A New Civics Curriculum for Australian schools – is it National Education?

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Abstract

In nation states and regions including Australia, Hong Kong, other countries of Asia, the European Economic Community and elsewhere, Civics and Citizenship education (CCE) is a contested concept. The development of *The Australian Curriculum* is providing a national opportunity for educators to rethink curriculum priorities and to decide on new emphases for learning in Australian schools, but policy documents have emphasized the importance of CCE for all young Australians. In this paper we discuss the notion of citizenship education as ‘national education’ in Australia. We suggest that while the development of CCE in Australia does include elements of ‘national education’, the new curriculum provides an opportunity to frame the civil, political and social components of CC for young Australians in ways that include local, national and global understandings. We argue that CCE should broaden young peoples’ world views and their passion and capacity to express their own identity, so they can be active and engaged citizens in diverse communities that include their own communities, the nation and beyond.
1. Introduction

In nation states and regions including Australia, Hong Kong, other countries of Asia, the European Economic Community and elsewhere, Civics and Citizenship education (CCE)\(^1\) is a contested concept (Henderson, 2010; McCann & Finn, 2006; Torney-Purta, Wilkenfeld & Barber, 2008; Tudball, 2010). CCE can encompass diverse fields including social and moral considerations, active community involvement, and the acquisition of political and civic literacy (CitizED, 2012; Zadja, 2009). At the global level, debates continue about the place of CCE in schools, how it can be represented and enacted in curriculum, and who has the power to decide what the goals and intent should be (Kerr, Sturman, Schulz, & Bethan, 2010). A central question in these debates is whether CCE should be, or is, ‘national education’? Nation states can orchestrate citizenship education in particular ways to promote only an imposed ‘national education’ view of the world that pushes agendas such as patriotism, or blind loyalty to a particular world view. Furthermore, they can develop curriculum that provides a view of the heritage and values of the nation state which denies debate, diverse viewpoints and critical opinion. Alternatively, nation states can formulate CCE in ways that encourage open mindedness and awareness of difference and diversity that builds young people’s capacity to understand alternative views of the nation and to embrace democratic participation in the global world. When CCE is well developed, through maximal approaches that empower young people to be critical thinkers and informed citizens, who can participate in active and positive ways in their multiple communities, it can be have a proactive influence on their lives (McLaughlin, 1992). When a limited or constructed view of society is imposed, that blinkers young people’s capacity to see the world though multiple and authentic lenses, CCE can disempower and limit their knowledge, skills, sense of identity and capacity to be local and global citizens.

In this paper, we discuss the question of whether the new Australian curriculum for Civics and Citizenship is a form of ‘national education’. While the development of informed and active citizenship is seen to be vital, we argue that national agendas do exist as this curriculum is evolving, but note that diverse opinions about the scope of citizenship education in Australia are being valued in policy and practice. The process of the development of the curriculum has involved broad national consultation and the inclusion of multiple voices, and this will continue through the writing phase. Whilst debates continue about the role of CCE in developing civic knowledge and understanding of the heritage of Australia as a nation, and its core liberal democratic values and traditions, there is a strong agenda that includes the wider role of CCE in developing local, regional and global young

\(^1\) In this paper we use the term Civics and Citizenship education (CCE) to refer to this field of learning, and to Civics and Citizenship (CC) as the learning area in *The Shape of the Australian Curriculum: Civics and Citizenship* (ACARA, 2012b).
citizens who are informed and critical about their world. This broader view of CCE beyond ‘national education’, is stronger in current policies than in the past, but the need to ensure the development of students’ understanding of the nation, its past and present, does remains at the heart of the curriculum reform.

Our paper is structured as follows. First, we discuss the contested nature of CCE and the debates about ‘national education’ globally. Second, a brief overview of the recent development of CCE in Australia is provided. Third, we discuss the development of the new Australian CC curriculum and the extent to which it can be identified as ‘national education’. In the conclusion, we present final comments on directions for CCE.

2. CCE as contested terrain

There are countless instances globally, of national governments attempting to exert control over ‘national education’ through policy, curriculum, text books, and resources that pursue a particular line of learning (Taylor & Guyver, 2012). However, ‘national education’ agendas are not always embraced by teachers, parents, students and community members, particularly when they do not agree with, and identify with, the agenda being imposed. In the special administrative region of Hong Kong, the recent triumph of people power in the rescinding of the introduction of Moral and National Education (Curriculum Development Council, 2012) designed to bolster national identity towards mainland China, indicates how intensely political CCE can be. Mass demonstrations took place during September 2012 against what was seen as the potential restriction of young Hong Kong people’s freedom to express themselves in the manner enshrined in the constitution agreed to by the United Kingdom, ahead of the Territory’s return to China, dubbed the ‘one-country, two-systems’ framework.

In Australia under the conservative Howard government (1996-2007), national debates referred to as ‘The History and Culture Wars’ (Attwood, 2005) emerged concerning the nature of Australian history and identity and how this should be transmitted to students through the curriculum. Many teachers in schools chose to ignore the Howard agenda, and since there remains considerable freedom for schools in Australia to interpret and implement curriculum in the manner that they choose across the States and Territories, the issue declined in importance. However, history was chosen as one of the key four areas to be first developed in the new Australian curriculum, and there are still debates about its purpose and direction (Henderson, 2011).
In many nation states, governments of the day continue to push national agendas to fashion the study of civics and citizenship for educational, political and economic reasons (Hébert & Sears, 2001). At one level, studying a nation’s civic traditions through its past in the school curriculum can be a form of national identity construction, shaped by the often conflicting influences of political conservatism in its “nationalistic and patriotic forms” and by the “tradition of preparing reflective citizens for a democratic society” (Thornton & Barton, 2010: 2489). Put simply, who decides what content should be taught, why, how and for what purposes are important questions to ask about CCE? When a national government makes those decisions and pushes particular political agendas, the central tenets and purposes of education for democratic citizenship can be lost; that is, the development of creative and critically thinking young people, who are informed and active citizens capable of balanced judgement and inquiry (McCann & Finn, 2006; Schulz, Fraillon, Ainley, Losito, & Kerr, 2008).

At another level, positioning particular forms of civics and citizenship education through the level of national curriculum reform can be linked to “the reconstruction of education as a central arm of national economic policy, as well as being central to the imagined community the nation wishes to construct through schooling” (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010: 96). In this sense, the push for a national curriculum in Australia can be conceptualised as a form of “cultural construction” (Kennedy, 2009:5).

In Australia, there is national consensus about the vital need to position Australian youth to be ready for a different kind of economic future (MCEETYA, 2008). The national government is responding to the impact of global and regional economic contexts by engaging in a knowledge economy discourse (Dale, 2005) that emphasises education’s role in national capacity building. According to Pang (2005); “the emerging thinking is that the capacity of a nation to remain competitive globally depends on whether its citizens are educated and sufficiently skilled for work in the future” (p. 161). The Australian government’s concern with developing a high-quality, world-class schooling system, which performs strongly against other countries of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), was made evident in the most recent statement on national goals for schooling in Australia, The Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians (MCEETYA, 2008) released in December 2008, and agreed to by all State and Territory Ministers. So clearly, both politics and economics are integral to debates about CCE, and national interests are at the centre of debates.
3. The development of CCE in Australia

CCE has, over time and in various ways, been recognized as a significant aspect of Australian education. In the 1890s and early 1900s it was linked to history and moral training. By the 1930s and 1940s it had developed into an explicit curriculum area as a component of social studies (Civics Expert Group, 1994). Since the late 1980s, there has been a considerable emphasis on the development of CCE curriculum and policy in Australia, at the national and state levels. Initially, this was in response to a perceived ‘civic deficit’ amongst young Australians, and “government concern at the level of public knowledge about, and commitment to, Australian political institutions” (Henderson, 2010: 6). Three federal government inquiries were conducted (Senate Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training, 1989, 1991; Civics Expert Group, 1994). Subsequent governments agreed, with varied emphases and commitments, that all students are entitled to develop the knowledge, skills and capacities to be active and informed citizens, capable of participating in their own communities, the nation and the wider world. The strongest commitment in terms of policy and funding for resources and professional learning to date was in the period from 1997 to 2004, when the Howard conservative government developed the national Discovering Democracy project (Curriculum Corporation, 1997).

The first stage of the Discovering Democracy Program involved the development of resources which incorporated a paradigm focused on formal Australian governance institutions and civic knowledge. The second stage focused on teacher professional development strategies which schools could adopt, and provided scope for expanding student CCE knowledge, understanding and dispositions. This was backed by the development of state-based curriculum development during both stages, but the Discovering Democracy project was not mandated for implementation in schools, since the implementation of education policies rests with State and Territory governments. However, the available funding generated wide ranging school programs in CCE across Australia. Discovering Democracy was funded with $18 million from 1997 to 2000 and, following an evaluation, a further $13.6 million to extend the programme to June 2004 and it become embedded in mainstream school curricula across Australia (Erebus Consulting Group, 2003). An Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) evaluation of the professional development stage of the Discovering Democracy program in Victoria (Holdsworth & Mellor, 2004), for example, provided insights into the case studies of whole school approaches to civics and citizenship education. The case studies in this report of how teachers responded to CCE initiatives provided qualitative evidence about a variety of ways of creating teaching and learning approaches and school contexts in which students can engage actively in civics and citizenship education.
However, when the available funding period concluded, the emphasis shifted when the new Minister for Education, Science and Training in the Howard government, Hon Brendan Nelson, commissioned a detailed study of values education in Australian and overseas schools. Earlier attempts to introduce explicit teaching of values in Australian schools had met with little success but Nelson was determined to foster a particular notion of national identity that was linked to Australia’s past through the teaching of values. The *Values Education Study: Final Report* (Curriculum Corporation, 2003) noted three different domains of values education such as “articulating values in the school’s mission/ethos; developing student civic and social skills and building resilience; and incorporating values into teaching programs across the key learning areas” (Curriculum Corporation, 2003:11).

In 2004 (then) Prime Minister John Howard and Minister Nelson, launched the National Framework for Values Education and allocated $31 million of federal education funding to achieve its goals. At the re-launch of the *National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools*, (Commonwealth of Australia, 2005) Nelson linked the statement of values with an episode in Australia’s military history. As Clark (2008) put it “the values represented by Australian soldiers in the Great War had given rise to a founding national myth and identity, and Nelson’s comments at the re-launch gave an insight into the way the values framework was tied to this unique expression of ‘Australianness’ ” (p. 4). Nine values claimed to be based on the *National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-First Century* (MCEETYA, 1999), were identified and made explicit in a poster that schools could display in their classrooms. Nelson arranged for an image of John Simpson Kirkpatrick and his donkey rescuing wounded soldiers at Gallipoli during World War One to be superimposed over the identified values on this poster, contending that this was representative of Australia’s national character. Nelson argued that Simpson’s actions “represents everything that’s at the heart of what it means to be an Australian” (Nelson, in Hawley, 2005: 3). Many schools across Australia applied to access federal funding for the values project and adopted innovative approaches to embedding the 2005 Framework approach to values education in the curriculum. Evaluation studies of funded grants to schools demonstrated that a considerable number of these schools developed innovative school-based approaches that went beyond the federal push for values inculcation (DEST, 2006; DEEWR, 2008).

Moreover, some educators (Gilbert & Hoepper, 2004) expressed concern at the heavy emphasis on values inculcation, as made explicit in foregrounding John Simpson Kirkpatrick and the singular notion of national identity in the flagship values poster, rather than a constructivist approach that enables students to engage in valuing as a cognitive process. This period was something of a hiatus for CCE, as the funding for it concluded and the Howard government shifted its approach to securing ‘national education’ in the push for a national
history curriculum as part of its conservative political agenda. This embodied a particular notion of what it meant to be an Australian citizen, and more transmissive approaches to teaching and learning, as noted earlier in this paper. After the Howard government’s defeat in the Federal election in 2007, the newly elected Labor Rudd Government, which had supported the idea of a national curriculum during the Federal election campaign, continued the push for a national approach to curriculum development and extended this beyond the discipline of history.

This effort for national control over education matters had been pursued by both Liberal and Labor governments without success but Rudd was determined to secure federal authority over the agenda for schooling (Henderson, 2011). Rudd promptly established the independent National Curriculum Board, to commence the development of a national curriculum for Australia with an initial focus on the development of four discipline areas: Maths, Science, History and English. Subsequently, the national development of the Civics and Citizenship curriculum, under the newly named and constituted Australian Curriculum and Reporting Authority (ACARA) Board commenced in October 2010, and is to be completed by the end of 2013. What is noteworthy about this ongoing process is, as we have already argued, that governments globally do push national agendas in the curriculum as part of national capacity building strategies (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). A federal election will be held in Australia in September, 2013 and the Shadow Minister for Education, Apprenticeships and Training, Christopher Pyne has noted that if the opposition is elected, he will initiate a review of the national curriculum. Pyne’s (2011) comments were reinforced in a speech on 27 September 2012 by former Prime Minister, John Howard, who took exception to the lack of emphasis on British history as the foundation for civic knowledge and understanding in The Australian Curriculum: History (ACARA, 2012c). According to Howard:

> The purging of British history from the curriculum is particularly blameworthy. The influence of British institutions on Australia is a fact not nostalgia. Magna Carta, parliamentary democracy, the language we speak – which need I remind you is now the lingua franca of Asia – much of the literature we imbibe, a free and irreverent media, our relatively civil system of political discourse, the rule of law and trial by jury, indeed, some of the sports we play, these are all owed in one form or another to the British. (Howard, 2012: 7)

Howard’s comments indicate the contested nature of choices made about what version of a nation’s civic traditions might be emphasised in national education for young Australians. If there is a change of government in 2013, is it possible that the curriculum will be rewritten to address Howard’s concerns about the nature of civic knowledge in the history curriculum. In this sense, curriculum documents are indicative of the efforts of governments at particular
times to secure the nation’s past in the present, with an eye to securing the future (Attwood, 2005). Perhaps this is why debates about a national curriculum run deep and are not “merely academic – they are debates about a nation’s soul. About its values. About its beliefs” (Kennedy, 2009: 6).

A further complication for the ongoing development of the Australian curriculum is that under the nation’s constitution, the responsibility for education formally resides with the States and Territories. However, since 1963, successive Federal governments of both political persuasions have worked to increase Federal authority in education policy prescription, by making funding available to the States and Territories for projects linked to its national agenda and grant allocation criteria (Barcan, 1980; Piper, 1997). In this way, the Federal government has exerted considerable, albeit indirect influence over curriculum matters, without overstepping constitutional constraints.  

After two years of planning towards a national curriculum, the decision to forge ahead was endorsed, with certain qualifications, by all state and territory ministers at the Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs (MCEECDYA) meeting on 8 December, 2010. Given that no other nation with a federal system of education has a national curriculum (Fensham, 2011), this could be regarded as a significant achievement, but it remains to be seen whether education authorities and schools across the nation will fully enact the intended and published curriculum for CCE, when the writing phase concludes.

4. The development process for the new Australian CC curriculum

In each of the learning areas of the Australian curriculum developed to date, a ‘Shape’ paper has been devised, that after extensive national consultation, has become the guide for the writing teams developing the curriculum content and achievement descriptors. In *The Shape of the Australian Curriculum: Civics and Citizenship* (ACARA, 2012b), citizenship is formally defined as:

… the legal relationship between an individual and a state. More broadly, citizenship is the condition of belonging to social, religious, political or community groups, locally, nationally and globally. Being part of a group carries with it a sense of belonging or identity which includes rights and responsibilities,

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2 The Commonwealth government has achieved this through the Australian Education Council (AEC) and from 2003, via the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA). On 1 July 2009, the Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs (MCEECDYA) was established, through the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) process, as part of the realignment of the roles and responsibilities of MCEETYA and the Ministerial Council for Vocational and Technical Education (MCVTE).
duties and privileges. These are guided by the agreed values and mutual obligations required for active participation in the group (p.2).

This definition is broader than the notion of citizenship as membership of a nation. It is also significant, that the Shape Paper recognises that in a highly multicultural society like Australia:

…individuals may identify with multiple ‘citizenships’ ... Citizenship means different things to people at different times, depending on personal perspectives, their social situation and where they live. This is reflected in multiple perspectives of citizenship that reflect personal, social, spatial and temporal dimensions of citizenship. (ACARA, 2012b, p 3)

This definition of citizenship provides scope for writers to incorporate content that encourages young people to develop understanding of community based or local citizenship, and curriculum that is not only centred on ‘national education’. Also, it is stated that the Australian Curriculum: Civics and Citizenship will provide opportunities for special recognition of Australia’s first peoples and for students to develop awareness and understanding of the diverse society in which they live. “It will also help students develop inclusive attitudes and beliefs and liberal democratic values and challenge stereotypes based on difference” (ACARA, 2012b: 2). This is “in the context of Australia as a multicultural, secular, and multi-faith society, governed through a well-established representative parliamentary process and based on liberal democratic laws, values, principles and practices” (ACARA, 2012b: 4). These very strong statements of inclusion represent an explicit focus on the diversity of the Australian nation.

ACARA, in its capacity as the federal statutory authority charged with the development of the new national curriculum, has made the decision that CC will be taught in the Australian Curriculum from years 3-8, and that it will be optional at other year levels, since there are concerns about imposing a ‘crowded’ curriculum. However, ACARA has also made clear that understanding of citizenship should be developed across all levels of schooling and implemented in diverse ways that school choose. Hence, CC can be developed within classroom based learning, wider school programs that encourage experiential learning and through community based participation, service learning and involvement in issues that matter to young people such as considerations of identity or personal and social concerns. Many educators welcome the recognition of the fact that:

… over the past two decades in Australia and internationally, there has been a broadening of the concepts, processes, and practices in Civics and Citizenship education. In particular there has been an increased emphasis on the role of active
citizenship, both as explicit content and as a key outcome of Civics and Citizenship education. (ACARA, 2012b:2)

This was recognized in the most recent statement on national education goals, the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* (MCEETYA, 2008). This document provided a clear national policy to guide the development of CC, since the stated aim is that “all young Australians become active and informed citizens” (Goal 2) who can:

- act with moral and ethical integrity
- appreciate Australia’s social, cultural, linguistic and religious diversity, and have an understanding of Australia’s system of government, history and culture
- understand and acknowledge the value of Indigenous cultures and possess the knowledge, skills and understanding to contribute to, and benefit from reconciliation between Indigenous and non-indigenous Australians
- are committed to national values of democracy, equity and justice, and participate in Australia’s civic life
- are able to relate to and communicate across cultures, especially the cultures and countries of Asia
- work for the common good, in particular sustaining and improving natural and social environments
- are responsible global and local citizens. (MCEETYA, 2008: 8–9)

These goals established a challenge for curriculum planners to develop knowledge, skills and capacities that would not fit neatly into one learning area. In the *Shape of the Australian Curriculum Paper* it was agreed that:

the disciplines provide a foundation of learning in school’ … However, C21st learning does not fit neatly into a curriculum solely organised by learning areas or subjects that reflect the disciplines. …Increasingly, in a world where knowledge itself is constantly growing and evolving, students need to develop a set of skills, behaviours and dispositions, or general capabilities that apply across subject-based content and equip them to be lifelong learners able to operate with confidence in a complex, information-rich, globalised world.” (ACARA, 2012a:20)

In the new Australian CC Curriculum, three components will be included, namely: civil (rights and responsibilities), political (participation and representation) and social (social
values, identity and community involvement) (ACARA, 2012b: 2). There are many layers to the defined scope of Civics and Citizenship in the Australian curriculum across the years of schooling (3-8), when it expected the curriculum will be implemented for all students. In addition there will be curriculum written for years 9-10 and the senior years. It is made clear that CC should be part of the formal school curriculum and wider whole-school programs; “This could include participation in experiences external to the school but linked to the school curriculum (for example, community activities, parliamentary education programs, civic institution visits and electoral commission programs)” (ACARA, 2012b: 15). These kinds of emphases provide further evidence that while knowledge and understanding of the nation, its government and institutions are to be part of the formal curriculum, so too will be community based learning.

The Australian Curriculum incorporates a tripartite design. Together with foundational knowledge in each of the discipline areas from the early years to year 10, the curriculum recognises that learning cannot always be defined by subjects or learning areas, so emphasises significant ‘cross curriculum priorities’, that young Australians need to know about, as well as a range of ‘general capabilities’ that individuals require and will utilise throughout their lives.

The general capabilities included in the Australian Curriculum are:

- Literacy
- Numeracy
- Information and communication technology capability
- Critical and creative thinking
- Personal and social capability
- Ethical behaviour
- Intercultural understanding

In the CC curriculum, links will be made to these general capabilities and suggestions provided for how students can develop areas such as personal capability or ethical practice, through the range of learning activities they will be engaged in within classroom or school programs and other learning contexts.

5. Cross Curriculum Priorities

The three areas that are given special priority in the Australian curriculum and are expected to be developed across the learning areas also have strong connections with CC are, ‘Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures’; ‘Asia and Australia’s
engagement with Asia’, and ‘Sustainability’. Each of these priorities are seen to encompass important understandings for students that do not fit one particular ‘subject’, but need to be developed through interdisciplinary or cross curriculum approaches.

The focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) histories and cultures could be seen to be ‘national education’, since full and widespread reconciliation with the First Australians and redressing of the wrongs of the past has not yet been achieved in Australia. There are many who would argue that developing worthwhile and engaging programs so that all young Australians can have “the opportunity to gain a deeper understanding and appreciation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures, their significance for Australia and the impact these have had, and continue to have, on our world” (ACARA, 2012e) is one of our biggest challenges as a nation. A further challenge is to develop approaches to this learning that encompasses the views and knowledges of diverse ATSI communities in sensitive ways. On the ACARA website, a conceptual framework based on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples’ unique sense of Identity has been developed as a structural tool for the embedding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures within the Australian curriculum. This sense of identity is approached through the interconnected aspects of Country/Place, People and Culture. Embracing these elements enhances all areas of the curriculum. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander priority provides opportunities for all learners to deepen their knowledge of Australia by engaging with the world’s oldest continuous living cultures. This knowledge and understanding will enrich their ability to participate positively in the ongoing development of Australia (Tudball, 2012).

The Melbourne Declaration’s emphasis that “Australians need to become “Asia-literate” through engaging in and building strong relationships with Asia” (MCEETYA, 2008: 4), marks the first time that a priority on Asia has been addressed in the national goals for schooling in Australia. The identification of Asia and Australia’s engagement with Asia as a cross curriculum priority in the new curriculum is overdue (Henderson, 2012) given the diverse connections Australia has with the region in economics, diplomacy, defence, and education. For more than forty years, a series of government and non-government policies, documents, committees, working parties and organisations have explored aspects of the need for Australians to learn Asian languages and cultures in the national interest (Henderson, 2008). Asia literacy can be linked to the acquisition of knowledge and understanding about Asia as students learn about and understand aspects of the histories, geographies, art and literatures of the diverse countries of the region. Those skills and dispositions that stem from such knowledge and understanding are also critical for Asia literacy so that students develop the capacity to engage with the peoples of countries in the Asian region.
The recent release of the Australian Government’s report ‘Australia in the Asian Century’ (2012), referred to as the ‘White Paper’, serves to reinforce this emphasis on Asian engagement and education’s role in capacity building students with Asia-related knowledge and skills. This White Paper emphasises the fundamental importance of deeper Australian engagement with Asia across its broad range of policy objectives (Commonwealth of Australia, 2012). In her Foreword to the paper, Prime Minister Gillard refers to the economic opportunities and strategic challenges that will accompany the rise of Asia, whilst also noting the social and cultural benefits to be gained from broadening and deepening people-to-people links across the region. It can be debated whether this second cross curriculum priority could be named as ‘national education’ or not, but in fostering Asia literacy, students will be better prepared to appreciate Australia’s distinctive path of social, economic and political development, its position in the Asia-Pacific region, as well as global interrelationships. This knowledge and understanding is not only essential to understand the region, but also for informed and active participation in Australia’s diverse society that increasingly includes people of Asian origin. In some senses the priority on Asia could be named as ‘national education’, given its emphasis on building the capacities, skills and attributes for young Australians to be ‘Asia ready’.

The third cross curriculum priority; ‘Sustainability’, aims to provide curriculum opportunities that allow all young Australians to develop an appreciation of the need for more sustainable patterns of living, and to also build capacities for thinking and acting that are necessary to create a more sustainable future. Once again, this agenda is important for the nation, but it is also significant in local and global contexts. There is increasing evidence that more schools across the world, including in Australia, are adopting a multi-dimensional approach to curriculum through making connections between CCE and developing theory and practice in values and education for sustainability (EFS) (Fien, & Tilbury, 2002; Henderson & Tilbury, 2004; Tuddball, 2010). Education for sustainability is a key capacity for 21st century learners and an integral component of innovative CCE. A greater focus on these areas is required in education (Tuddball, 2010). EFS encourages students to develop understanding of the complex relationships between economic, environmental and social goals, systems and processes (Rauch, 2004, UNESCO, 2005), consistent with key national goals for citizenship education. In the IEA International Civic and Citizenship Education Study ICSS (2009) study (Kerr, Sturman, Schulz & Bethan, 2010:18), teachers in schools amongst many of the participating countries chose “promoting respect for and safeguard of the environment”, as an important aim of civic and citizenship education … the interdisciplinary nature of citizenship education and its potential for ‘learning in the service of a better world, and about promoting human potential to solve problems’ ”.
6. Future directions and possibilities for CCE

There is still an intense writing period and further consultation and trialing phase before the new CC Australian curriculum will be ready to be implemented in schools. However, as discussed earlier, a range of factors can still side track the full enactment of CC in schools. One of the most significant factors is that any State or Territory could withdraw from the agreement to implement the curriculum, or refuse to adopt aspects of it. Recently, the conservative Minister for Education in Victoria, Martin Dixon, announced that his Department would reshape the ‘Domains’, or learning areas in the state-based curriculum model, named ‘AusVELS’, that provides an evolving combination of Victorian and Australian curriculum, despite the Federal government’s plans and the prior agreement of all Ministers to introduce the national curriculum (Preiss, 2012, Tudball, 2012). In his restructuring of the key learning domains, Dixon failed to include CC, but claimed it would be integrated across the curriculum (Tudball, 2012). At the time of writing this paper, the Victorian situation remains unclear. Moreover, many are unconvinced that this approach to ‘national education’ is worthwhile in that such “national curriculum learnings” (Kennedy, 2009: 2) are often based on a deficit view of schooling and a government desire to “teacher proof” (p. 3) the curriculum through prescriptive controlling mechanisms rather than “creating a future for young people based on the best that a nation has to offer” (Kennedy, 2009, p.3). As Reid (2009) put it, the rationale provided for this curriculum was limited and it failed to address the key question: “(w)hat is it about Australia in a globalising world that makes a national curriculum so important?” (p. 7).

Of course, the key to implementing any curriculum lies with the actions of teachers and there is broad consensus that teacher quality is the single most important in-school factor influencing student learning outcomes (OECD, 2005). Sadly, in many Australian schools much of the learning for young people is oriented towards the future use of knowledge and skills. In this context, agency and outcomes relevant to Civics and Citizenship are often deferred. More than forty years ago, Coleman (1972) referred to the impact of this passive state as one in which students are, “always in preparation, but never acting” (p. 5). Wyn (1995) links broader issues to this inactivity, such as the marginalization of young people in Australia and the deferral of roles of value to an uncertain future, and to how we conceptualise their identity as citizens. Young people can be viewed as a group “in deficit” and “citizens of the future, rather than citizens in the present” (Wyn, 1995: 52). Holdsworth (2010) argues that when young people are held in passive roles, they perceive themselves as having no value except in terms of what they might become. This deferral of current value can impact on student’s motivation to learn, whereas effective educational practice suggests that meaningful
learning depends on students having a sense of agency and being motivated to learn (Holdsworth, 2006).

So in considering whether the new CC curriculum is ‘national education’, there are still a number of unresolved questions. Will teachers provide genuine learning opportunities for their students to be active and informed citizens, so they can respond to societal challenges within and beyond the nation, in this time of change and globalisation (Beck, 1992), whilst also affirming their identity as Australians? Will teachers implement the CC curriculum in ways that embrace opportunities to go ‘beyond’ a national approach, since the policy context and goals for schooling in Australia do see the need for a focus on the nation and the world? And, will teachers be supported by the government and school leaders to participate in professional learning opportunities and funding to enhance their capacity to engage in this curriculum renewal? McLaughlin’s (1992) maximal view implies a broader, more inclusive approach to CCE, typically referred to as ‘education for democratic citizenship’. This approach “encompasses skills and attitudes for participation in democratic processes, as well as knowledge necessary for citizenship” (Osler and Starkey, 2005: iii). In addition, it includes elements of schooling which extend beyond the formal curriculum, such as the development of a democratic school ethos, democratic school structures, and involvement in community service and extracurricular activities. Further, students are seen to have “a responsibility to actively question and extend their local and immediate horizons in the light of more universal considerations ‘such as justice [and] social disadvantage’” (McLaughlin, 1992: 236). It is our hope that the new CC curriculum in Australia will encompass this maximal approach.

7. Conclusion

We have argued that globally, CCE’s purpose and representation in the school curriculum is subject to contestation and debate, given that governments of the day can pursue national agendas to fashion the study of civics and citizenship for political and for economic reasons. Furthermore, nation states can orchestrate citizenship education in ways that promote a particular ‘national education’ view of the world aimed at promulgating certain world views, and forms of nationalism which value the nation state, whilst silencing debate and critical opinion. Alternatively, nation states can adopt a multidimensional view of CCE which provides students with knowledge and skills that encourage the development of critical inquiry, open mindedness and opportunities for democratic participation through active and informed citizenship. We suggest that the development of CCE education in the first national curriculum for Australia provides an opportunity to frame the civil, political and social components of CC for young Australians in ways that include local, national and global understandings. If a ‘national education’ focus constrains young peoples’ world
views and their passion and capacity to express their own identity, it limits their right to be active and engaged citizens now. In these circumstances, citizens have no other choice but to protest in order to achieve change, as occurred recently in the region of Hong Kong. Negotiating the notion of ‘national education’ is one of the challenges for the new CC curriculum in Australia and for teachers in schools when they move to the implementation stage.
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