work in these three schools, has been achieved through the medium of the Studies of Society and the Environment curriculum. New units have been written, and an impetus has been developed to raise the profile of Studies of Society and the Environment generally. This has been regarded as a success in all three schools, though in the secondary school it has been a most significant shift of realisation by the whole staff of what are some of the central concerns and activities of the Studies of Society and the Environment Key Learning Area.

---

17 **Prior’s Dimensions of Citizenship**

1. Civic knowledge (e.g.: Understanding cultural contexts in which a community exists)
2. A sense of personal identity (e.g.: A positive attitude to self)
3. A sense of community (e.g.: A commitment to family, village or nation)
4. Adoption of a code of civil behaviours (e.g.: A respect for others)
5. An informed and empathetic response to social issues (e.g.: Caring for the environment)
6. A disposition to take social action (e.g.: Engaging in community service)
The co-curricula outcomes have been achieved through school-based decision-making bodies. The processes previously utilised in the schools were re-examined, to varying degrees, in the light of the levels of engagement accorded the students and parents and other community stakeholders.

One of the key benefits of the second phase of the Discovering Democracy program was that it provided significant monies for teacher professional development. This professional development focus was universally applauded by all staff interviewed, though one school had not undertaken any formal professional development in the area of civics and citizenship. The Discovering Democracy Professional Development Strategy provided for a detailed explication of the Discovering Democracy program and materials, enabling a subsequent freedom to decide how useful or in what ways they could be utilised by the school. The major difficulty especially in rural areas is getting teachers to experience new things… ‘the costs of transporting anyone is often prohibitive’. So without monies specifically allocated to civics and citizenship programs for out-of-class experiences, for professional development, for teachers to develop ideas into units of work or for whole school policy to be discussed, let alone implemented, it just won’t happen. ‘There’s no shortage of ideas, but they take time to implement, and school budgets are tight’.

The Discovering Democracy Professional Development Strategy could also provide time for teachers to reflect on what their schools were doing and what they might like to change. Time for reflecting on practice (especially as a group, during or after the professional development) was seen as the best most valuable outcome of the policy. Only those schools which had decided to allocate a curriculum day to professionally developing their staff in civics and citizenship had had such experiences.

**Particular interest in student leadership**

Leadership is a live debate in all three schools. The key issues were seen to be how to:

- Offer opportunities to engage in leadership activities to all, not just some, students;
- Make decision-making ‘real’, how to have it be about things that matter to students;
- Keep a range of decision-making processes complementary, not conflictual or overlapping;
- Acknowledge and affirm citizenship successes, even if small, in such a way as to retain in students a sincerity and thoughtfulness about the leadership tasks;
- Avoid creating division or complacency within the student community, especially when supporting ‘difference’;
- Connect and reinforce the concepts of ‘leading’ and ‘responsibility’ (more an issue with younger children and those cultures inexperienced with leadership).

**A hiatus in the interviews with teachers**

Once the matters reported above had been discussed, the interest of the teachers being interviewed was solely limited to their teaching of the values and goals agreed to by their communities. It was at this point of the Civic Conversation that the disconnection of civics education in the schools from Discovering Democracy was most palpable. This lack of link between Discovering Democracy and their programs meant that they were not prepared to ‘integrate’ them in the conversation any longer. They talked animatedly and at length about
their values programs, the programs planned for the following year, the reaction of their students to the programs they currently have, the links between parent and other community stakeholders to the school and how to assess civic and citizenship outcomes.

They all believed they were ‘making a difference’ to the students’ learning by their programs, but they wanted their students to be able to confidently know how to ‘make a difference’ themselves, for themselves, their peers, and their communities.

The secondary school experience is one which could act as a model and also as an incentive for other schools. This is especially the case given that implementing civics and citizenship curriculum change and whole school civics and citizenship activities in secondary schools has proven to be more difficult and less common than in primary schools.

**Celebrating engagement in active citizenship at Wangaratta State High School**

Since 1999, the Rural City of Wangaratta has had, as a Committee of its full Council, a Youth Council, on which students from the school (Year 9 and 10 students) have been representatives and had a range of responsibilities, including mayoral. The City has allocated the Youth Council monies and the responsibility of implementing tasks for youth within the local community. Each year the Youth Council develops a corporate plan for the Youth Council. The Youth Council’s decision-making process has been one which has obliged the youth representatives to canvass the community to ascertain appropriate activities on which the community is prepared to support the allocation of municipal funds. Following such decisions, the Youth Council is responsible for the implementation of the decisions. At all stages, the Youth Council is monitored by the City, but at no time has any intervention been required.

The High School has enabled its students full engagement and the fulfilment of a full range of activities in the Youth Council. The object is:

‘to give the kids a role in local affairs. It’s been a good opportunity for the voice of kids, and they have been influential in spending $25,000 per annum of local rates on kids. They have been influential in setting up a range of youth activities for the region, and one of them has been the building of the skate board and bike disaster area! It took two years to arrange, it’s been open a week, and already there are broken bones!'  

There has also been the opportunity for kids to be involved in interviewing migrants in the region. In the ‘Living in Harmony’ project, funded by the Commonwealth, the focus was on the history of migrants to the region. Our kids were asked to assist in the development of the interview schedules, they were bussed to the place for the interviewing, and they had to report on and de-brief to peers and the Steering Committee. The interview tapes are now all stored in the local library for posterity and a book of the interviews was published [with interviewees acknowledged].

This was outside classroom time and counted for assessment in the Australian Migration unit at Year 8 level. They learnt heaps! There’s a new Harmony Grant now, starting in 2002… for interviewing indigenous people in the local community… we may be asked to get involved in that too, which would be kind of nice.

We are interested in fostering pre-existing cultural connections that exist in country towns and regions al over the place. And that interest is known in this community.’

---

In 2002 the school is piloting a new civics and citizenship curriculum in Year 9. It is called “Making a Difference”. The school has the C&C (civics and citizenship) stuff spread across the curriculum, especially in SOSE units at Years 8 and 9, and that is necessary because of the middle school structure (where only some students take some SOSE options) if we don’t spread it around many kids might not get a chance to get into C&C’. But in this new semester-length unit, which a broad cross-section of the Year 9 kids have chosen to take for four periods a week, they

‘will become actively involved in some way in the school or local community and Make a Difference. It has a problem-solving focus, uses a co-operative learning model, and they will all be reporting back to their peers in class what they’ve been doing and what is their analysis of the difference(s) they are making to themselves and/or to the community. They’ll be choosing what they do but I imagine they will be helping out in the homes for older folks, coaching sports teams, being active, as leaders perhaps, in the peer mediation schemes we have going, being involved in student government, at a class or school level, working with people in the historical society… that sort of thing.’

The Studies of Society and the Environment staff have decided to pilot one group in the first year… ‘to see how much stress it puts on us and the organisations in the community, and to see what changes we’d need to make before it could be an option for more than one class a year’. This is a Studies of Society and the Environment initiative, arising from the school’s Charter Priority: How we can extend all students. ‘The staff said that they were looking for personal responsibility in the students’ learning. We wanted to challenge them (students) to learn about themselves but to also look beyond themselves. To gain the confidence to believe that through their activity something can change’. All staff at the school would hasten to add that they support the program, as being in the tradition of the ‘Whole School Approach’ to civics and citizenship at the school, citing the support for the School Governance and Citizenship Awards. And the Studies of Society and the Environment staff are well aware that if the rest of the staff did not support the time taken to plan and the timetabling dimensions to the unit, ‘with kids being out of the school from time to time, etc’ that the unit would not be a ‘goer’.

But why was it the Studies of Society and the Environment staff who took the initiative?

‘Because we think we SHOULD. Because, at a philosophical level, we believe that this concept of Active Citizenship is an important one. If you want people to be good citizens, you basically want to give them the idea that their involvement is a good thing. It gets them thinking about how they can change it and what they can do about it. This has always seemed to me more what citizenship education is about, rather than how many senators there are in Canberra. We want them to know about meaningful activity by the citizenry in the local community’.

Concluding the Wangaratta story, it can be seen how it exemplifies the full range of issues mentioned by all the Victorian case study interviewees. The program has grown from a tradition of seeing the school as part of the local community, especially a local country tradition. The staff have used a small grant as a springboard to achieve some professional development, and then to develop a new civics and citizenship unit, to extend themselves as teachers. The Studies of Society and the Environment staff took the initiative, but they acknowledge the importance of the context and support of the whole school staff and administrators. Their concept of important civics and citizenship learning and understandings is manifest as Active Citizenship learning. They want equity, so they want all kids to experience Active Citizenship learning. They know Active Citizenship learning directly connects to self-esteem and growth. They believe it can be part of a formal written curriculum, with defined learning outcomes, and that these are amenable to assessment. They have recognised the need
to pilot and to evaluate the program pilot before they proceed further. They are good change models. It has been a considerable effort to get this far, but they know why they are doing it: ‘Because we think we SHOULD’.

**Conclusions regarding civics and citizenship education in Victoria**

It can be concluded that *Discovering Democracy* was used by all three schools to promote civics and citizenship and to re-focus on implementing their civics and citizenship policies and programs (curricula and co-curricula). Different strategies were adopted in using *Discovering Democracy* to foreground civics and citizenship in each of the schools. Each of the three schools made some use of the *Discovering Democracy* policy and program to address their own civics and citizenship concerns. They had, to varying degrees, construed the *Discovering Democracy* policy and program as an opportunity to raise the profile of the issues and pedagogic approaches they valued. They had grasped what they saw as an opportunity to review their goals, which in the case of two of the schools, were significantly reviewed and augmented. In the third school the *Discovering Democracy* policy and program resulted in a realisation by teachers that they needed more civic information/knowledge themselves, before a comprehensive civics education policy and program could be developed in the school. Teachers at all three schools showed a preference for citizenship activities over civic knowledge outcomes. Very little formal assessment of learning outcomes was undertaken in the two primary schools, with slightly more occurring in the secondary school.


Hahn…….


Hargreaves…….


Hogan, Fearmley–Sander……


Australian Capital Territory: Questions that teachers were asked

Below is an outline of the questions that teachers were asked in the formal, recorded interviews.

Questions about you as a teacher
- How long have you been a teacher?
- How long have you been teaching at this school?
- What subjects/areas/grades were you trained in?
- What subjects/areas/grades are you currently teaching?

Questions about your personal views on civics and citizenship
- What are your personal views about civics and citizenship education?
- Why/how have you formed this view?
- Based on your view of civics and citizenship, do you think you’ve taught civics and citizenship in your classrooms? (If so, how, if not, why not?)
- Have you used the Discovering Democracy materials in your classroom? (If so, how, if not, why not?)
- What do you see as the strengths and weakness of the Discovering Democracy materials?

Questions about civics and citizenship within your school
- What is the history of civics and citizenship education in your school?
- What is currently happening in your school to do with civics and citizenship?
- Does what is happening in your school reflect your personal views about civics and citizenship education? (If so, how, if not, why not?)
- Does the school have outcomes associated with civics and citizenship? If so, are these formal (e.g. school curriculum) or informal (e.g. extra-curricular activities)?
- Does the school have a policy or a written document that deals with civics and citizenship? If so, what role do you and other teachers play in this policy?
- Who is responsible for civics and citizenship education in this school?
- Has Discovering Democracy had any influence on the school’s planning or thinking about civics and citizenship education?
- How does your school reward/acknowledge civics and citizenship issues?
- Where do you think your civics and citizenship education is going in your school?
New South Wales: Questions and topics for interviews

[This was a rough guide that I used at each school to help structure the overall conversation. Teachers had a copy of these topics before each interview as a way to be familiar with the content of our conversation. I generally stuck to this outline but added different questions as part of the natural conversation.]

(1) Personal background
  • Years teaching, years at present school, subjects taught

(2) Teachers’ personal views about civics education and citizenship
  • What comes to your mind when someone mentions civics education?
  • What does citizenship mean to you?
  • How do you define citizenship?
  • What goals would you assign to teaching students a subject that would focus on citizenship?

(3) Formal/informal curriculum and civics and citizenship education
  • In your opinion, do things happen at this school that you think reflect citizenship?
  • In your opinion, do you think you have been teaching students about citizenship and civics throughout your career; in what ways?
  • Discuss formal/informal ways that citizenship is addressed at the school
  • Discuss the extent to which the school might be able to improve, if at all, the formal/informal ways in which citizenship is addressed
  • What’s in store for the future at this school that aims to target civics and citizenship?
  • What could be in store for the future that might target civics and citizenship more/less effectively than it presently is?

(4) Awareness of Discovering Democracy and use of materials
Queensland: Letter faxed to all interviewees

Thanks for agreeing to be part of the conversations about the civic’s project. Here’s some further information re our conversations which might be useful for you. As you can see from the attached flyer, I am interested in informal conversations with teachers to better understand what they believe about civics and citizenship education, what is happening in their schools and future possibilities they see for civics and citizenship education in the classroom.

As I mentioned, the conversation will be informal but the sorts of areas we could discuss include the following. However, think of these as guides only; as I have stressed this is an informal conversation not a formal interview. However I find it is good to have some ideas to talk around. Think of these in this way.

(a) Something about you as a teacher, e.g.
   • how long have you been teaching?
   • how long have you been at this school?
   • what subjects/areas/grades do you teach?
   • what subjects/areas were you trained in?

(b) Something about your personal views on civics and citizenship education, e.g.
   • what are your personal views about civics and citizenship education
   • why do you have this view?
   • based on your view of civics, do you think you’ve taught civics within your subject/your grade/s?
     if so, how?
     if not, how come?
   • how do you think civics should be taught in the classroom?
   • do you have views on citizenship itself?
   • do these views influence your views about civics in any way?
   • what is happening in your school that you think reflects citizenship?
   • are there things you think should be happening at this school that would reflect your view of citizenship?

(c) Something about the school and civics and citizenship education, e.g.
   • does this school have outcomes associated with citizenship (i.e. formally in the school curriculum or informally in the extra-curricular activities at the school)?
   • what role do teachers play in the school’s policy on civics?
   • what prompted the introduction of these citizenship outcomes?
   • what prompted the introduction of civics at the school?
• has Discovering Democracy had any influence on the school’s planning or thinking about civics?
• does the school reward/acknowledge citizenship issues?
• where do you think civics is going at this school — what’s in store for the future that is attempting to target civics?

Hopefully these will get our thoughts going. As I mentioned, I hope to be able to audiotape our conversation if you are agreeable. The transcription of the conversation will then be returned to you for your verification. Your and your school’s anonymity is assured. No school’s name nor teacher’s name will be used unless you want to be identified.
Victoria: Conversations about Civics, An A.R.C. Policy Study: Interview Schedule

(a) Personal background
• How long have you been teaching?
• How long have you been at this school?
• What subjects do you teach? (Any civics and citizenship training or professional development?)

(b) Personal views on civics and citizenship education
• In your view, what is encapsulated by the term citizenship?

Prior’s Six Dimensions of Citizenship
1 Civic knowledge (e.g.: Understanding cultural contexts in which a community exists)
2 A sense of personal identity (e.g.: A positive attitude to self)
3 A sense of community (e.g.: A commitment to family, village of nation)
4 Adoption of a code of civil behaviours (e.g.: A respect for others)
5 An informed and empathetic response to social issues (e.g.: Caring for the environment)
6 A disposition to take social action (e.g.: Engaging in community service)

(c) Your views about civics and citizenship teaching and learning
• What sorts of outcomes might you assign to C&C learning and teaching?
  – Where have you looked to, to support your view of civics?
• Have you always thought and taught in this way, with these outcomes in mind?
• What range of pedagogies do you employ in teaching for C&C outcomes?

(d) Your opinions about the school’s approach to C&C teaching and learning
• In what ways does this school support your view of civics?
• Does the school have explicit curriculum outcomes associated with C&C?
• Is the school trying to achieve any specific social outcomes relating to civics?
  – Are there official school policies that address these outcomes?
  – What things/events/activities at this school reflect the school’s view of a C&C agenda?
  – In what ways does the school acknowledge citizenship issues?
  – In what ways does the school reward students and staff as citizens of the school?
• What prompted the introduction of C&C at the school? Who talked about it?
• What role has DD played in supporting you or the school in the development of programs?
  – Has the policy (and its materials?) been constructed in a variety of ways in the school?
• How do you construct outcomes and identify outcomes associated with citizenship?
• Does this task make more sense if it is done as part of a whole school approach? WHY?
• What direction(s) do you think C&C might take in your school in the future?
Last page of text makes 72 in total
TEACHERS TALKING CIVICS

The research reported here is the product of collaboration between a team of researchers and teachers in the Australian Capital Territory, New South Wales, Queensland and Victoria. The focus of the research was civics and citizenship education. Its purpose was to seek a better understanding of how teachers are responding to recent civics and citizenship education initiatives. It was recognised to be an important opportunity to hear the voices of teachers in an area of the school curriculum that was both new and very public. The research took the form of “conversations” between the researchers and between them and school teachers and principals. Those conversations are reported here in the form of case studies and are followed by an overview to highlight the main lessons that can be drawn from the case studies.