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The Problematics of Citizenship Education within the Australian Context

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Abstract

A review of the development of the citizenship concept reveals that the educational, social, political and philosophical constructs of citizenship have been consistently problematic. Western educational and political philosophies have provided a series of rich and diverse perspectives on the role of the citizen in society and the way in which education can play a part in the formation of the citizen. Despite an extensive body of literature on citizenship, traditional assumptions have been called into question by worldwide social and cultural changes. In contemporary debates, a variety of educational, social and political influences have been recognised as significant to citizenship formation.

Much of the available literature on citizenship, its role in society and education's role in formation, has been informed by the philosophies, ideologies, conceptual frameworks and experiences constructed in the West. This paper discusses some of the key limitations in the current philosophical foundations that underpin understandings of citizenship education and identifies some key issues relevant to the Australian context..

Key Words

Citizenship Education, Civics

The Problematics of Citizenship

There is clear evidence to support Turner's (1990) view that the concept of citizenship does not have a unitary character. The notion of citizenship has not remained static as each historic period has developed and transformed the concept because social and political notions of citizenship are constructed within changing cultural environments. Citizenship has multiple dimensions and there are a variety of current discourses that are directly or indirectly linked with the citizenship debates at local, national and global levels. Western

intellectualism has provided a variety of significant perspectives on citizenship but while there is some recognition that intellectual foundations need to be broadened to incorporate divergent perspectives, current debates do not generally include, for example, Eastern understandings and approaches on the issues (Dallmayr, 1993). This is inadequate, particularly for a country such as Australia that is geographically, if not culturally, part of the Asian Pacific region and engaging with the challenges of globalisation and cultural pluralism. Asian states are developing notions of citizenship that respond to their own philosophical frameworks and emerging political and economic circumstances. For instance, Milner and Quilty (1996, p.231) make the following comparisons between Australian and Singaporean citizenship:

Singaporean citizenship is more difficult to acquire than Australian citizenship ... The link between the nation and the state is stronger; the duties and obligations of citizenship more substantial. Australians tend to place greater value on the autonomy of the individual. Because of this they interpret Singapore's close regulation of its citizens' lives ... as evidence of a lack of civil rights. Conversely, it could be said that, because Singaporeans attach primary importance to the coherence of the community, they tend to conflate nationalism and citizenship. They interpret the apparent indifference of Australians to the public interest as a lack of civic responsibility. Such conflicting judgements suggest that different notions of citizenship are being invoked.

These differences demonstrate that there is a need to broaden current understandings of citizenship so that its multiple dimensions can be recognised, and the particular approaches some nations have taken can be understood.

Secondly, Cox (1995) argues in the *Boyer Lectures*, that much of the focus of the citizenship debates presently in the West is too narrow because they are dominated by a notion of the citizen as a competitive individual. This is obviously problematic because fundamentally, people are social beings so it is important to broaden the citizenship debates beyond the economic frameworks that dominate them. Coleman (1988), Putnam (1995, 1996) and Cox (1995) for example, maintain that there has not been enough attention paid to the notion of social capital. The term refers to the processes between people which establish social networks, norms and trust that secure community resources by facilitating co-ordination and co-operation for mutual benefit" (Putnam, 1993; Portes, 1998). Cox (1995) proposes that social capital is the most significant of all capitals because it provides the basis upon which a civil society may be established. She explains:

Without our social bases we cannot be fully human. Social capital is as vital as language for human society. We become vulnerable to social bankruptcy when our social connections fail (Cox, 1995, p.13).

Cox (1995) suggests that the social and economic disharmony in society is linked with conceptualising citizens as competing individuals rather than socially connected human beings. Cox (1995) takes the view that values that are responsible for holding a society together, such as co-operation, goodwill, trust and reciprocity have been nearly forgotten. She personifies the problem by recognising the current significance of "Economically Rational Man" and suggests that this constructed individual is only interested in maximising short term advantage. "If he takes over", she suggests, "he will destroy society because social connections have no place in a world full of self-interested, competing individuals" (Cox, 1995, p.2). Her vision is to facilitate the development of, "a new century of optimism that will allow us to move co-operatively and not competitively towards a more civilised future" (Cox, 1995, p.2). There is clearly a need to challenge current economic

understandings of citizenship to incorporate a stronger social, co-operative and relational dimension to the debates (Arcodia, 2000).

A significant underpinning of current understandings of citizenship is Marshall's (1950) proposition that citizenship can be expressed most fully within a liberal democratic state and that when civil, political and social rights are secured, all members feel they are a part of society and willing to participate within it. Another significant limitation however, is that current theories of citizenship require a greater emphasis on ethical responsibilities because in recent years, citizenship has been defined as Kymlicka & Norman, (1994, p.354) note, "almost entirely in terms of the possession of rights". Notwithstanding the security and freedom that possession of rights provides for the citizen, it has led to a high degree of passivity and a clear imbalance between rights and responsibilities. Furthermore, the continuous examples of corruption in private and public enterprises makes it clear that liberal democracy's system of checks and balances is not enough to temper self-interest so consequently there is a need for a developing higher levels of civic responsibility (Galston, 1991).

Linked to the discussion of citizenship and ethics is the notion of organisational citizenship which can be identified as another limitation in the current debates. Organisational citizenship acknowledges the interaction that exists between business and society but also the link between the individual and the organisation. This concept is being increasingly explored but an organisation's responsibility to the community and its responsiveness to community issues is still theoretically under explored. With decisions about the use of many of the world's resources being made within organisational structures, and considering the amount of time that the individual spends working within an organisation, it is important to consider perspectives that develop further the notion of organisational citizenship.

Conceptualisations of citizenship are often associated with Western democratic systems (e.g. Yeatman, 1996; Hogan, 1996; Vandenberg, 2000; Vasta, 2000), but this is also a limitation because it is important to note that citizenship is not synonymous with democracy but can also be linked to non-democratic forms of government. Different forms of social theory challenge traditional theories of citizenship (Torres, 1998). The search for authoritative models of citizenship has been selective because, as Riesenber (1992) explains, while democratic Athens was admired for its cultural achievements, it was oligarchic Sparta that provided a strong citizenship model. Riensenber (1992, p.xvii) also provides the following criticism by suggesting that citizenship:

has encompassed and defined privilege and constituted the means to discriminate against non-citizens. In this way it has favoured the few against the many and restricted the full benefits of membership in a community to a minority. And ... citizenship has made it difficult for all men and, eventually, women to fulfil their ultimate reason for existence, that is, to play the role of a political being, to act in the ennobling sphere of ethical politics (Riesenber, 1992, p.xvii).

So while the most prevalent contemporary notion of democracy is "liberal representative democracy, with its principle of the active citizen" (Torres, 1998, p.432), Riesenber (1992) makes a valid point in explaining that throughout history, citizenship has been compatible with different forms of political organisation. The connection between citizenship and democracy is tentative because from the outset citizenship has been linked to privilege, exclusion, discrimination and policies that can only be described contemporarily as sexist and racist. If citizenship continues to be linked exclusively with democratic forms of government, the opportunities for global citizenship will be hindered.

The concept of multiculturalism also poses a challenge to the current debates about citizenship (Inglis, 1999; Castles, 1997; Castles & Davidson, 2000; Coleman & Higgins, 2000). Many countries worldwide are confronted with the advantages and challenges of large-scale migration, the resurgence of ethnic identities, new cultural and political formations, subcultures and multiple identities. In discussing notions of citizenship, it is important to recognise that Australian society has developed with people of different cultures and beliefs. There is an increasing recognition of the need to reconstruct notions of citizenship so as to develop models that are appropriate to a multicultural society that is playing a role in an interdependent world

Lister, 1995; Castles, 1997; Torres, 1998). As Gore (1995, p.5) advocates:

Such diversity and pluralism need to be recognised and citizenship of such a community should identify what beliefs and values its people hold in common. To achieve this some mutual understanding of these differences is needed.

A further limitation in the current debates is that globalisation has become increasingly significant in recent years, but as governments search for models of free trade and unregulated access to world markets, the reality of globalisation does not always result in a rich mix of cultures, betterment of society and cultural understanding. The exploitation of poorer nations and ethnic minorities, the worldwide spread of Western values and increased profits for multinational corporations is a far more frequent outcome (Cox, 1995). The human condition of the global citizen is not generally emphasised in current debates about globalisation because much of the discussion revolves around economics, the movement of global capital and the economic challenges provided by displaced ethnic groups. Tu (1995) is critical of the process of globalisation, especially when it is linked with the individualism of the West. He warns that:

The unleashed juggernaut blatantly exhibited unbridled aggressiveness toward humanity, nature, and itself. This unprecedented destructive engine has for the first time in history made the viability of the human species problematical (Tu, 1995, p.81).

The above discussion suggests that the fundamental social aspects of human life are not adequately embraced by current global structures, concepts of globalisation and approaches to global citizenship.

The final limitation underpins the others and refers to the role that education has in forming the citizen. The role of education in citizenship formation has been well established (e.g. Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Brown 1977; Butts, 1980; Civics Expert Group, 1994; Yates, 1995; Boston, 1996; Dickson, 1998) but many educational initiatives in citizenship are focussed more on educating about procedures and civic knowledge rather than civic values. There seems to be a stronger emphasis on the external trappings of civic behaviour rather than a focus on cultivating the necessary values in order to be available to respond responsibly to civic duties. As Riesenberg (1992) and Heater (1995) propose, citizenship should have moral content and education in citizenship should be clearly focussed on the formation of character within a framework of ethical values.

The Australian Context

The problematics of citizenship are amplified when considered within the context of Australian society. Australia is in the middle of great cultural change and as Butts (1977)

claims, the need to promote citizenship education makes itself most manifest in times of social crisis or speedy change. He maintains that it takes on greater significance when the need for social cohesion and unity is seen to be particularly important. Butts (1977) wrote about the context in the United States but there are clear comparisons to be made with Australian society. Australia is experiencing its own "crisis" because there is a discrepancy between changing social, economic and political conditions and the traditional constructs that have informed understandings of citizenship. Key among these changing conditions are three forces (cultural diversity, Asian economic development and globalisation) that are impacting on Australian society and demanding a new and broader conceptualisation of citizenship and the role of education in promoting it Kalantzis (1995); Kennedy, (1996).

Australia and Cultural Diversity

Colonial Australia began as a British outpost that followed closely British institutions and customs and continued to be heavily influenced by British culture. Scottish born George Reid, in 1914, wrote that:

Australia today is as truly British as Britain itself. Of its total population over 96 per cent are of British decent ... Australians have resolved that their country shall be "white". They realise that one of the most effective methods of keeping it so is to encourage their kinsmen from overseas to join them (cited in Arnold, Spearritt & Walker, 1993, p.1).

Anyone without a British background was considered in some ways a social threat, so those who were successful in migrating to Australia were essentially selected from this reasonably homogeneous cultural background, a view that continued for a substantial part of early Australian history. Post-World War II immigration in a large scale was begun by the Chifley government and continued by subsequent governments in a "populate or perish" mode of thinking encouraged by fears of Asian invasion, together with the need to industrialise further. This was a different immigration program from previous years in that a large proportion of the migrants were not of British origin. So what had been determined earlier as an "Australian" way of life was challenged by broader cultural differences. In the absence, however, of any other large ethnic group in Australia, a model of assimilation to the dominant Anglo-Celtic cultural group developed (Inglis, 1999, p.22). The policy of assimilation required that all inhabitants of Australia embrace a common cultural stance and a homogeneous Australian way of life. White (1981, p.45) explains how the concept of the "Australian" way of life discriminated against migrants:

It not only denied the possibility that the cultural tradition of migrants might enrich Australian life, it also denied the existence of different "ways of life" among Australians themselves. Cultural differences were an affront to a society which demanded social uniformity, if not equality. The "Australia Way of Life" proved a useful tool of intolerance because it was so vague a notion, but it was rare for an Australian to point out how meaningless it was.

Gradually, through the 1960s, the cultural exclusiveness and some of the intolerance that was associated with the "Australian" way of life started to weaken. Integration replaced assimilation and even though many attitudes were paternalistic, they allowed for at least some retention of cultural identity. While Australian society included a wider representation of European cultures, the dominant culture remained British (Inglis, 1999). With further changes to immigration policies, there was less strict adherence to the Immigration Restriction Act of 1901, commonly known as the White Australia Policy, which allowed small numbers of non-Europeans to enter Australia. It was not until the Whitlam Government of the early 1970s, however, that multiculturalism became a government policy (Castles, 1997)

and Australia officially accepted that it lived in a society that encompassed a diversity of cultures and began to promote itself as a pluralistic, multicultural society.

Substantial transformations of the Australian population have challenged mainstream understandings of "Australia". For example, when free-born immigrants outnumbered the convicts; when Australian-born outnumbered immigrants; and later still, around the 1950s, with the increases of immigrants from diverse non-English speaking backgrounds; and currently, with increases of immigrants from Asian nations. So it is obvious there is a variety of distinctive views of Australia that are all legitimate and held by different cultural groups. As Whitlock and Carter (1992, p.1) point out:

The predominate images of national identity may seem to be natural or inevitable products of "our" experience as a nation - those images which associate the Australian national character with mateship, the land or the beach for example. But things look rather more complicated when we start to consider questions about just who we mean when we use a phrase such as "our experience as a nation". Who is included and who is excluded by the familiar images of national identity?... How have they changed over time? Do we have different, even contradictory images present together? What groups identify with what images?

The significance of understanding different cultures is well evidenced by a series of reports that were published in the 1990s. The Mayer Committee in 1992 identified seven Key Competencies that allowed for an integration and application of generic knowledge and skills. The Queensland government, however, reserved its position on the Key Competencies because it wished to include an eighth competency, Cultural Understandings. In July, 1993, after a number of consultations with industry and other states and territories, it was agreed that Cultural Understandings would be included as a Key Competency.

The Finn Report, *Young People's Participation in Post-Compulsory Education and Training* (1991), identified cultural understanding as an area of competency, describing its knowledge and skills as:

- (1) understanding and knowledge of Australia's historical, geographical and political context;
- (2) understanding of major global issues e.g. competing environmental, technological and social priorities;
- (3) understanding the world of work, its importance and requirements

In December 1993, an inter-university research consortium was organised to add "Cultural Understandings" as a Key Competency. Its task was to prepare a discussion paper on the scope of Cultural Understandings as a Key Competency and to describe relevant performance levels. Its report, *Cultural Understandings as the Eighth Key Competency* (1994) describes four integrated characteristics of "Cultural Understandings".

Firstly, it raised the issue of interrelatedness within the global economy and the reality that nations are interdependent on each other. The cultural diversity of the Australian workforce together with the need to become internationally competitive highlights the necessity to understand the cultures that form Australian society and their interrelatedness:

It is fundamental that all students have an education where they experience this interrelatedness, to begin to understand, to appreciate and be tolerant of

other cultures and to value cultural and linguistic diversity as an inherent feature of Australian society (*Cultural Understandings as the Eighth Key Competency*, 1994, p.3).

Secondly, the report targeted Australia's social, economic and cultural traditions and their relation to workplace cultures and productivity. This aspect of Cultural Understandings is important for promoting effective and efficient workplace practices:

Cultural Understandings concentrates on the liberal democratic traditions of Australia as well as the historical, economic and political knowledge and skills which should be familiar to all students in order to ensure that they can make a productive contribution to the nation

(*Cultural Understandings as the Eighth Key Competency*, 1994, p.3).

Thirdly, the report focused on the development of workplace sensitivities that ensure tolerance, empathy and understanding of different cultural outlooks. This feature included an understanding of Australia's heritage and the contribution different cultures have made to Australia's history and present society:

This feature enriches the cultural and intellectual lives of individuals, enabling them to fulfil productive civic roles in this country and throughout the world" (*Cultural Understandings as the Eighth Key Competency*, 1994, p.3).

Fourthly, the report highlighted the need for a critical awareness and understanding of the world, particularly responding to this country's cultural diversity in terms of social justice. The report states that, "This entails an ethical perspective in which citizenship responsibilities are acknowledged and maintained" (*Cultural Understandings as the Eighth Key Competency*, 1994, p.4).

The preceding discussion illustrates that Australia is a culturally diverse nation and this diversity should be encompassed and symbolised in its new citizenship identity (Inglis, 1999). The transformation of Australian society requires a model of citizenship that can recognise and accept the diverse origins of its population. Failure to recognise and understand such cultural diversity leads to severe difficulties in identifying and sharing common values and consequently a weaker civic culture.

Australia and Asian Pacific Economic Development

Another important factor impacting on Australia is the economic development of the Asian Pacific region. Australia's determination to become a significant participant in the Asian Pacific region can be traced to the end of the Second World War, but it is in recent years that various Australian governments have given Australian-Asian relationships greater pre-eminence.

The Asian Pacific region has for some time been seen as the focus of Australia's economic and social future (Fitzgerald, 1994). Australia is becoming culturally more distant from Britain and Europe and as Print (1998, p.10) observes, "Traditional loyalties and values that have forged the development of our country over the last century are increasingly being challenged, forcing Australians to rethink what it means to be Australian". Those who promote closer links with Asia do not generally advocate turning Australia into an "Asian" country with a subsequent loss of identity to Asia. A more accurate description is a determination to preserve the strengths and individuality of Australian culture, by developing a greater familiarity with East Asian cultures.

Economic agreements such as the Asia Pacific Economic Community (APEC), Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the East Asian Economic Caucus (EAEC) are providing a new economic focus for Australian governments and business. Where Australia's imports and exports were once closely linked with Britain and Europe, the degree of complementarity in economic activity has led to a clear direction towards the Asian region (Irwin, 1996)

Fitzgerald (1994) suggests, however, that while there are trade statistics that point to Australia's increasing involvement with Asia, geographical proximity alone, in this age of efficient communications, effective transportation and advances in information technology, is a weak argument for Australia's continued interest in Asian cultures. He rightly points out that the transformation of Asia must be understood as a global phenomenon rather than a mere regional one. Australia must respond creatively to Asia not only because of geographical proximity but because the world is changing. Fitzgerald (1994, p.15) advances his argument: "... it is becoming increasingly difficult to participate in public life anywhere in the world, let alone to assert the values appropriate to contemporary Australia, without knowing about what is happening among the states of Asia and why it matters in the broadest sense". The economic transformations in Asia cannot surely be intelligently grasped as merely regional events. As Fitzgerald (1994, p.14) explains further, "Asia's role in this global village is expanding at a rate to match its demographic, economic, geographical and historical potential." The Asian nations are experiencing significant transformations and Australia cannot ignore them, not only because Australia is geographically close to Asia, but also because these are transformations which are significant to the global environment (McGillivray & Smith, 1997).

Asia has established in recent years a stronger and powerful worldwide significance (Irwin, 1996). For example, the share of the world economy that is claimed by Japanese interests has influenced the economic integration initiatives in Europe. Recent Japanese financial problems are a genuine threat to international monetary security. While South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore and Hong Kong are often cited examples of best practice in export focussed economic development (Fitzgerald, 1994) the recent Asian financial crisis dealt a powerful blow to a variety of economies within and beyond Asia (Chotigeat & Lin, 1997; Kim, 1997). The economy of mainland China is progressing quickly and is soon to become one of the largest in the world. These developments have caused a sense of urgency as Australia attempts to position itself, at least economically if not culturally, in the Asian Pacific region. Fitzgerald (1994, p.14) explains, "the Asia Pacific generally is making its presence felt more forcefully in the world as a whole, contributing to its expanding stock of knowledge and human resources as well as its stock of goods and capital".

Fitzgerald (1994, p.12) offers the reminder that for some time, "...Asian studies have ridden the wave of government intervention in universities and schools, profiting from the argument that Australia needs Asia and hence the Australian educational system needs more Asian studies." If one were to study Asian cultures only because of the possible economic benefits, then the education system would surely be devalued as a simple servant of mercantile interests. The study of Asian cultures has clear vocational interests but to simply have more Asian studies in schools and universities without a thorough intellectual engagement would be futile. Fitzgerald (1994) holds a poor view of educational systems that adopt a utilitarian thrust in its interest to learn about Asia. He warns (1994, p.13) that, "...a tyranny of proximity offers little respite from habits of dependence acquired from an earlier tyranny of distance" and that "...there is little respect in Asian communities for those who profess to learn about others simply to profit from the relationship".

Western theories which underpin policy and practice have in the main, neglected the rich philosophical traditions of the East. Furthermore, understanding Asian to citizenship is not

only necessary for developing stronger ties, but it is intrinsic to the redefinition of Australian identity as it responds to the Asian Pacific context (Muller & Wong, 1991; Viviani, 1992; Fitzgerald, 1994; Asian Education Foundation, 1995).

Australia and Globalisation

The reality of a global society with the interdependence of nations as a key characteristic, is not an entirely new phenomenon of the human condition, as there has always been some interdependence in human history. What is distinguishable in the modern era, its scale and depth. The people of the world have achieved a level of physical mobility and a level of access to information that is unprecedented, and these factors have contributed to clear and strong links across national boundaries. As the concept of citizenship continues to change and develop in response to the impact of globalisation, there is on the one hand the consistent pressures towards localisation and regional autonomy, yet on the other hand, there is a powerful movement towards the globalisation of political responsibilities (Turner 1990). The idea of a global citizenship is strong, yet the uncertainty of the global context seems to continue to produce political responses that focus on the national level rather than global.

Any model of global citizenship must recognise the legitimacy of different cultural perspectives and the right of cultural groups to participate fully as members of society without losing their cultural identity and distinctiveness. It is also important to recognise the possibility of multiple citizenships within a global citizenship framework (Lister (1995).

Citizenship Initiatives In Australia

The discussion above provides contexts for the way in which citizenship is conceived in Australia. While there have been many reports on citizenship in other countries such as Britain, the United States, Canada and France (Macintyre, 1995), nowhere are the debates about citizenship more current than in Australia where, over recent years, there has been a sustained focus and increasing momentum on the development of responsible citizenship and formation of character. These recent calls to review the formation of the citizen, have been instigated by a series of government reports, the development of a national citizenship curriculum and the current academic debates within Australia which have made substantial contributions to understanding the issue of citizenship.

In the last ten or so years, there has been a plethora of government reports that demonstrate the heightening interest in the citizenship enterprise. A Senate Standing Committee on Employment Education and Training published its report in 1989, entitled *Education for Active Citizenship*. The report made a number of recommendations that were designed to overcome the perceived gross inadequacy of knowledge about the democratic process in Australia. While the committee emphasised that active citizenship involved much more than political literacy, media attention focussed on the paucity of knowledge about fundamental issues of Australian democratic government. The Committee summarised its understanding of "active citizenship" as follows:

An active citizen is not someone who has simply accumulated a store of facts about the workings of the political system - someone who is able to perform well in a political quiz. An understanding of how the social and political systems work is an essential element, but equally important is the motivation and the capacity to put that knowledge to good use... Active citizenship is a compound of knowledge, skills and attitudes: knowledge about how society works; the skills needed to participate effectively; and a conviction that active

participation is the right of all citizens (*Education for Active Citizenship*, 1989, p. 7).

For this committee, the notion of active citizenship embraced both formal knowledge about government processes but also the responsibility for active participation with the resultant empowerment of the individual. In 1991, the committee undertook the task of reviewing the implementation of its recommendations. The document served to refocus the issues raised in its earlier report and to encourage further debate about active citizenship. The reports acknowledged that the level of one's political literacy did not necessarily equate with one's level of civic activity and responsibility. It did suggest, however, that there was a relationship between participation and knowledge. The Committee also pointed out that a consequence of this ignorance was a degree of apathy and cynicism:

Political ignorance is a strong indicator of indifference and apathy towards political dimensions of experience. The citizen who knows little about community affairs, or about local, State and national government is frequently the citizen who has little interest in such matters ... High levels of political ignorance in a community are therefore a danger sign (*Education for Active Citizenship*, 1989, p.9).

As Dickson (1998) explains, in recent years the earliest recognition of the poor levels of civic understanding in community came from these Senate Standing Committees on Employment, Education and Training reports in 1989 and 1991.

In another major commonwealth initiative, the Centenary of Federation Advisory Committee was established by the Council of Australian Governments to identify strategies for the lead up to the year 2001. In its report, *2001: A Report from Australia* (1994) the committee suggested that the celebrations should encourage a view of Australia "as a polity, as a state, with a system of government and an active civil society". The report concluded that:

in order to celebrate the centenary of Federation the Australian people need to understand what we are celebrating. Ignorance of Australian history and our Constitution is seen as the greatest obstacles to a meaningful celebration of the centenary of federation. There is considerable disquiet about the shortcomings in the teaching of political and constitutional history and in the lack of opportunities for participating in education for citizenship (*2001: A Report from Australia*, 1994, p.12).

The Prime Minister launched a statement on Australian cultural policy in October, 1994. *Creative Nation: Commonwealth Cultural Policy* emphasised the Commonwealth's commitment to and support of Australian culture asserting that it is fundamental to our sense of who we are as a nation. The statement declared:

Multicultural Australia - a society which is both diverse and tolerant of diversity - is one of our great national achievements. It is important to remember that the achievement was built upon the traditional democratic strengths of Australian society - and these should never be neglected (*Creative Nation: Commonwealth Cultural Policy*, 1994, p.6).

In October 1994, a Commonwealth Parliament Joint Standing Committee reported on an inquiry into the meaning of citizenship. The report, *Australians All: Enhancing Australian Citizenship* (1994) examined the meanings of citizenship and ways of encouraging civic participation. It also recognised the need for a special emphasis on a broadly based citizenship education for newly arrived people to Australia. A discussion paper prepared by

the Senate Legal and Constitutional References Committee, *A System of National Citizenship Indicators* (1995), also supported education in citizenship. It offered a rationale for the necessity of education in citizenship:

Our system of government relies for its legitimacy on an informed citizenry ... The ethical content of citizenship - the idea of civic duty - is crucial. Without individuals and organisations prepared to participate and take responsibility, without a concept of the public interest, citizenship would be impossible and democracies become difficult to govern ... These civic qualities are not just innate: they can be learned and improved (*A System of National Citizenship Indicators* (1995, pp.9,15).

The most substantial government publication, however, is the report of the Civics Expert Group, *Whereas the People - Civics and Citizenship Education* (1994). The task of the Civic Expert Group was to "develop a strategic plan for a non-partisan program of public education and information on the Australian system of government, the Australian Constitution, Australian Citizenship and other civic issues" (Civics Expert Group, 1994, p.5). More specifically, the objectives were to educate the Australian public about governmental, constitutional and citizenship issues, facilitate a better understanding of rights and responsibilities as citizens and to promote good citizenship by participating in decision-making processes (Civic Experts Group, 1994). The underlying tone of the report was about the process of government and knowledge of governmental procedures. There was some reference, however, to broader issues such as basic democratic values, the diversity of Australian society and the rights and responsibilities of citizenship (Civic Expert Group, 1994).

The Civics Expert Group also commissioned a national survey that ascertained the views and levels of understanding of key groups in the community. There were a number of issues raised but most of them dealt with respondents' knowledge of the constitution, the parliamentary system, the law and the current debate about the forming of a republic. The topics for discussion give an indication of how the Civics Expert Group viewed the notion of citizenship. Much of their concern reflected knowledge of government and procedural matters with much less emphasis on civic responsibility, ethical behaviour and moral duty.

One of the most significant reasons for a revival in Australia of debates on the formation of the citizen is what the Civic Expert Group identified as a "civic deficit":

Deficiencies of knowledge, capacity and civic confidence are apparent. The level of knowledge of how the Australian system of government works is low...Most Australians have little knowledge of the constitutions of the Commonwealth, states and territories. They are not familiar with the principles of responsible government, of the division of powers, and the relationship between the legislature, executive and judiciary (Civic Expert Group, 1994, p.13).

The Group argued that many Australians have a poor understanding of the Constitution and are unfamiliar with the principles of responsible government.

While the results refer to Australians in general, the study identified young people, women, those with lower formal education and people of non-English speaking background as being particularly ill informed. The study also suggested that citizenship and civic duty should be a priority because while there was evidence of a high level of participation in voluntary groups, the community in general lacked a civic identity (Civic Expert Group, 1994).

As Print (1998) suggests, the renewed interest in citizenship formation in Australia has been due to the newly emerging critical mass formed by educators, politicians, academics and interested pressure groups. Apart from the recent government reports dealing with the issues of citizenship, academic journals which have published special editions focussing on these issues (e.g. *Melbourne Studies in Education*, 1995), a variety of conferences which have had citizenship themes (e.g. *Culture and Citizenship*, Griffith University, 1996), number of high profile Australians, such as David Malouf (1994) and Peter Hollingworth (1994) and Eva Cox (*Boyer Lectures*, 1995) have contributed to the public discussion on citizenship. They have in recent years joined the debates by making public comments about the need to develop a better understanding of what it means to be Australian with shared values as the basis for an active national life.

The recent initiatives in the development of citizenship in Australia are evidence that it has emerged as an educational and political priority. Now that it is a priority, it is important to inform these initiatives with a variety of conceptions of citizenship, some of which may be grounded within different philosophical paradigms. The issues discussed above demonstrate that while there is a long tradition in Western thought about the notion of citizenship, the understandings of citizenship that have emerged from Western intellectualism have significant limitations.

Conclusion

The notion of citizenship in the West has been problematic from its beginnings in the city-states of ancient Greece and has continued to be so as a myriad of philosophers, educators, politicians and social theorists have attempted to engage new understandings and perspectives. The current debates about citizenship and its relationship with individualism, ethics, the organisation, democratic participation, multiculturalism, globalisation and the role of education in citizenship formation, demonstrate that the notion is complex and multi-faceted. Many of the contemporary discourses are significant for Australia as it strives to forge an independent identity that reflects its cultural diversity, regional responsiveness and commitment to responsible global involvement. To form citizens who are politically mature, socially cohesive and globally responsive, Australia must deal with its past, establish an identity which encompasses the cultures and aspirations of its population, and focus on present and future political, economic and social relationships for mutual benefit. Its citizens must see themselves as citizens not only of Australia, but also of a wider region and indeed the world.

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