SSOAR

Open Access Repository

www.ssoar.info

Active Citizenship in the Political Realm: The Case of Australian Secondary School Students

Reichert, Frank; Print, Murray

Veröffentlichungsversion / Published Version
Zeitschriftenartikel / journal article

Mitglied der

Leibniz-Gemeinschaft

gesis
Leibniz-Institut
für Sozialwissenschaften

Active Citizenship in the Political Realm:
The Case of Australian Secondary School Students[1]

Frank Reichert[a] and Murray Print[b]
[a]University of Hong Kong, [b]University of Sydney

Abstract: For democratic societies to sustain, the participation of young people in a political realm is of high significance, yet, research suggests that adolescents are generally politically "passive" citizens. This article examines the behaviors and behavior-related attitudes of students in Australian secondary schools for nearly two decades. Given significant developments in Australian civics education with regard to policy, curriculum and implementation, this article adds to understanding the long-term developments and potential influences of civics and citizenship education in Australia. Various data sources referenced in the present analysis suggest that civics and citizenship education may have had limited long-term effects with respect to active citizenship in political realms, though the present article also identifies promising trends that may reflect general developments rather than outcomes of civics and citizenship education. We discuss our analysis with regard to the need for a long-term commitment to education for active citizenship by teachers and politicians, as well as some deficits and influences in civics and citizenship education outcomes.

Keywords: Active citizenship, citizenship education, citizen participation, civics, educational policy, political attitudes

Active citizenship in the political realm:
The case of Australian secondary school students

The foundation of every democracy is the active engagement of citizens in order to nurture and sustain that democracy (Crick, 2002; Dalton, 2004; Putnam, 2000). It is well recognized, especially in Western democracies that school-time adolescence is a significant period in life for becoming a competent and engaged citizen (Flanagan, 2009; Sherrod, 2006; Youniss & Yates, 1997). In Australia, these aims have been confirmed by the widely accepted *Melbourne Declaration*, which states that "young Australians should become active and informed citizens who are committed to national values of democracy, equity and justice, and participate in Australia's civic life as well as be responsible global and local citizens" (MCEETYA, 2008, p. 9).

This requirement for active, informed citizenship is not new. Two decades ago, *Whereas the People…* (Civics Expert Group, 1994) initiated a wave of civics and citizenship education in Australia that was initially promoted by the Labor government. In 1997, the first activities of *Discovering Democracy,* a program that provided teaching resources as well as teacher professional development, commenced under a newly elected Coalition government (Kemp, 1997; Print, 2016), aimed at familiarizing Australian students with Australian democracy, and was the most important such initiative in Australia's recent history (Hughes, Print, & Sears, 2010; Print, 2008, 2016). Although the *National Assessment Program: Civics and Citizenship* was first conducted in the very same year when *Discovering Democracy* ended, little is known about the developments and changes that happened in the context of the public debates and initiatives in Australian civics and citizenship education over the past two decades with respect to youth civic engagement. Our aim is to trace these developments and to examine the changes in attitudes and behaviors related to the involvement in the political realm[2] of young Australians.

Although developing active citizens has become a major goal of Australian education across all states and territories (MCEETYA, 2008) over the past two decades, it is questionable whether young Australians are now more active citizens than they were before the recent revival of Australian civics (Print, 2016). We contend that civics and citizenship education has failed to promote active citizenship in the long term because of the discontinuance of *Discovering Democracy*

at a time when the evaluations of *Discovering Democracy* suggested that cognitive learning outcomes, such as gaining knowledge about the political system, still predominated in school assessments with less focus on behavioral outcomes (e.g. participatory skills) (Erebus Consulting Partners, 2003). Further, the removal of funding for programs in schools aimed at educating active Australian citizens and their replacement by the Values Education Program had the effect of severely diminishing school-based activities in citizenship education and thwarting the initiatives of *Discovering Democracy* (Print, 2016). In the following, we first present a brief overview of different approaches to active citizenship and clarify the understanding of active citizenship used in this paper, drawing upon an empirical perspective. Second, we familiarize readers with the Australian case and provide background information about education for active citizenship, in particular, the *Discovering Democracy* initiative. Then we introduce the sources used to compare different aspects of active citizenship over time, followed by the presentation of the manifestations of several indicators of active citizenship in relation to attitudes toward citizen action, expected political participation, and actual participation of young Australians. The results are discussed with respect to their potential relevance, or irrelevance, to Australian civics and citizenship education for building active citizenship, whilst also addressing limitations and future perspectives.

Active citizenship

The concept of active citizenship is located in an active learning context and yet its definition remains imprecise (e.g., Hoskins & Mascherini, 2009; Nelson & Kerr, 2006; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). Active citizenship is linked to participation and engagement in politics as well as the community with a strong emphasis on skills development and motivated behavior as a result of participation in various contexts, such as schools, communities or civil organizations (Nelson & Kerr, 2006). A comprehensive understanding of active citizenship also comprises (behavior-related) attitudes as well as values (e.g. Hoskins & Mascherini, 2009; MCEETYA, 2008).

Kennedy (2007) has specifically addressed the concept of active citizenship summarizing the literature into three approaches: popularized adoptions of active citizenship; conceptual and theoretical uses of active citizenship; and empirical approaches to active citizenship. *Popular approaches* are those that are imprecise about the concept of "active citizenship" and various governments simply use "'active citizenship' as a slogan that suits the politics of the day" (p. 307). *Theoretical uses* of "active citizenship" are mainly located between republican and communitarian understandings, according to which citizens should actively participate in society and their communities on the one hand, and (neo-)liberal conceptions of active citizenship on the other. The latter support a passive view of citizenship in that it aims at self-regulating citizens. Other scholars have also labelled the first perspective as a "thick" or "active" understanding of citizenship and democracy, while the liberal conception is often characterized as "thin" or "passive" citizenship (e.g., Zyngier, 2012). However, these remain theoretical conceptions. Third, Kennedy categorized *empirical approaches* as those "that seek to identify the behaviours and attitudes of 'active citizens'" (2007, p. 306) using data from students or adults. The conceptualizations by Westheimer and Kahne (2004) as well as Hoskins and Mascherini (2009) are approaches driven by empirical data and are useful in identifying active citizenship.
We may therefore think of active citizenship as a two-dimensional model. One dimension juxtaposes "passive" versus "active" participation, the second values and attitudes that affect levels of participation. "Passive" participation may involve activities like watching television news or simply joining a human rights organization without any further engagement. Other activities are more active, like voting or writing to a politician, while even more active forms comprise attending a demonstration or collecting signatures for a petition or actively supporting a political party during an election campaign.

The second dimension represents a scale of values and attitudes as an underlying element of active citizenship. Hoskins and Mascherini (2009) suggest that this dimension comprises behavior-related (or "democracy") values – involving what people think how important it is, for instance, to vote or volunteer – that subsequently affect people's levels of activity. (Human) Rights-related values, such as attitudes towards immigrants' rights, laws against discrimination and individual freedoms, belong to this dimension, too.

This understanding of active citizenship as a two-dimensional continuum provides a useful framework for discussing active citizenship, though our main concern will be on *participation in political realms*, as a form of active citizenship. Hence, we focus on activities that can be described as political and consider political behavior-related values as part of a broader concept of active citizenship (cf. Note 2).

Australian civics and citizenship education at the turn of the millennium

The 1990s saw Australia experience a revival of civics education after a period of some neglect when concerns were raised about low levels of political literacy and a lack of interest in politics and active citizenship (Beresford & Phillips, 1997; Civics Expert Group, 1994; Print, 1995, 2016). As a consequence, after the report by the Civics Expert Group (1994), the new government launched *Discovering Democracy* (Kemp, 1997) to provide substantial funding for the development of curriculum resources, teacher professional development, and national activities between 1997 and 2004. The program had a clear focus on education for active citizenship and was endorsed by all states and territories (Print, 2008, 2016).

A first evaluation of *Discovering Democracy* was conducted by the Erebus Consulting Group (1999) after an initial period of only two years. Some success was identified, in particular regarding the provision of a wide range of activities outside the formal curriculum in schools. Yet obstacles to the implementation of the program included, for instance, competing school priorities, timing in school academic year planning, and a lack of teacher awareness of the program (Print, 2016). Moreover, teachers' focus was on students' understanding of content, but not on the active dimension of citizenship (Erebus Consulting Group, 1999).

Simultaneously, Australian Year 9 students in 1999 participated in the International Civic Education Study (CIVED) (for summaries of the national and international findings, see Mellor et al., 2002; Torney-Purta et al., 2001). CIVED focused on students' understanding of citizenship and civic engagement, as well as their actual civic participation and their future expectations of participation. The civic knowledge of Australian students was determined to be in the middle of the international average, but students' views of what constituted a good citizen and their willingness to participate in politics in adult life were less positive with regard to students from other countries (Mellor et al., 2002; Torney-Purta et al., 2001). Various possible reasons are offered to explain these results, such as the very negative image of political parties in the Australian media, the evolutionary development of Australian democracy, and/or the Australian political culture with compulsory voting which might have reduced the motivation to voluntary engagement (Kennedy, Hahn, & Lee, 2008). As a consequence, scholars argued for a more participatory approach towards civics and citizenship education and for more opportunities for students to engage with their communities to increase youth participation (DeJaeghere & Tudball, 2007; Print, 2007; Saha, 2000).

A consequence of the renaissance of civics and citizenship education in the 1990s was the establishment of the *National Assessment Program: Civics and Citizenship* (NAP-CC). This triennial, Australian-wide assessment of civics and citizenship performance has been conducted regularly since 2004 (ACARA, 2011, 2014; MCEETYA, 2006, 2009). Although NAP-CC was imposed unilaterally and reflected a broader, reactionary educational policy (Macintyre & Simpson, 2009) its impact has been benign. In fact, many of the developments in Australian civics and citizenship education since the turn of the millennium have received criticism and were marked as "neo-

liberal" by scholars who were concerned that critical thinking and active citizenship in a "thick" sense were not endorsed by those policies (Kenway, 2008; Zyngier, 2012). Similar concerns were also raised with respect to the *Discovering Democracy* initiative (Howard & Patten, 2006) and the *Draft Shape of the Australian Curriculum: Civics and Citizenship* (e.g, Sears, 2013).[3]

Returns to *Discovering Democracy*?

The final evaluation of *Discovering Democracy* (Erebus Consulting Partners, 2003) concluded that the program had a positive impact on civics teaching and learning in schools. The evaluation identified the avenues provided by the states and territories to incorporate in their curriculum documents the need for students to become active citizens and committed to democratic civic values. Competition with other priorities in the school curriculum remained a challenge though, and schools primarily assessed civic knowledge outcomes. Community participation was an important aspect of many school initiatives, but according to the evaluators, there was a need for more active citizenship involving both values education and student engagement, such as participation in community projects.

Conversely, Howard and Patten (2006, p. 456) argued that "the values of critical engagement and democratic citizenship have been largely abandoned" by *Discovering Democracy*. Moreover – and it is not clear whether the alleged abandoning of critical engagement was the cause for this – only a third of schools included student citizenship participation activities in their civics and citizenship education, and less than half of all schools were regularly using the free materials developed specifically for *Discovering Democracy* (Erebus Consulting Partners, 2003). Substantive funding for the incorporation of the *Discovering Democracy* materials in the school curricula nevertheless ceased after June 2004, despite the evaluators' request for further funding (Erebus Consulting Partners, 2003).

Active citizenship outcomes across time

Discovering Democracy was the most significant, or perhaps only, initiative aimed at improving civic and citizenship education outcomes in recent Australian history (Hughes et al., 2010; Print, 2008; 2016), excluding the first Australian curriculum on civics and citizenship, which commenced implementation in 2016. Therefore, the 1999 findings of CIVED and the evaluations of *Discovering Democracy* are an appropriate starting point for the examination of active citizenship in Australia in the context of civics and citizenship policies. For this we will primarily refer to NAP-CC data, namely from 2010 and 2013 (ACARA, 2011, 2014), as many items are not available in previous NAP-CC cycles (MCEETYA, 2006, 2009), and relate their findings to CIVED 1999 (Mellor et al., 2002; Torney-Purta et al., 2001)[4] where appropriate. These studies represent the two major data sources of Australian student outcomes in civics and citizenship, and we draw upon the figures cited in the aforementioned public reports for the purpose of our analysis (see appendix for a list of items).

A major aim of CIVED was to inform policy about the organization of educational programs, students' civic knowledge, engagement and attitudes, teaching in schools, and to stimulate discussion among stakeholders (Torney-Purta et al., 2001). For this, CIVED assessed secondary school students' knowledge in the civic and political domain, measured their concepts of democracy, and surveyed students' civic attitudes and their expectations for future participation in civic and political activities (Torney-Purta et al., 2001). The international report (Torney-Purta et al., 2001) describes the 28 country samples in comparative perspective, where tables provide one row for each country and compare most of the statistics against the international average of the total sample. The Australian national report on CIVED (Mellor et al., 2002) examines the descriptive statistics for the Australian sample. It puts the Australian findings

in a national context, compares them with the international total sample, and provides additional descriptions of the data not included in the international report.

The triennial NAP-CC is an assessment of civics and citizenship performance in three domains: civic knowledge and understanding of civics and citizenship; civic attitudes; and civic participation among Australian students. The public reports (ACARA, 2011, 2014; MCEETYA, 2006, 2009) present descriptive statistics (frequencies) for all items that were measured in NAP-CC. However, the original NAP-CC was primarily concerned with students' knowledge and reasoning skills in civics and citizenship (MCEETYA, 2006, 2009). This focus changed in 2010, when a revised assessment framework and a more comprehensive student questionnaire were implemented (ACARA, 2011, 2014). Hence, we primarily refer to the 2010 and 2013 NAP-CC, and the survey questions that we utilize in the present paper are summarized in the appendix. Furthermore, while CIVED surveyed only Year 9 students, NAP-CC surveyed both Year 6 and Year 10 students. Our comparisons are consequently not aligned but it is nevertheless reasonable to use both, partly due to the fact that civic learning typically takes place in Year 9, though partly also in Year 10, as an element of other school subjects. The analysis thus considers Australian Year 9 (CIVED; 3,331 students) and Year 10 students (NAP-CC; samples of 6,409 and 5,478 students in 2010 and 2013, respectivley). We furthermore note that sometimes the item wording (see appendix; the following tables refer the wording used in NAP-CC) and the employed scales are not identical, but supplementary analyses suggested that differential item functioning (Zumbo, 1999) was of no substantial concern.[5] We will clarify potential constraints of any comparisons made in the course of our analysis. Additionally, we would like to note that NAP-CC 2013 was conducted online, whereas previous data collections employed paper-and-pencil testing.

We first examined the documents with respect to items that related to active citizenship, based on our conceptualization of active citizenship. This approach involved participation-related attitudes, self-reported participation in civic and political realm, and expected participation in the future. Once items had been identified (of which rather few reflect what some scholars might understand as [very] active elements of active citizenship), we compared question wordings and measurement scales across those studies. The weighted percentages of the Australian samples were extracted for identical questions and those questions and measurement scales that were deemed comparable. In the following, we narratively describe the results, as the most suitable way of presenting the comparisons.

Active citizenship attitudes: Good citizenship behaviors

In both CIVED and NAP-CC students were asked about behaviors that they associated with being a good citizen. Positive attitudes towards certain types of behaviors are linked with adult participation in similar activities, and can predict the propensity of later engagement in political versus non-political activities (Jennings, 2015). We would expect more positive attitudes towards legally unambiguous and non-violent citizenship behaviors as a potential outcome of a more successful civics and citizenship education over the past one or two decades. For this we can use data from CIVED and NAP-CC measured in the categories "conventional citizenship," i.e. conventional forms of political participation, and "social movement-related citizenship," i.e. unconventional citizenship behaviors which refer to both aspects of civil society (*protest and social change* and *community life*) (Hoskins & Mascherini, 2009).

We also note that the response categories differed slightly between CIVED (very important, fairly important, fairly unimportant, totally unimportant)[6] and NAP-CC (very important, quite important, not very important, not important at all). The two highest categories were similar in both surveys and we would assume that these are therefore comparable (cf. Note 5). However, we will be cautious with our conclusions.

Table 1

Percentage of Australian Students Who Think These Activities are Fairly/Quite *or* Very Important *for Being a Good Citizen*

	CIVED 1999	NAP-CC 2010	2013
Conventional citizenship			
Supporting a political party	N/A	59	60
Discussing politics	34	37	41
Learning about Australia's history	55	77	78
Learning about political issues in the newspaper, on the radio, TV or the internet	50	72	75
Learning about what happens in other countries	N/A	68	73
Social movement-related citizenship			
Participating in activities to benefit the local community	80	78	76
Taking part in activities promoting human rights	68	73	75
Taking part in activities to protect the environment	74	78	77

Sources: ACARA (2011, p. 65, 2014, p. 75) and Mellor et al. (2002, 83f.).

Table 1 gives some indication that respective attitudes of Australian students may have "improved", that is, students consider certain activities to be more important over time. In particular conventional activities are more strongly supported as good citizenship behaviors by students in 2013 compared with 2010, and the last three gains among the conventional behaviors were statistically significant (ACARA, 2014, p. 75). Comparing these figures with CIVED, it appears that students' perceptions that gaining knowledge about Australia's history and political issues from the media are important for being a good citizen changed the most since 1999. This finding supports the conclusions about *Discovering Democracy* (Erebus Consulting Group, 1999; Erebus Consulting Partners, 2003) that "passive" elements of active citizenship gained more attention than more engaging activities, since the Erebus evaluations revealed that teachers assessed primarily knowledge outcomes.

On the other hand, unconventional citizenship behaviors were identified by students as important for good citizenship. Students' support for those behaviors was already high in 1999 so that we may experience a slight ceiling effect[7], implying that any increases would rather be expected for conventional citizenship. We conclude that perceptions of good citizenship activities have probably been raised in previous years, though it seems that a focus on history and knowledge – about whose low levels CIVED raised concerns (Kennedy et al., 2008) – contributed primarily to the sense of conventional and rather "passive" citizenship behaviors.

Active citizenship behavior: Expected participation as an adult

Students' opportunities to participate in political activities are usually limited, so they were asked about their expected participation in civic and political activities as an adult. The response categories were *I will certainly not do this, I will probably not do this, I will probably do this,* and *I will certainly do this* (reverse order in NAP-CC) for the first three items presented in Table 2, the other items used different response labels in NAP-CC ("I would …" instead of "I will …"). However, since these were also four-point scales, thus not providing a middle category and framed in a very similar vein, we assume that this did not affect the distribution of the responses (cf. Note 5). Therefore, we may compare results of CIVED with those of NAP-CC.

We find the results of both studies to be very similar – the only difference seems to be that students would more likely write emails or letters to newspapers in 2010/2013 (with a considerable drop between 2010 and 2013). However, CIVED only asked about writing a letter

and not an email due to its limited availability in 1999. Hence, we cannot identify an increased willingness to actively participate in any of the activities provided in Table 2 in the long term, except perhaps for protest activities.[8] The difference in writing to newspapers is perhaps an effect of the availability of new technologies.

Table 2
Percentage of Australian Students Who Expect Probably *or* Certainly *to Participate in Political Activities as an Adult*

	CIVED	NAP-CC	
	1999	2010	2013
Join a political party	11	10	10
Find information about candidates before voting in an election	76	72	76
Stand as a candidate in local council or shire elections	12	9	10
Write a letter or an email to a newspaper	24	46	38
Take part in a peaceful march or rally	41	46	49
Collect signatures for a petition	53	50	53

Sources: ACARA (2011, pp. 98/100; 2014, pp. 107/109), Mellor et al. (2002, p. 86), Torney-Purta et al. (2001, p. 124) and supplementary analyses of the CIVED dataset.

This interpretation of a technology-driven effect is also plausible if we look at the Youth Electoral Study 2004 data (Saha, Print, & Edwards, 2005) and compare its results with NAP-CC 2010 (ACARA, 2011). Whereas 44% of Australian Year 12 students said they would sign a petition in 2004, 55% of the Year 10 students indicated that they would sign an online petition in 2010. These figures might look like an increase by 2010 in the first place, but it appears that the perceived rise is due to the new technology when we inspect intended participation in other activities: Participation in these activities was fairly stable across time and between Year 10 and Year 12 students (compare also Mellor, 1998, for Victorian Year 11 students).

The Youth Electoral Study found that 52% of Year 12 students would help collect signatures for a petition and 46% would take part in a rally or demonstration (Saha et al., 2005). These figures are very similar to those reported by ACARA (2011) for Australian Year 10 students in 2010 (Table 2). However, in 2013 already 60% of Year 10 students report that they would certainly or probably sign an online petition and 49% would take part in a peaceful march or rally (ACARA, 2014). Surprisingly, in 2013 Year 10 students also said significantly more often that they will certainly or probably "help a candidate or party during an election campaign" or that they would certainly or probably "contact a member of parliament or local council" than Year 10 students in 2010 (increases by 6% and 3%, respectively; ACARA, 2014, pp. 107/109). Although most activities yield slight increases in Year 10 students' willingness to engage between 2010 and 2013, which might reflect higher motivation to participate, we suggest that intended participation in politics in the future has mostly remained stable. However, we note that the readiness to participate in political protest and election-related activities may have increased during past decades (ACARA, 2011, 2014; Saha, 2000; Saha et al., 2005; Torney-Purta et al., 2001).

Actual active citizenship behavior

Electoral enrolment. In 1999, 86% of all Year 9 students said they would probably or certainly vote as an adult (Mellor et al., 2002), which is as many responses as in 2004 when 87% of Australian Year 12 students said they would probably or definitely vote in a federal election when 18 (Saha et al., 2005). Similar questions were not included in NAP-CC, but the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) has provided useful enrolment data (Figure 1). Inspecting

enrolment rates is instructive as voting is mandatory in Australia; hence, registering to vote (i.e. enrolling) is an important effort in order to actually cast a ballot.
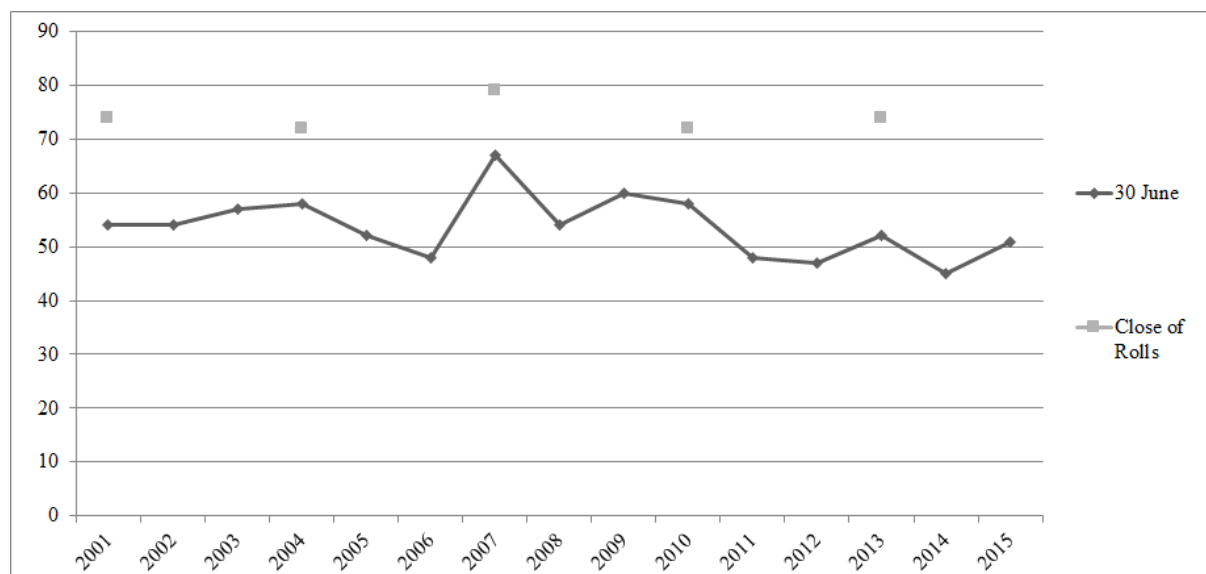

Figure 1: Enrolled Australian citizens at the age of 18 years as of 30 June and at the close of rolls for federal elections (percentages)
Source: Unofficial modelled data prepared by the AEC using population growth assumptions reflecting recent trends and revisions in ABS population estimates (R. Faulkner, personal communication, 30 July 2015).

Figure 1 shows that enrolling to vote is much higher at times of federal elections for 18 years old Australians compared to years without federal elections. However, enrolment levels fluctuate – mostly affected by election dates around which enrolment rates increase – and are lower today than in 2001. It is hard to tell whether higher enrolment rates for 2007 reflect a short-term effect of *Discovering Democracy*; in 2007, a considerable number of young adults who attended lower secondary school during *Discovering Democracy* were eligible to vote for the first time. Alternatively, the 2007 "blip" in youth enrolment could be attributed to the "Rudd" effect of an ebullient party leader.

Participation in civic organizations and political protest. Students in CIVED and NAP-CC were also asked about their participation in environmental and human rights organizations.[9] While in 1999 only 4% of Australian students reported participation in a human rights organization (Torney-Purta et al., 2001, p. 142), this increased up to 15% of Australian Year 10 students in 2010 (ACARA, 2011, p. 15) and 18% in 2013 (ACARA, 2014, 95f.). The same studies reveal that a higher amount of Year 10 students participated in an environmental organization in 2010 and in 2013 than Year 9 students did in 1999 (31% and 35% vs. 19%). Interestingly, only 11% of the Year 10 students reported participation in an environmental organization more often than hardly ever in 2004, while it was 21% in 2007 (in 2004 and 2007, participation in an environmental organization was measured by a four point scale; MCEETYA, 2006, 2009). Hence, we find higher civic participation rates in 2013 than in 2010, and in 2010 compared with 1999, yet it seems that this number has gone up only lately and may therefore not reflect a continuous increase.

The Youth Electoral Study (Saha & Print, 2009; Saha et al., 2005) also suggests that the number of Australian students who had signed or collected signatures for a petition or who had contacted a politician or a newspaper, television or radio station had considerably declined by 2004, if we compare its results with figures from other surveys conducted in the 1980s and 1990s (Saha, 2000). The Youth Electoral Study, however, also yielded figures indicating that forms of

(unlawful) political protest remained more or less at the same level after an increase in the 1980s and 1990s (Saha, 2000; Saha et al., 2005).

Discussion

The present analysis inspected behavior-related aspects of active citizenship by referring to multiple data sets, and the primary focus was on the political aspect of active citizenship. For two decades a major aim of Australian civics and citizenship education policies has been to develop and promote active citizenship among Australian youth (Civics Expert Group, 1994). Although the evaluations of *Discovering Democracy* identified that schools and teachers believed that students should become active citizens, and despite opportunities to participate in school decision making and community life, these evaluations concluded that school assessments mainly paid attention to knowledge outcomes and less to active citizenship skills (Erebus Consulting Group, 1999; Erebus Consulting Partners, 2003).

Our aim was to examine recent developments in terms of civics and citizenship outcomes and the need to promote active citizenship among the young. We compared results from NAP-CC with data from the large CIVED study (Mellor et al., 2002; Torney-Purta et al., 2001). Even though the latter surveyed Year 9 students, we sought to "match" with NAP-CC data from Year 10 students (ACARA, 2011, 2014; and partly MCEETYA, 2006, 2009). There is no evidence that pedagogies changed during this period, and we did not identify differential item functioning (see Note 5). Furthermore, we aimed at investigating active citizenship, as one of the primary goals of Australian civics and citizenship education has been to promote active engagement in students. If this goal was achieved we would expect an increase in participation rates and higher rates for older students once they studied civics and citizenship, which is most likely to happen in Year 9 or 10 in Australia. Taken together, our findings suggest that participation rates barely increased over time, though we also identified some promising results in the 2013 reports. However, 2013 was the first time data were collected online and not by paper-and-pencil instruments and this approach potentially produced a bias towards students who have an affinity towards (new) media (but see Note 5). Moreover, students in the NAP-CC 2013 round were somewhat older than their fellow students in 2010.[10]

The NAP-CC data reveal a slight increase in achievement in civics and citizenship knowledge and understanding between 2004 and 2010, with a small, insignificant decline between 2010 and 2013 (ACARA, 2014). Given the perceived importance of knowledge assessment (MCEETYA, 2006, 2009; Torney-Purta et al., 2001), this initial increase might be interpreted as a long-term outcome reflecting a constant interest in civics and citizenship education over the past two decades. Moreover, the focus on history and knowledge that was identified with previous initiatives mirrors the finding that secondary school students' perceptions of good citizenship behaviors highlight cognitive aspects of citizenship – learning about history and politics. These activities appear to be considerably more important to students' understanding of citizenship nowadays than in 1999. We may partly attribute this to efforts in Australian civics and citizenship education, although we need to be careful with our conclusion as CIVED used a bipolar scale (but see Note 5).

However, the data provide no evidence for higher levels of readiness of students to participate in political activities as an adult in 2010 compared to 1999. It appears that new information technologies, instead of special efforts in civics and citizenship education, contributed to growth in some active citizenship elements. In particular, students reported greater willingness to write to a newspaper since email lowers the hurdle to do so, and the internet also makes it easier to obtain news about current events. There is little evidence that participation in political matters has increased, perhaps reflecting the continued turmoil in the national government that Australians have been witnessing since 2010 (Reichert, 2016b).

Figures for actual participation of the young in political realms, however, are not promising. The intentions to vote apparently remain relatively stable – which we could also see as a success. As we found somewhat higher enrolment rates in 2007, we can perhaps say that an awareness regarding the importance of voting in a democracy was raised through the major initiative entitled *Discovering Democracy*. Unfortunately, data suggested that enrolment among 18 year-old Australians is at best at the same level today as it was during *Discovering Democracy*, and it never went up except in 2007 and, as usual, before elections.

Other possible explanations arise for the perceived lack of long-term impact of *Discovering Democracy* on student outcomes. The application of the extensive curriculum materials disseminated to schools appears problematic in that materials were haphazardly applied or frequently ignored (Print, 2007, 2008). Five years after all schools had received the *Discovering Democracy* kits, the materials were a well-established part of the curriculum for only seven percent of teachers (Erebus Consulting Partners, 2003). More fundamental was the perceived relevance of the curriculum materials to daily teaching. Given the lack of prominence of civics and citizenship in the school curriculum, teachers found little incentive to use the materials (Erebus Consulting Partners, 2003), assuming they knew how. The professional development of teachers for *Discovering Democracy* was, at best, limited by a lack of resources (Print, 2007, 2008). It is unlikely that these figures were dramatically better after significant funding for *Discovering Democracy* had ceased.

Interestingly, the number of students who reported participation in environmental or human rights organizations considerably increased by 2010 (and again in 2013). This probably reflects a movement towards more locally and community oriented Australian youths (Harris, Wyn, & Younes, 2008), even though it might also be a consequence of civics and citizenship education and the long-term gain of the many activities promoted by *Discovering Democracy*. Yet, it seems more likely to be a representation of the change in political participation during the past decades during which the repertoire and definition of political participation broadened and when people more often employed unconventional means of political participation instead of conventional political activities such as the increasing use of the internet, email and social media (Dalton, 2008; Norris, 2002; Zukin, Keeter, Jenkins, & Delli Carpini, 2006). On another note, it is worth mentioning again that more young people reported willingness to participate in activities related to election campaigns and parliaments, though this was still at relatively low levels.

Conclusion

If we were interested only in civic knowledge and the belief of students that conventional citizenship is important, particularly learning about Australian history and being up-to-date with current events, then we may be happy that "passive" behaviors are as important as social movement-related activities. Potentially, the focus on learning in civics and citizenship education has gained some yields. In this regard, the increased willingness to support election campaigns as well as the increased support for learning and knowledge might be interpreted in terms of young Australians' emergence of what is often interpreted as "neo-liberal" conceptions of citizenship. However, since we are interested in broader active citizenship indicators, we are less optimistic that civics and citizenship education has actually made much difference over the past two decades. Consequently, we may affirm the worry expressed by Print, Kennedy, and Hughes (1999) that not recommending civic education for the upper secondary school curriculum "may have vitiated the possible status of civic education in schools and established a gap between formal learning and the actual use of civics skills" (p. 43). That is, chances for promoting active citizenship and for consolidating habits of actively engaged democrats may have been missed. Yet, we refrain from being pessimists. Some figures of the recent NAP-CC (ACARA, 2014) look quite promising. Although young people overproprotionally decide not to vote in elections, they also report an increased willingness to express their views through protests and are more

commonly engaged in human rights organizations. The latter development could be attributed to, in part, the contribution of more critical, informed and active young people. These developments might also indicate that compulsory voting does not pose a huge constraint to voluntary participation anymore, a relationship previous scholars were concerned about (Kennedy et al., 2008).

Moreover, the Erebus evaluations identified that opportunities for participation in school governance—such as standing for elections, voting and conducting student elections—and in students' communities existed (Erebus Consulting Partners, 2003), and a recent analysis suggests that participation at school has indeed increased (Reichert, 2016a). If the broader concept of school participation is considered and pursued consistently across secondary schooling, this can contribute to the development of active citizens (Kahne, Crow, & Lee, 2013; Reichert & Print, 2017; Saha & Print, 2010; Torney-Purta et al., 2001; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004), though it was not the focus of our paper. Furthermore, the *Australian Curriculum: Civics and Citizenship* is now being implemented. The implementation of that nationwide curriculum might change the situation of Australian civics and citizenship education considerably and support more engaging and consistent civics teaching, which in turn would make it more reasonable to expect appropriate and more permanent outcomes at the national level should substantial teacher professional development be linked to the new curriculum. Australia still faces a need for more active citizens for nurturing a sustainable democracy characterized by the involvement of the many, but we have reason to assume that Australian adolescents, though not highly active democrats, do endorse Australian democracy.

Notes

1 This research was funded in part by Australian Research Council grant DP 120103057, and it was supported in part by a visiting fellowship at the University of Sydney, as well as a postdoctoral fellowship by the Fritz Thyssen Stiftung. We also thank two anonymous reviewers for their very helpful comments on earlier versions of this paper.

2 See Reichert (2016a) for a review of students' engagement in their communities and schools.

3 Note that the draft Shape Paper is not a draft of the curriculum, which some critiques seemingly misunderstood.

4 The international report (Torney-Purta, Lehmann, Oswald, & Schulz, 2001) provides national averages *and* international mean scores and thereby complements the national report (Mellor, Kennedy, & Greenwood, 2002) as the latter does not detail all findings that are provided in the international document, and vice versa. All reported frequencies from CIVED and NAP-CC have been replicated, though the presented figures may differ by less than 1% from the actual data, due to the rounding to integers in the public reports. The NAP-CC data are available from the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) in accordance with its Data Access Protocols; and the CIVED data are sourced from the study data repository (http://rms.iea-dpc.org/) of the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA).

5 As differential item functioning does not seem to be a problem, it is safe to assume that differences in survey mode, item wording and scales can be ruled out as potential causes of bias.

6 Mellor et al. (2002) report the given scaling, though the international questionnaire used the labels *not important, somewhat unimportant, somewhat important,* and *very important* (Schulz & Sibberns, 2004).

7 Although one could argue that there was still room to grow for social movement-related citizenship, the point we would like to make here is that there was certainly more potential for growth among conventional citizenship, given the differences in numbers of students who supported the former versus the latter in 1999.

8 Although this assumption is supported by a significant increase of students who would "choose not to buy certain products or brands of products as a protest" between 2010 and 2013, students were significantly less motivated to "wear a badge, hat or t-shirt expressing [their] opinion" in 2013 (ACARA, 2014, p. 107).

9 This was a no/yes question in CIVED, whereas NAP-CC collapsed two of three response categories: "yes, I have done this within the last year" and "yes I have done this but more than a year ago" (versus "no, I have never done this").

10 There was a considerable amount of missing information about students' age in 2013, which might qualify statements about any age difference between both cohorts.

References

Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA). (2011). *National Assessment Program: Civics and Citizenship Years 6 and 10 Report 2010*. Sydney: ACARA. Retrieved from http://www.nap.edu.au/verve/_resources/NAP-CC_Report_2010_251011.pdf

Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA). (2014). *National Assessment Program: Civics and Citizenship Years 6 and 10 Report 2013*. Sydney: ACARA. Retrieved from http://www.nap.edu.au/verve/_resources/National_Assessment_Program_-_civics_and_citizenship_Years_6__10_report_2013.pdf

Beresford, Q., & Phillips, H. C. J. (1997). Spectators in Australian politics? Young voters' interest in politics and political issues. *Youth Studies Australia, 16*(4), 11–16.

Civics Expert Group. (1994). *Whereas the People… Civics and Citizenship Education*. Canberra: AGPS.

Crick, B. (2002). *Democracy: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press.

Dalton, R. J. (2004). *Democratic Challenges, Democratic Choices: The Erosion of Political Support in Advanced Industrial Democracies*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press.

Dalton, R. J. (2008). Citizenship norms and the expansion of political participation. *Political Studies, 56*(1), 76–98.

DeJaeghere, J. G., & Tudball, L. (2007). Looking back, looking forward: Critical citizenship as a way ahead for civics and citizenship education in Australia. *Citizenship Teaching and Learning, 3*(2), 40–57.

Erebus Consulting Group. (1999). *Evaluation of the Discovering Democracy Program*. A Report to the Commonwealth Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs. Canberra: Erebus Consulting Group.

Erebus Consulting Partners. (2003). *Evaluation of the Discovering Democracy Programme 2000-2003*. A Report to the Australian Government Department of Education, Science and Training. Canberra: DEST.

Flanagan, C. (2009). Young people's civic engagement and political development. In A. Furlong (Ed.), *Handbook of Youth and Young Adulthood. New Perspectives and Agendas* (pp. 293–300). London, New York: Routledge.

Harris, A., Wyn, J., & Younes, S. (2008). *Rethinking Youth Citizenship: Identity and Connection*. Melbourne: Australian Youth Research Centre. Retrieved from http://web.education.unimelb.edu.au/yrc/linked_documents/RR30.pdf

Hoskins, B. L., & Mascherini, M. (2009). Measuring active citizenship through the development of a composite indicator. *Social Indicators Research, 90*(3), 459–488.

Howard, C., & Patten, S. (2006). Valuing civics: Political commitment and the new citizenship education in Australia. *Canadian Journal of Education, 29*(2), 454–475.

Hughes, A. S., Print, M., & Sears, A. (2010). Curriculum capacity and citizenship education: A comparative analysis of four democracies. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education, 40*(3), 293–309.

Jennings, M. K. (2015). The dynamics of good citizenship norms. In T. Poguntke, S. Roßteutscher, R. Schmitt-Beck, & S. Zmerli (Eds.), *Citizenship and Democracy in an Era of Crisis. Essays in Honour of Jan W. van Deth* (pp. 93–111). Abingdon, Oxon, New York: Routledge.

Kahne, J., Crow, D., & Lee, N.-J. (2013). Different pedagogy, different politics: High school learning opportunities and youth political engagement. *Political Psychology, 34*(3), 419–441.

Kemp, D. (1997). *Discovering Democracy: Civics and Citizenship Education*. A Ministerial Statement. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia.

Kennedy, K. J. (2007). Student constructions of "active citizenship": What does participation mean to students? *British Journal of Educational Studies, 55*(3), 304–324.

Kennedy, K. J., Hahn, C. L., & Lee, W. O. (2008). Constructing citizenship: Comparing the views of students in Australia, Hong Kong, and the United States. *Comparative Education Review, 52*(1), 53–91.

Kenway, J. (2008). The ghosts of the school curriculum: Past, present and future: Radford Lecture, Fremantle Australia 2007. *The Australian Educational Researcher*, *35*(2), 1–13.

Macintyre, S., & Simpson, N. (2009). Consensus and division in Australian citizenship education. *Citizenship Studies*, *13*(2), 121–134.

Mellor, S. (1998). *"What's the point?" Political Attitudes of Victorian Year 11 Students*. Melbourne: ACER Press.

Mellor, S., Kennedy, K., & Greenwood, L. (2002). *Citizenship and Democracy: Australian Students' Knowledge and Beliefs*. The IEA Civic Education Study of Fourteen Year Olds. Camberwell: ACER.

Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA). (2006). *National Assessment Program: Civics and Citizenship Years 6 and 10 Report 2004*. Carlton South: MCEETYA. Retrieved from http://www.nap.edu.au/verve/_resources/2004_NAP_CC_Public_Report.pdf

Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA). (2008). *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians*. Melbourne: MCEETYA. Retrieved from http://www.curriculum.edu.au/verve/_resources/National_Declaration_on_the_Educational _Goals_for_Young_Australians.pdf

Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA). (2009). *National Assessment Program: Civics and Citizenship Years 6 and 10 Report 2007*. Carlton South: MCEETYA. Retrieved from http://www.nap.edu.au/verve/_resources/2007_NAP_CC_Public_Report.pdf

Nelson, J., & Kerr, D. (2006). *Active Citizenship in INCA Countries: Definitions, Policies, Practices and Outcomes*. Final Report. London: QCA. Retrieved from http://www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/QAC02/QAC02.pdf

Norris, P. (2002). *Democratic Phoenix: Reinventing Political Activism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Print, M. (1995). Research on political literacy as a basis for civics education. In M. Print (Ed.), *ACSA Teaching Resource: Vol. 8. Civics and Citizenship Education in Schools: Issues from Practice and Research*. Canberra: ACSA.

Print, M. (2007). Citizenship education and youth participation in democracy. *British Journal of Educational Studies, 55*(3), 325–345.

Print, M. (2008). Education for democratic citizenship in Australia. In J. Arthur, I. Davies & C. Hahn (Eds.), *International Handbook on Education for Citizenship and Democracy* (pp. 95–108). London: Sage.

Print, M. (2016). The recent history of teaching civics and citizenship education in Australia. In A. Peterson & L. Tudball (Eds.), *Civics and Citizenship Education in Australia: Challenges, Practices and International Perspectives* (pp. 7–22). London: Bloomsbury.

Print, M., Kennedy, K., & Hughes, J. (1999). Reconstructing civic and citizenship education in Australia. In J. Torney-Purta, J. Schwille, & J.-A. Amadeo (Eds.), *Civic Education across Countries: Twenty-four National Case Studies from the IEA Civic Education Project* (pp. 37–59). Amsterdam: IEA.

Putnam, R. D. (2000). *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Reichert, F. (2016a). Learning for active citizenship: Are Australian youths Discovering Democracy at school? *Education, Citizenship and Social Justice*, *11*(2), 130–144.

Reichert, F. (2016b). Students' perceptions of good citizenship: A person-centred approach. *Social Psychology of Education*, *19*(3), 661–693.

Reichert, F. & Print, M. (2017). Civic participation of high school students: The effect of civic learning in school. *Educational Review*, 1–24. doi:10.1080/00131911.2017.1316239

Saha, L. J. (2000). Political activism and civic education among Australian secondary school students. *Australian Journal of Education*, *44*(2), 155–174.

Saha, L. J. & Print, M. (2009). *Youth Electoral Study: Report 5: Youth, Schools and Learning about Politics*. Retrieved from http://www.aec.gov.au/About_AEC/Publications/youth_study/youth-study-5/youth-electoral-study-05.pdf

Saha, L. J., & Print, M. (2010). Student school elections and political engagement: A cradle of democracy? *International Journal of Educational Research*, *49*(1), 22–32. doi:10.1016/j.ijer.2010.05.004

Saha, L. J., Print, M., & Edwards, K. (2005). *Youth Electoral Study: Report 2: Youth, Political Engagement and Voting*. Retrieved from http://www.aec.gov.au/About_AEC/Publications/youth_study/youth_study_2/youth_electoral_study_02.pdf

Schulz, W., & Sibberns, H. (Eds.). (2004). *IEA Civic Education Study: Technical Report*. Amsterdam: IEA.

Sears, A. (2013). Australia's new Civics and Citizenship Draft Shape Paper: A significant step backwards. *Curriculum Perspectives*, *33*(1), 87–89.

Sherrod, L. R. (2006). Promoting citizenship and activism in today's youth. In P. Noguera, S. A. Ginwright, & J. Cammarota (Eds.), *Beyond Resistance! Youth Activism and Community Change. New democratic possibilities for practice and policy for America's youth* (pp. 287–299). New York: Routledge.

Torney-Purta, J., Lehmann, R., Oswald, H., & Schulz, W. (2001). *Citizenship and Education in Twenty-eight Countries: Civic Knowledge and Engagement at Age Fourteen*. Amsterdam: IEA.

Westheimer, J., & Kahne, J. (2004). What kind of citizen? The politics of educating for democracy. *American Educational Research Journal*, *41*(2), 237–269.

Youniss, J., & Yates, M. (1997). *Community Service and Social Responsibility in Youth*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Zukin, C., Keeter, S., Jenkins, K., & Delli Carpini, M. X. (2006). *A New Engagement?: Political Participation, Civic Life, and the Changing American Citizen*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press.

Zumbo, B. D. (1999). *A Handbook on the Theory and Methods of Differential Item Functioning (DIF): Logistic Regression Modeling as a Unitary Framework for Binary and Likert-Type (Ordinal) Item Scores*. Ottawa: Directorate of Human Resources Research and Evaluation, Department of National Defense. Retrieved from http://faculty.educ.ubc.ca/zumbo/DIF/handbook.pdf

Zyngier, D. (2012). Rethinking the thinking on democracy in education: What are educators thinking (and doing) about democracy? *Education Sciences*, *2*(4), 1–21.

Appendix
Table A1
Item Wording (Table 1)

CIVED 1999	NAP-CC 2010 & 2013
N/A	Supporting a political party
Engages in political discussions	Discussing politics
Knows about the country's history	Learning about Australia's history
Follows political issues in the newspaper, on the radio or on TV	Learning about political issues in the newspaper, on the radio, TV or the internet
N/A	Learning about what happens in other countries
Participates in activities to benefit people in the community	Participating in activities to benefit the local community
Takes part in activities promoting human rights	Taking part in activities promoting human rights
Takes part in activities to protect the environment	Participating in activities to protect the environment

Sources: Schulz and Sibberns (2004) for CIVED 1999 and ACARA (2011, 2014) for NAP-CC 2010 and 2013.

Table A2

Item Wording (Table 2)

CIVED 1999	NAP-CC 2010 & 2013
Join a political party	Join a political party
Get information about candidates before voting in an election	Find information about candidates before voting in an election
Be a candidate for a local or city office	Stand as a candidate in local council or shire elections
Write letters to a newspaper about social or political concerns	Write a letter or an email to a newspaper
Participate in a non-violent [peaceful] protest march or rally	Take part in a peaceful march or rally
Collect signatures for a petition	Collect signatures for a petition

Sources: Schulz and Sibberns (2004) for CIVED 1999 and ACARA (2011, 2014) for NAP-CC 2010 and 2013.