

Comparative findings from the IEA civic study and their impact on the improvement of civic education in Australia

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The Australian Context for the IEA Civic Education Study

The IEA Civic Education Study took place in Australia from 1996-2002 against a background of national questioning of civic institutions. At its commencement, there was an active debate about Australia's constitution and the British connection, amongst citizens and particularly amongst political leaders. The debate surrounding the republic referendum, and preparations being made to celebrate the centenary of Federation due in 2001, were part of the political context for civic education being given a profile in the school curriculum in the late 1990s.

The Australian context for the study additionally included civic education just becoming a policy priority for government. Successive Australian governments in the 1990s had provided powerful impetus for the introduction of formal civic education in Australian schools. In 1997 the Federal government initiated a large scale curriculum development exercise entitled *Discovering Democracy* that had resulted in resources being developed for upper primary and lower secondary students for use in programs of civic education. Every school in Australia was provided with the first of these materials late in the decade.

As a complementary response, each government at State/Territory level had made civic education a non-compulsory priority in the school curriculum by the end of the decade. It was an ideal time to find out what young Australians knew and valued about democracy and what their attitudes were to a range of issues that affect democracy. Data about such matters were regarded by government and the community as worth having. At the school level, Australian students would probably have been exposed to civic issues and ideas, but neither in any systematic way, nor consistently across states or systems. The IEA Civic Education test and survey instruments were administered late in 1999, at which time the new *Discovering Democracy* curriculum resource materials initiative would have had little impact on students' knowledge acquisition, and teachers' practice, so the study took on a benchmarking role.

Given the slightness of the formal Australian civic learning context, it can be reasonably assumed that family, peers, informal school activities, the media and students' everyday activities in the community would have been at least as important in influencing students' civic understandings and attitudes as their in-class school experiences. This view of the sources of significant exposure is supported by the time estimated by Principals to have

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been spent on civics in their schools. Approximately 70% of Principals indicated that students spent less than one hour a week, although some 20% of Principals said their students spent between 1-2 hours on civics and 10% put the figure as high as 3-4 hours. However the definitions of 'civic education' they used were very broad, and possibly problematic.

The Conduct of the IEA Civic Education Study in Australia

The study was carried out in two phases by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA). In Phase 1 (1995-1999) of the Study, national researchers conducted qualitative case studies that examined the contexts and meaning of civic education in 24 countries (*Torney-Purta, Schwille, Amadeo 1999*). In Phase 2 of the Study, nationally representative samples of nearly 90,000 students in the usual grade for 14-year-olds in 28 countries were surveyed, in 1999. The findings from the international study were reported in March 2001 (*Torney-Purta, Lehmann, Oswald, Schulz 2001*). The Australian national report analysing and interpreting the Australian data collected during study was released in March 2002 (*Mellor, Kennedy, Greenwood 2002*).

A two stage stratified cluster design for sampling was employed. At the first stage, schools were sampled using a probability proportional to size. 142 secondary schools in Australia participated (Participation rate of 94%). The sample structure, ensured proportional representation of the three school systems in Australia: government, Catholic and independent.

The second stage of the sampling process consisted of selecting one intact classroom per school from the target grade. The chosen class was not to be tracked by ability and was, where possible, to be in a civic-related subject (eg. history, social studies). The Australian cohort of Year 9 students was 3331. (A participation rate of 92%)

The 352 respondents to the Teachers' Questionnaire (3 requested from each of the 142 participating schools) were teachers of English, Studies of Society and the Environment (SOSE) or were SOSE Curriculum Co-ordinators. Principals from 120 schools responded to the School Questionnaire.

The IEA Concepts of Civic Knowledge and Attitudes

Underpinning this study was the conception of civic education as a complex enterprise involving a variety of cognitive, conceptual and attitudinal strands, each of which is important and open to independent evaluation. The model of civic education used in the study particularly addressed the issue of how students gain civic knowledge and develop civic attitudes, and it foregrounded active citizenship (*Torney, Lehmann, Oswald, Schulz 2001*).

The proposed topics for examination were based on the three broad domains established in Phase 1 as representing the core knowledge base of civic education.

- Democracy/Citizenship;
- National Identity/International Relations; and
- Social Cohesion/Diversity

In the student questionnaire there were items and questions on content knowledge; skills in interpretation; the understanding of concepts, attitudes; and expected actions.

Australian Students' Results in an International Context

Ten of the 28 participating countries had Total Civic Knowledge scores which were

significantly above the international mean. The USA was one of those countries. Eight countries were significantly below the international mean. Ten countries, positioned in between these two groups, had means which did not vary significantly from the international mean. Australia and England were two of those 'average' countries.

On the eleven attitudinal scales, Australia achieved an above average rate of support on only two, a below-average response rate on four and an average on five of the scales. The devil is in the detail of course, and the illumination we seek from involvement in international studies derives from how the comparisons can be drawn, on which scales and in which items there is significant agreement or disagreement. One also must ask of these comparisons what we may learn from them that could inform policy or practice in the future planning of curriculum. The understandings gained from such international comparative work should impact on policy and practice.

Some General Trends in Influences Identified in the International Data

The international data indicate that civic knowledge is not gender-based, though there were substantial gender differences on some of the attitudinal scales and differences between specific countries on specific scales.

Like their international peers, only a little more than half of Australian students (55%) said they had learnt in school about the 'importance of voting in national elections'.

In the large majority of countries, the more books students reported in the home the better they performed on the civic knowledge test. Australian students responses exemplified this pattern.

The television news is the preferred source of information for 80% of Australian students. (The international rate is 86%) Australia is one of the countries where the frequency of watching news is associated with higher civic knowledge, with a greater effect than the international average. Australian students also read newspapers and listened to the news on radio more often than most international cohorts.

Schools that model democratic practice are the most effective in promoting civic knowledge and engagement in their students. Students who have experienced engagement in voluntary or school organisation participation are more likely to do well in the acquisition of civic knowledge and to have positive civic attitudes. Such was the pattern of the Australian responses in the study. This finding is the most broad-ranging in its effect, because it impacts on civic learning regardless of curriculum provision.

The Value of Comparing Student Response Patterns Across Like-Countries

Twenty eight countries of greatly-varying political development participated in the IEA Civic Education Study. They were all democracies, of some kind, but they had adopted this 'model' of governance in very different circumstances and over a period of centuries. The purposes their citizenry viewed as legitimate goals of government, and the learning outcomes they sought for their students in relation to civic education, were wide-ranging. Thus the value of comparing the responses of the student cohort of ones' own country with such a range does not immediately present itself.

But the experience of engaging with such a range of views, as to what is important for students who live in a democracy to know, is valuable of itself. The Student Questionnaire, like the other two instruments, was designed by experts from all participating countries and by members of the IEA International Steering Committee. The construction of the items for the test and survey instruments was a long, engaging and heavily-consultative process

which exemplified a passionate commitment to democratic values. The resultant items are ones which will stimulate discussion of the preferred learning outcomes in any society where such matters are considered important.

The provision of civic education in Australia is readily comparable to some of the other 27 countries which participated in the IEA Civic Education Study, but sharply contrasts with others. There are a number of reasons why comparisons of student civic understandings with those from England and the USA are particularly illuminating to the Australian data.

All three countries are long-standing representative democracies, with similar, developed economies and value-systems. There is a shared history, and each draws on some of the same precepts in the arrangements as to how the government and non-government institutions relate to each other and to the populace. The case of civic education provision in England was very close to that of Australia, at the time of testing. The situation in the USA was dissimilar to the Australian, in that formal civic education has a long history in primary and secondary levels in the USA, where all students would have experienced a range of civic curricula by age 14. The education systems have significant differences too, and some of these are illustrated by the differences in student responses to some of the test and survey items in the IEA Civic Education Study. Since England and the USA are two of the other country-participants in the study that have released their national reports, (and they are in English language) fine-grained comparisons with them are possible. (The publication of this journal will enable many more of these kinds of comparisons to be made!)

Australian Students' Total Civic Knowledge

The Total Civic Knowledge scale was composed of two sub-scales: Content Knowledge (made up of 25 items) and Interpretative Skills (with 13 items). You will recall that the USA students were in the above-average group on the Total Civic Knowledge scale, and Australia and England were in the average group.

If one regards the scores on the two sub-scales, an interesting comparative pattern emerges. We see the three countries have retained their position relative to each other and to the international cohort, but at two distinctly different levels. The USA students gained a mean of 102 on the content knowledge items, Australia 99 and England 96. (On all these scales the international mean was set at 100) But on the Interpretative Skills items the relative scores were, respectively, 114, 107 and 105. So the relative strength of the students' knowledge is similar on both sub-scales, but dissimilar to the rest of the international cohort. The items in the two sub-scales test different matters, and the students demonstrated a differential learning.

The main bulk of the civic knowledge items had a regular multiple-choice structure. This is one where a proposition was put and four potential responses to it were offered and a choice is to be made by the student. These were the Content Knowledge items. The Interpretative Skills items had a variety of formats. They all involved a level of 'reading', of text or picture, followed by the question, again with four potential responses to it offered and a choice is to be made.

A sample interpretative skills item follows:

Identify party which issued a leaflet

We citizens have had enough!

A vote for the Silver Party means a vote for
higher taxes.

It means an end to economic growth and a
waste of our nation's resources.

Vote instead for economic growth and free
enterprise.

Vote for more money left in everyone's
wallet!

Let's not waste another 4 years! VOTE FOR
THE GOLD PARTY.

This is a political leaflet which has probably been issued by ...	Total	Females	Males
the Silver Party.	6	5	8
a party or group in opposition to the Silver Party. *	79	83	74
a group which tries to be sure elections are fair.	8	6	11
the Silver Party and the Gold Party together.	7	6	7

The above response rates are those of the Australian students. The item references the importance of elections and of being able to interpret campaign materials before deciding on voting intentions. The response options allude to issues such as fairness in elections, the notion of coalitions, and requires the skill of identifying which voice is that of the author party. Students were asked to read the campaign leaflet and then decide which of the two parties mentioned had authored it. Australian students found this a relatively-easy task, more especially the females. The Australian mean (of 79%) was lower than that of the USA (83%) and above that of England (75%).

The picture for the international cohort was quite different. The response range was from 40% to 83%, with a mean of just 65 per cent. The skills are textual comprehension, requiring a close reading for consistency of thought in the argument in the leaflet. These are the kinds of skills students in the three countries of comparison acquire in topic analysis and discussion, a pedagogic style which operates in many of their classes. Eight other of the 28 countries achieved a mean of 75% on this item, so adoption of this pedagogy may also have been a factor in their success. But as most of them also did better on the civic knowledge sub scale than the sub-cohort of 3, the strength of their civic knowledge may have been the dominant explicator. For of course, de-coding the four response options also requires some civic knowledge, as well as interpretative skills.

As a result of their relatively greater than average skill in interpretation and all that implies, the 14 year old students of Australia, England and the USA were able to gain a better position relative to the whole cohort than they would have been able to achieve without them. It also indicates that this pedagogy is one suited to a range of content, and has positive effects on a range of learning outcomes. The power of this factor in learning was not anticipated by the study's designers. It is just the kind of research outcome which international studies can gift to researchers.

Most of the civic knowledge items draw from Domain 1 (Democracy/Citizenship) and deal with aspects of Democracy. The need to keep secure the items in the Civic Knowledge test, detailed description of the analysis, nationally and thus also between nations, is constrained. However through the sample items one can observe some comparisons.

The Civic Knowledge items with which Australian students had the most difficulty were those which deal with the forms and purposes of **Democracy**. Only half of the Australian students demonstrated clarity about the theoretical precepts of democratic models and structures, such as the role of criticism in a democracy, civil rights, the function of periodic elections, the content (and by implication the purpose of) a constitution, the legitimate media influence in a democracy, and the stages a government moving from dictatorship to democracy would need to undertake.

Sixty per cent of Australian students successfully inferred the consequences to democracy of a large publisher buying up many of a nation's newspapers, and 59% in the USA and only 49% from England (with the international average at 57%).

In each of the three countries in the sub-cohort, 78-79% of the students can identify that having many organisations for people to join is important to democracy because it provides many opportunities to express different points of view. (The international average is 70%)

Students in all countries had difficulty recognising the distinguishing characteristics of a non-democratic government. The international mean was 53%, as was that of the USA. Australians students achieved 51% and the English 45%. It is clear that this is a crunch concept... and the students have relatively-similar difficulty in recognising the distinguishing characteristics. Key words are not grasped in their full context, even in the countries where formal civic courses might have been expected to create such knowledge.

Like their international peers, Australian students do not have a strong grasp of the impact of economic issues in the functioning of a democratic system. They do not have a clear sense of where the inherent tensions between democratic ideals and economic exigencies lie. Only a third could correctly identify the role of trade unions in a modern economy, the key characteristics of a market economy, a range of issues associated with multinationals and globalisation.

The main conclusion that can be drawn, regarding the strength of the Australian responses on the Total Civic Knowledge scale, vis a vis the international responses, is that there are significant differences between them, and there are even smaller differences (of course!) between those countries that share the average mean. It is not unreasonable to hypothesise that the differences between the USA and Australia and England on the Total Civic Knowledge scale results from the level of civic education provision in those countries. It appears that students do learn civic-related knowledge in schools, that formal provision of civic education in schools can make a difference. Students don't acquire their civic knowledge solely from the society in which they live. Some of the similarities in the civic knowledge scores from the sub-cohort appear to indicate that similar pedagogic styles exist in classrooms across the three countries, and that this too makes a difference to civic learning outcomes.

Australian Students' Civic Engagement

The first group of the Attitudinal scales, called the Civic Engagement Dimension, consisted of four scales. These scales reference active participation. Australian students' scores are significantly below the International mean on three of the four scales which make up the Civic Engagement dimension. It appears Australian students do not endorse action by citizens. England's results were the same as Australia's. In comparison, students in the USA achieved an above-average mean in the first three and average on the fourth.

On the **Conventional Citizenship** scale the Australian students showed they believe a good citizen votes and shows respect for government representatives. But, like their English peers, and unlike those from the USA, they regard knowing the country's history and following political issues in the press as relatively-unimportant. All three cohorts register the least interest in the citizenship activity of engaging in political discussion, but the differences between the three is substantial. Only one third of students from England and Australia, compared to nearly two-thirds of the USA students, think it important.

On the **Social Movement Citizenship** scale the Australian students' responses indicate a less than enthusiastic endorsement, but eighty per cent of the Australian students believe in the importance of a good citizen participating in 'activities to benefit people in the community'. Three quarters of the Australian students think taking part in the protecting the environment is important, and two thirds support the importance of promoting human rights. Only just over half of the Australian students think it important to participate in peaceful protest against a law they believe to be unjust. Students from USA have a comparatively 15-20% higher support rate, and the English support rate is lower, across all the items, by about 10%.

The Australian mean for the **Expected Participation in Political Activities** scale was also significantly below the international mean. Given that voting is compulsory in Australia, students' expectation that 86% of them will vote is less significant than for those countries where it is optional. Eighty nine per cent do not expect to join a political party, 76% do not expect to write letters to newspapers about social or political concerns, and 87% do not expect to be a candidate for a local or city office. Two thirds of Australian students reported that they expect to collect money for a social cause or charity. Only 40% said they would be prepared to join a non-violent protest march. Students in the USA are twice as likely to join a political party than either the Australian or English students.

On the **Confidence in Participating at School** scale the Australian mean, is 'average'. Australian students appear to have a more positive view of what can be achieved by groups of students in schools than they have of what adults can achieve by active participation in the political process. Between 82% and 87% believe student participation in decision-making processes in schools directed at solving problems that exist in their schools would have positive effect on their school. This optimism is not shared by their teachers. Participation in a school council or parliament is positively related to civic knowledge for Australian students, indeed even more so than for the international students. However, only one third of them has participated in a school council or parliament. The USA details of results to this scale are not published (they were in the average band) and the support rates from the students in England are about 10% less than in Australia.

Another scale which draws on the same aspect of Civic and Citizenship learning as the above four scales, is the **Open Classroom Climates** scale. Students from Australia and England registered an average mean and those of the USA expressed an above average experience of the open classroom. Students in eleven of the 28 countries have a negative response, claiming they rarely discuss in class. Thus the pedagogic experience is again linked with learning outcomes. Two thirds say they are often encouraged to voice their opinion in class. Nevertheless, similar to their international peers, a quarter of the Australian students say this rarely or never happens.

About three quarters of the Australian students had generally positive response to the open classroom items, compared with about two thirds for England. Those from the USA were consistently in the high 70% to low 80%. Once again, it seems that the pedagogic approach and the content are inter-twined in providing positive learning outcomes. In addition, the three cohorts share a much lower support for one item, that in which students are asked whether 'Teachers encourage us to discuss political or social issues about which people have different opinions'. In each country the support rate for this item goes down by almost 20%. Students in each country are telling us that controversial issues are not encouraged as matters of discussion. That teachers stay with safe topics.

All three national patterns on the items on these five scales indicate that more positive civic attitudes about engagement co-exist with greater civic knowledge. It may be that students are demonstrating society-wide attitudes here, though the levels of engagement, by voting and other measures, would not suggest that across the three countries such differences exist. These results indicate that formal provision of civic education makes a difference to civic attitudes.

Teachers' Views on Civic Education Issues

As previously-mentioned the respondents to the IEA Teachers' Questionnaires were teachers of English, Studies of Society and the Environment (SOSE) or were SOSE Curriculum Co-ordinators. SOSE and English are the areas of secondary curriculum where civics education is most likely to be located in Australian schools. Thus the teachers surveyed in the IEA study were already somewhat pre-disposed to believe civics education is important in student learning. But only one third of them had had any training in discipline areas related to civics during their initial teacher training courses. Thus few of the teachers most likely to be trained in the area had had the opportunity to be formally trained in the substance or content of civics and citizenship education, nor had they experienced the contested nature of much of the material. The opportunity for them to engage in such matters had chiefly been as active citizens, and thus the pedagogy of teaching in the area of values and attitudes had been implicit rather than explicit.

These surveyed teachers were largely in agreement about the importance of values and certain topics in civic education. Their responses to a range of questions on the IEA survey about curriculum delivery in civics education suggests they have a preference for 'playing safe'. They affirmed that in civic education, more 'knowledge about society' should be addressed and that less emphasis should be placed on 'independent thinking by students' and on 'student participation in community and political affairs'. The social issues discussed in these classrooms are generally 'soft' ones, rather than 'controversial'. To date in Australia, the wariness of teachers (and schools) to get involved in the field has been characterised by the avoidance of the political, and at times the ethical, components of these social issues. This strategy of avoidance has been rationalised as not 'treading on the toes' of parents and the values' of other stakeholders, such as curriculum initiators and senior members of the school system bureaucracy. Indoctrination is the charge teachers say they meet if they are not careful of toes. But who would they be offending? Prior's study with 400 teachers, 90 secondary students and 200 of their parents suggests that there is a high degree of agreement across these cohorts that the good citizen must deal with 'social issues' (*Prior 1999*). It would appear then that there may be other or additional reasons beyond the fear of offending dominant groups, for teacher avoidance of these matters in their classrooms and in Australian secondary schools.

Views on the Valid Foci of Civics and Citizenship Education

The findings of this study suggest that an explicit pedagogy is required to make a difference to students' learning. In this, the area of civic knowledge is no different to any

other area of learning. Explicit pedagogy and learning outcomes will always provide a clearer achievement of learning. The important differences lie in the substance of the field, and in the way that a civic role requires knowledge, skills and some attitudes which foreground the civic/social responsibilities of its citizens. No other area of knowledge demands all this from its learners (nor from its teachers). The content of civics can get perilously close to politics, especially the great bogey of party-politics, often characterised as leading to the indoctrination of malleable students by scheming teachers. These concerns make the teaching of civics and citizenship a very different activity for schools to get involved in, compared to say, the teaching of maths. The civics teachers and their students need to learn how to learn about contested notions of knowledge. The teacher responses indicate a set of reasonably positive attitudes to civic education, but give no indication of that teacher cohort possessing the skills to implement a civic education curriculum.

The more recent discussions of civics and citizenship education in some Australian schools have grappled with many of these fears. Teachers and schools will have to come to terms with the findings of the IEA study. Concerns have been expressed already on a national scale about some of them. One example of the fearful results of the IEA Civic Education Study is that Australian students do not wish to be actively engaged in their democracy. Yet there is reason to believe that all is not lost, because the students seem to believe democracy is a good thing. Australian teachers in the IEA study also thought democracy was a good thing. They showed that the values they affirmed as the key learning outcomes of civic education, in descending importance, are: to develop consciousness about the needs of the whole world (98%), to develop honesty (97%), to fight against injustice (96%), to stand up for one's own opinion (96%), and to ensure opportunities for minorities to express their own cultures (91%). What is more, ninety per cent of teachers thought that what is important in civic education could be taught in schools.

They were well aware of the *realpolitik* of civic education in schools. Only thirty per cent thought that because of the conflicts and different opinions in society could there be no agreement on what should be taught in civic education. Resolution is possible and schools have a role to play in resolving the emerging civics education curricula issues, it seems. But the lesser support by teachers for values such as: accepting conflict and make the best of it (61%), criticising nationalism (38%), or strengthening the culture against foreign influence (38%) suggest that they recognise the areas that have the potential to create trouble in schools. This is teachers still 'playing it safe' (or perhaps they are simply recognising the *realpolitik*).

The nexus between civic knowledge and skills is well-understood by practitioners in Australian schools. The majority (70-90%) of the teachers and Principals agreed that students learn civic competencies by 'working together', by 'acting to protect the environment', and 'understanding people with different points of view'. Additionally, just over half of the teachers agreed that teachers should negotiate with students what is to be studied in civic education.

The concerned adults amongst the Australian teachers of Social Education and English know that unless they teach students about how democracy works, the future of the Australian democracy will be in doubt. Some expressed concern about this. Civic Knowledge is required for the achievement of outcomes about how democracy works. Teachers need to steer school-based civic learning towards citizenship, in order to facilitate the development of critique skills in students. Teachers appear to realise that if the students are engaged in the topics and issues being studied, they will more readily engage in the civics education classes. Negotiating civic engagement curriculum options with students may have the effect of encouraging current or subsequent engagement in the broader social world, but even if this is not the outcome, the students will at least be better prepared to understand and critique that social world. Democracy will be well-served by such strategies, but they are no more than a start.

Gaining civic knowledge is one step, linking it with the fate of democracy is quite another.

For young people, to see the role of legislative and judicial powers in protecting individuals and democracy is to draw a very long bow. Making connections between the social issues which teachers feel are important and the issues which interest and worry young people is a still further step. And learning the benefits and skills of engagement is yet another step to be undertaken by young citizens before they can be expected to take any active interest in Democracy.

How to Teach Decision-making in Schools

But will students of the teacher respondents to the IEA study be able to learn and practice decision-making? Support for Student Representative Councils (which can take many forms, it must be recalled) having much real power in their functionality was not high amongst the surveyed Australian teachers. The highest support (87%) was accorded the function of 'to organise social events'... which is precisely the kind of task most Student Representative Councils (SRCs) do in Australia. Support for SRCs to 'empower students to decide for themselves' was rated as (85%)... but decide about what? This support is just mere rhetoric, when set beside the support afforded the other options. Fewer than three quarters of teachers support SRCs 'participating in the political life of the school' or 'solving school problems'.

These two generalised propositions are the kind of feel-good comments that demonstrate the 'comfort zone' which rhetoric can provide. When asked specifics about the kind of participation or the kind of school problems students could usefully address through an SRC, fewer than a third of teachers support 'cooperating with teachers to solve discipline problems', and only about a quarter of them support SRCs to 'resolve conflicts among students' and 'resolve conflicts between students and teachers'. Evidently, teachers do not want the SRCs to do any real decision-making work in schools. Unlike the students, they show little confidence in student capacity to learn or practice decision-making in the school. Students know this and don't feel trusted. Teacher views on student roles form a dramatic contrast to the role students believe they could usefully play in their school's governance. (See the section earlier in this paper on the **Confidence in Participating at School** scale)

It is worthy of repetition that, as has been reported earlier in this paper, when asked to compare what is, and what should be, emphasised in civic education in schools, teachers revealed they wanted even less than the current levels of student participation in community and political activities.

Students are demonstrably being poorly-served by their schools in the gaining of critical civic competencies. This will have to change... and these findings can be used to help make that change. I have found that, when presented with these anonymous and nationally representative data, teachers are silenced by them. Teacher reluctance to cede territory to their students and their negative attitudes to skilling their students in engagement and participation, do not suggest a climate supportive of student participation in school governance currently exists in Australian schools. The part teachers play in the construction of the civic environment students encounter in schools is obvious and it is evidently not a positive contribution.

If teacher support for their students developing civic engagement skills moves beyond the merely rhetorical, and is increased, then will they know how to achieve these new civic learning outcomes? Will they be able to address the issues honestly and to marshal the personal and systemic resources to meet the needs of themselves and their students? Teachers do need help to know how to go about making those changes... and this is where the pedagogic work will come into its own. Professional development will make a difference, especially if teachers know what effect they are wanting to achieve. Again, this study can contribute in clarifying the desired outcomes.

Conclusions: What we learn from these comparative data

The IEA Civic Education Study demonstrated the relative civic knowledge of students in 28 countries. It also illustrated the civic attitudes of the students. By virtue of the combination of all these scales we have a set of understandings of both the learning outcomes and also some indication of how they can be acquired. The study reminds us also of the pervasive nature of civic learning. Civic knowledge does after all relate to the engagement of the individual with the significant groups in that individual's life, so it is not surprising that it generates questions about how and where one learns, not just what one learns. The contested nature of all these civic and citizenship domains is part of what schools need to unpack, when planning their classroom and non-classroom civic and citizenship curricula.

The most important finding of the study is that schools which model democratic practice are the most effective in promoting civic knowledge and higher levels of engagement in their students. The inter-country comparisons lend some support to this proposition. Providing students with a climate of engagement in classrooms is important to civic learning, but insufficient to generate civic learning or positive civic attitudes in the majority. As other studies have indicated (*Mellor 1998*), real issues, ones which concern students have to be available as serious areas of academic work and assessment. The IEA international (and the Australian) path analyses show that students who experience participation in school councils achieve better knowledge outcomes than those who have not had those experiences. It is not by chance that the students who know the most (within and between countries) are those who also care about participating. Such students are the most positive about their capacity to make a difference.

Schools need to provide all students with opportunities to actively participate, in classrooms and in school governance. Teachers need to model good citizenship, and schools need to provide models of, and practice in, good democratic decision-making. Formal civic education will then be seen to be more relevant to students. Their belief in the value of their democratic institutions will rise as their knowledge increases. The study and the sub-cohort comparisons demonstrate this. If citizens of the future are to be fully engaged in the democratic process they must have a solid understanding of the democratic institutions that underpin that process. Schools can both teach and model such learning. We cannot afford, as a democratic society, for schools to fail to encourage such learning outcomes.

In the weeks just prior to the submission of this paper, the Australian Federal, States and Territories governments have let the contract for the development of Key Performance Measures in Civics. These KPMs will form the basis of biennial national testing of Australian students in Years 6 and 10, beginning in 2004. This strategy of using national testing, based on specific indicators, to generate curriculum focus across the national school system has previously been used in Australia, England and America. It is a recent innovation in Civics in Australia and England, though the USA has had the NAEP in Civics since 1988. It is a compelling strategy, and will have an effect on schools' delivery of civic and citizenship education.

It is no small measure of the value of the IEA Civic Education Study that Australian governments have a heightened awareness of the importance of improving the civic knowledge and values of students in Australian schools. The IEA study has demonstrated that reliable measures can be developed in the area, and the Australian report indicated the need for a different approach to Civics and Citizenship provision, if improvements in student learning outcomes were to be achieved. This national testing is one way of focussing attention in schools on civic education. Support for teachers and schools to change their administration and pedagogy will be an important on-going task for systems and professionals, and for the communities they serve. Let the Civics and Citizenship Education Conversation begin!

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