

# **NATIONAL ASSESSMENT OF CIVIC AND CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION OUTCOMES IN AUSTRALIA: THE IMPACT OF THE IEA CIVIC EDUCATION STUDY ON AUSTRALIAN POLICY AND PRACTICE IN CIVIC AND CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION**

*Suzanne Mellor*

Australian Council for Education Research, Australia

## **Abstract**

The paper will posit that the knowledge gained from Australia's participation in the IEA Civic Education Study has been instructive and influential in facilitating and shaping significant developments in Civics and Citizenship Education (CCE) in Australia. The first part will focus on an analysis of the conceptual model and item types used in the IEA Civic Education Study, and comment on how these impacted on the kinds of findings reported in CivEd reports. The second part will focus on the key Australian findings derived from secondary analysis of the national data in the IEA Civic Education Study, and the response from interested parties in Australian to those findings. The third part will describe and canvass issues associated with the National Sample Assessment, to be undertaken in Australian schools across all jurisdictions in 2004. Comparisons of CivEd instrumentation with National Assessment trial instrumentation and data will demonstrate the extensions that have been developed. Fourthly, the initial impact of the national assessment policy on school and teacher activity will be briefly examined. The Australian teacher and school data in the IEA Civic Education Study, and the findings associated with these, indicate a conflict between intent and capacity in Australian jurisdictions to deliver the CCE learning outcomes they espouse. Discussion of this dynamic policy development in CCE in Australia will conclude what is only a beginning conversation for systems and practitioners in Australia. The ways in which dominant studies such as those with the IEA can contribute to educational policy in general will be canvassed.

## **BACKGROUND**

The importance and impact of IEA studies is not confined to the location and analysis of national and international data on student achievement. This paper will hypothesise that the knowledge gained from Australia's participation in the IEA Civic

Education Study has been instructive and influential in facilitating and shaping the significant developments in Civics and Citizenship Education (CCE) in Australia since the study began, and especially since the publication of the National Australian report (Mellor et al., 2002). These developments include policy changes in assessment, and thus curriculum and pedagogy, in Australia.

The first part of the paper will focus on an analysis of the role of the conceptual model and item types used in the IEA Civic Education Study, and how these impacted on the kinds of findings to be reported in the national and international CivEd reports. The second part of the paper focuses on the National Sample Assessment.

### **The State of Australian CCE at the time of the CivEd Study**

The IEA Civic Education Study took place in Australia from 1996-2002 against a background of national questioning of civic institutions. The Federal Government's commissioned report: *Whereas the People...* was published in 1994. At its commencement, there was an active debate about Australia's constitution and the British connection amongst citizens and particularly amongst political leaders. The debate surrounding the republic referendum, and preparations being made to celebrate the centenary of Federation due in 2001, were part of the political context for civic education being given a profile in the school curriculum documentation in the late 1990s.

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

As a complementary response, each government at State/Territory level made civic education a non-compulsory priority in the school curriculum by the end of the decade. It was an ideal time to find out what young Australians knew and valued about democracy and what their attitudes were to a range of issues that affect democracy. Data about such matters were regarded by government and the community as worth having. At the school level, Australian students would probably have been exposed to civic issues and ideas, but neither in any systematic way, nor consistently across states or systems. The IEA Civic Education test and survey instruments were administered late in 1999, at which time the new *Discovering Democracy* curriculum resource materials initiative would have had little impact on students' knowledge acquisition, and teachers' practice so the study took on a benchmarking role (Mellor, 2003).

### **Australian participation in IEA studies**

Australia has participated in all IEA studies except the 1972 Civics study. This history of participation in IEA studies is somewhat self-fulfilling and encourages bureaucrats

to agree to and to fund subsequent participation. But there has also been a recent history of intense debate about the relative success of Australian students in several IEA Studies, especially TIMSS. This discussion, typically, moves beyond international comparisons of student achievement to a reflection on and questioning of, the curriculum models and pedagogies employed in Australian schools, by practitioners and bureaucrats. Underlying this questioning is both a conviction that the effectiveness of pedagogies and curricula are social and cultural constructs, and also that pedagogies and curricula in successful jurisdictions can be transplanted to Australia. Thus the tendency to regard IEA studies and the findings, published in national and the international reports, as a prompt for a general review of practice and educational goals is well-established in Australia. This in itself promotes further engagement in future IEA studies.

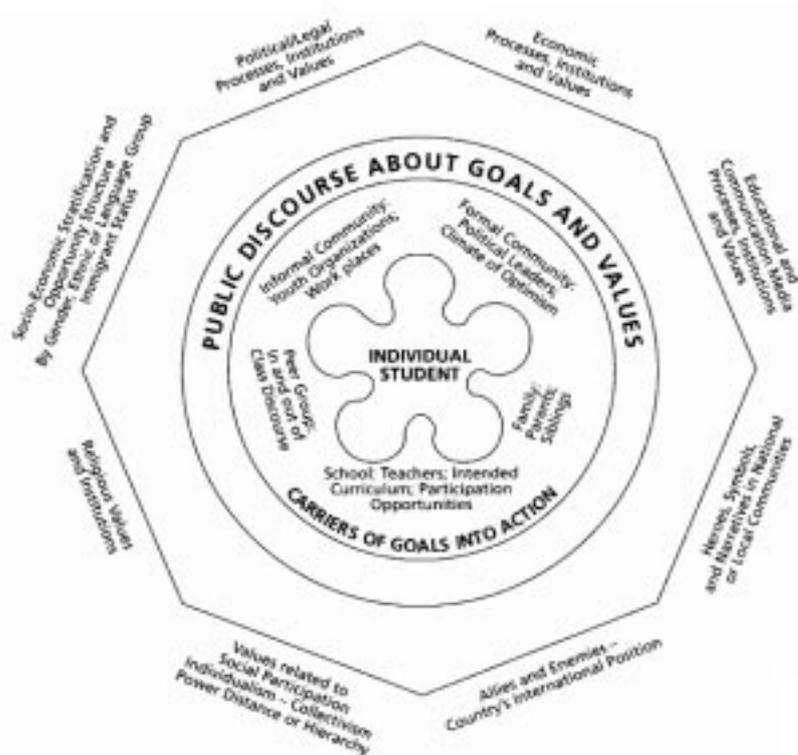
Given the uncertain state of CCE in the early 1990s, as previously described, and the lack of an agreed national curriculum, jurisdictional interest in CCE was so slight that Australia nearly did not participate in Phase 1 of the study. Participation in Phase 1 took the form of a contractual research study for the Federal Government, under the aegis of the Civics Expert Group. But for Phase 2, the national assessment required national jurisdictional support. It was then that the 'tradition' of participation in IEA studies, plus the financial support from the Commonwealth Government, enabled it to win over the states' bureaucracies. Early discussions with jurisdictional decision-makers suggested that they believed the study would not seriously challenge local practice (or the lack thereof). It was widely believed that assessment of any civic knowledge would be so general as to be vague, and that citizenship outcomes could not be assessed at all. So it was a 'safe' option to exercise!

### **THE IEA CIVED CONCEPTUAL MODEL**

The first indication of the challenge the study represented to accepted dogma, as then configured in CCE policy in Australia, was evident from the IEA Conceptual model (Figure 1). Whilst most of the IEA Civic Education Study tested only a small part of the knowledge and understandings represented in this model, its view of the range of factors that influence civic (and citizenship) student learnings was not a view that had prominent support from policy makers in the late 1990s in Australia. The IEA CivEd Study helped to change this perception.

Within this theoretical framework, students are seen to be active constructors of civic knowledge within a broader community consisting of teachers, peers and parents. They take part in and construct for themselves different discourses of citizenship and out of this participation emerges their own particular view of themselves as citizens. In this context, the process of becoming a citizen is not simply associated with the acquisition of certain knowledge and the practice of certain formal responsibilities such as voting. Students may well come into contact with such knowledge and will certainly need to be acquainted with their rights (Mellor et al., p. 11).

*Figure 1: Model for IEA Civic Education*



*Torney-Purta et al, (2001)*

The model recognises the multiple influences on students. While the student remained at the centre of the study, and indeed was the unit of analysis for the study, she/he is embedded in contexts represented by the circle and the octagonal in the conceptual model. These contexts are assumed to have had a 'cumulative influence' (Torney-Purta, 1996, p.14) on students in ways unknown and unspecified. The role of the school became problematic in civic and citizenship knowledge acquisition.

The conceptual model was not disseminated in Australia until Phase 2 of the study was well underway, and the project manager found it could be used to affirm a range of the proper concerns of CCE, both at a systems and classroom practitioner level. Practitioners in particular resonated with the view of CCE it embodied. The IEA Conceptual Model and the project's Key Policy Questions were crucial in achieving the participation of the target population.

The IEA Study challenged the notion that civics education consisted of a static body of knowledge to be transferred to students. As a result, test design and construction could not consist only of dichotomous or multiple-choice questions about a particular body of knowledge to which there was always a right answer. A constructivist approach to civics education demands a test design that itself represents the fluidity inherent in constructivism.

## **The IEA Concepts of civic knowledge and attitudes**

What kinds of questions would be able to elicit student responses capable of indicating the growth of civic knowledge and attitudes? This, of course, was the central question for the IEA Study. The task, was a considerable one - how can complexities associated with growth in civic learning be reduced to a number of questions on a test paper? The resultant cognitive test items, plus the survey of attitudinal propositions to which students were able to express a response, were the IEA 'solution' to this 'problem'.

Underpinning this study was the conception of civic education as a complex enterprise involving a variety of cognitive, conceptual and attitudinal strands, each of which is important and open to independent evaluation. The model of civic education used in the study particularly addressed the issue of how students gain civic knowledge and develop civic attitudes, and it foregrounded active citizenship. In the student questionnaire there were items and questions on content knowledge; skills in interpretation; the understanding of concepts, attitudes; and expected actions.

The three broad domains for examination, representing the core knowledge base of civic education were:

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

One of the 'givens' in all the CivEd reports was that the scales developed and the analysis of student achievement were governed by the conceptual model and the three broad domains. It needs to be reiterated that another conceptualisation would have altered the findings.

## **FINDINGS**

### **The main findings on cognitive achievement**

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

One-third of students successfully inferred the consequences to democracy of a large publisher buying up many of a nation's newspapers, and three-quarters identified that having many organisations for people to join is important to democracy because it provides many opportunities to express different points of view. But only half knew the distinguishing characteristics of a non-democratic government. It is clear that this is a crunch concept for all cohorts in the study... and Australian students

have relatively similar difficulty to their peers in recognising the distinguishing characteristics. Key words are not grasped in their full context, even in the countries where formal civic courses might have been expected to create such knowledge.

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

The national report not only reported on the cognitive data, carefully positioned within the context of the internationally comparative data, but it also foregrounded the importance of the attitudinal data.

### **The main findings on affective achievement**

The findings on the civic attitudes of Australian students unsettled readers, for they challenged the comfortable views Australians have of themselves as comparatively tolerant and of their society as securely democratic. The first group of the attitudinal scales, called the *Civic Engagement Dimension*, consisted of four scales. These scales reference active participation. Australian students' scores were significantly below the International mean on three of the four scales which make up the Civic Engagement dimension. The national report found that Australian students do not endorse action by citizens.

On the *Conventional Citizenship* scale the Australian students showed they believe a good citizen votes and shows respect for government representatives. But, they regarded knowing the country's history and following political issues in the press as relatively unimportant, and reserved their lowest level of interest for 'engaging in political discussion'.

On the *Social Movement Citizenship* scale the Australian students' responses indicated a less than enthusiastic endorsement, though eighty percent of the Australian students believe in the importance of a good citizen participating in 'activities to benefit people in the community'. Three-quarters of the Australian students thought taking part in protecting the environment is important, and two-thirds supported the importance of promoting human rights. But only just over half of the Australian students thought it important to participate in peaceful protest against a law they believe to be unjust.

The Australian mean for the *Expected Participation in Political Activities* scale was also significantly below the international mean. Given that voting is compulsory in Australia, students' expectation that 86% of them will vote is less significant than for those countries where it is optional. Over three-quarters of Australian students do not expect to join a political party, or to write letters to newspapers about social or political concerns, or to be a candidate for a local or city office. Only 40% said they would be prepared to join a non-violent protest march.

On the *Confidence in Participating at School* scale, the Australian mean is 'average'.

Australian students appear to have a more positive view of what can be achieved by groups of students in schools than they have of what adults can achieve by active participation in the political process. Between 82% and 87% believed student participation in decision-making processes in schools directed at solving problems that exist in their schools would have positive effect on their school. This optimism, it was noted later in the report, was not shared by their teachers. Participation in a school council or parliament is positively related to civic knowledge for Australian students, indeed even more so than for the international student cohort. However, only one-third of them had participated in a school council or parliament.

Another scale which draws on a similar aspect of Civic and Citizenship learning as do the above four scales, is the *Open Classroom Climate* scale. Two-thirds of Australian students said they are often encouraged to voice their opinion in class. Students in eleven of the 28 countries claimed they rarely discuss in class and a quarter of Australian students agreed with them. When asked whether 'Teachers encourage us to discuss political or social issues about which people have different opinions' the support rate goes down by almost 20%. Students are telling us that controversial issues are not encouraged as matters of discussion... that teachers stay with safe topics.

Analysis of student responses on these five attitudinal scales indicate that more positive civic attitudes about engagement co-exist with greater civic knowledge. It may be that students are simply demonstrating society-wide attitudes here, but the variations in student responses, within and across different cohorts, on certain items and scales results indicate that formal provision of civic education also makes a difference to civic attitudes (Mellor, 2003). Thus did the IEA conceptual model achieve some greater affirmation.

The Australian report's findings on the analysis of the teacher questionnaire data concluded that there was a significant shortfall in the capacity of Australian teachers to effectively deliver CCE. The importance of professional development in content and pedagogy was seen as crucial, as Mellor & Elliott found in 1996, because the pedagogic approach and the content are intertwined in providing positive learning Civics and Citizenship outcomes. The report argued that better civics and citizenship learning outcomes were urgently required for the sake of the future of the state and its citizens.

## CONCLUSIONS

### **The Australian CivEd report**

The main findings in the Australian report, like those in all the other national reports, reflect and are constrained by the CivEd model and domains. But in the report the discussion could take on the issues pertinent to the jurisdiction.

The Executive Summary of the Australian National Report concluded with the following:

On the one hand the report indicates there should be some confidence that young Australians already know a good deal about their democracy. Programs of civics and citizenship education can assist them to understand in more depth what their roles might be in the future, and how they can

participate in an active way. At the same time the report demonstrates that there is also a need to support teachers in their roles, so that civics education can be a rich and engaging experience for students.

Perhaps the most significant of all findings identified by the Study is that students need to be convinced that conventional forms of democratic engagement are worthwhile. Our elected representatives have much to contribute to this process. The future of Australian democracy belongs to, and with, our young people. We need them to be engaged in Australian democracy. ...This is the challenge for the future. (Mellor et al., 2002, p. xxii)

Taking up the call for the importance of an education with both Civics and Citizenship learning outcomes, the Report's Conclusion read:

...The preparation of future citizens cannot be left to chance. Directions need to be set at all levels of education to indicate that this is one of the priorities for the future. The data produced by the IEA Civic Education Study provides a solid foundation on which future developments can be built. Policy makers need to come to grips with the implications as they have been outlined here. As civics and citizenship education initiatives are being implemented, there will be continued debate about content, pedagogy and related issues.

There are two fundamental challenges for the future. First, to continue to support teachers in their role as civic educators both at the preservice and in-service levels. ... Second, debates and discussions need to be encouraged relating to the forms that civics and citizenship education should take in schools. Such debate will involve consideration of both the formal and informal curriculum, the role of so called extra curricular activities and the role that the involvement of students in the community can play in constructing broadly based programs of civics and citizenship education. These are important challenges for schools and their communities as well as policy makers and if they are successfully met they will build on the solid foundations that have already been laid over the past few years.

The Australian findings in this report provide useful guidance for these debates. Curriculum developers can focus on these findings as the starting point for deliberations about the form civic education programs should take. Teachers can be better informed about what their students are likely to be thinking when it comes to civic knowledge and attitudes. Researchers can take up many of the issues that have been raised and explore them further in other contexts and with complementary methodologies. If these become the responses to the IEA Civic Education Study it will have played an important role not only in helping us understand schools and students today, but also in helping to shape the future. This would be an important achievement. (Mellor et al.,2002, p. 137-8)

## **The Stakeholder response to the CivEd study**

The CivEd findings need to be considered in the light of the CivEd model... and any analysis of future developments in other jurisdictions should look to variations that are wrought. The variations should be seen as artefacts of the new situation and as significant, representing choices made, rather than being inevitable, or the result of casual implementation. Civics and Citizenship concepts are contested matters. The responses in Australia reflect educational and social issues and the unresolved nature of many of these.

The Australian CivEd project manager had discovered during the life of the study that interest in the project from Australian schools or the state jurisdictions was minimal. It was simply seen to be too theoretical and as not likely to generate useful achievement data. These avoidance procedures were not universally adopted, but expectations for the study to create debate or result in change in schools were low.

Only on the publication of the national report was the project taken seriously. This was because the published cognitive items and attitudinal questions findings were suddenly recognised as rigorous and relevant to national educational concerns. Invitations flooded in for the project manager (as the main author of the report) to present the findings to practitioners and decision-makers. And the presentations were invariably followed by intense and passionate discussion by attendees.

The language of the report made the concepts of the study accessible. It affirmed the existence of the concepts, their validity and the practicality of their rigorous assessment. Practitioners were able to use that IEA language and the findings to force discussion in their schools and in the jurisdictions, on the legitimacy of the area of CCE as a focus for school education, as a national education outcomes goal. Many of the 'excuses' previously uttered about the importance of learning outcomes in the area, or practicalities of assessing were no longer possible. Individuals and systems became engaged in a debate that would not go away.

On three important fronts, the response to the findings of the Australian national CivEd report has been very positive. All major education stakeholders have accepted both key substantive aspects of CCE as defined in the report (that is Civics and Citizenship), and have inserted text in state level curricula that reflects these new concerns. Many of the report's conclusions and urgings have already been explicitly identified and implemented in state-wide curricula and practice. Secondly, there has been acceptance of the report's position regarding professional development and some implementation, supported by Commonwealth funding. The suggestion that the IEA CivEd study caused these developments cannot be sustained, but its influence is clearly visible in the shape of the new national sample assessment in Civics and Citizenship, and it continues to inform the discussions surrounding the assessment and other related issues.

## **Introducing National Assessment in Civics and Citizenship in Australia**

The third, and chief, way this revitalised civics and citizenship agenda has been driven in Australia is through the adoption of a regime of recurrent national sample assessment at two levels of primary and secondary schooling in civics. The strategy

(with its curricula and pedagogical ramifications) has been with adopted by, and with the active support of, all educational systems in Australia.

In April 1999, the State, Territory and Commonwealth Ministers of Education, meeting as the tenth Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA), agreed to the new *National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-First Century*. (This became known as the Adelaide Declaration.)

The National Goals provide the framework for reporting on student achievement and for public accountability by schools and school systems. Goals 1.3 and 1.4 are especially relevant to CCE. They specify that when students leave schools they should *'be active and informed citizens with an understanding and appreciation of Australia's system of government and civic life'* (Goal 1.4). Moreover, the Declaration affirms that students *'should have the capacity to exercise judgement and responsibility in matters of morality, ethics and social justice, and the capacity to make sense of their world, to think about how things got to be the way they are, to make rational and informed decisions about their lives and to accept responsibility for their own actions'* (Goal 1.3).

The MCEETYA Taskforce on Performance Measurement was established in July 2001 to report to the Ministerial Council on approaches to reporting on activities and outcomes by schooling systems. Late in 2000 discussions were begun and during 2002 MCEETYA announced that Civics would be the next field for the next national sample assessment, following similar work in fields of literacy, numeracy and science. Additionally it was also agreed that the assessment should be conducted at two year levels; the conclusion of primary schooling (Year 6) and the conclusion of compulsory schooling (year 10).

A conceptual paper was prepared for MCEETYA in 2001, and this conceptual model was proposed as the basis of the national assessment domain. The first national sample assessment is to be undertaken in October 2004, and subsequently at three-year intervals. Assessment trials were undertaken in 2003. The author of this paper was project manager for the CivEd in Australia and of the CCAP Trial in 2003.

In 2001, only moderate levels of formal support, by schools in government and private jurisdictions, for the implementation of CCE had been evidenced. Whilst curricula documentation existed in some jurisdictions, the hours of class contact in CCE in most schools were very small. Principals were surveyed for the CivEd study on estimated time spent on civics in their schools. Approximately 70% of Principals indicated that students spent less than one hour a week, although some 20% of Principals said their students spent between 1-2 hours on civics and 10% put the figure as high as 3-4 hours. However their definitions of 'civic education' were very broad, and possibly problematic.

Given the slightness of the formal Australian civic learning context, it can be reasonably assumed that family, peers, informal school activities, the media and students' everyday activities in the community would have been at least as important in influencing students' civic understandings and attitudes as their in-class school experiences. Such had been the case at the time of testing in the CivEd study in

1999. Clearly the MCEETYA wanted to situate civics in schooling. National assessment of student achievement through schools clearly implies that schools have a major contribution to make to the outcomes. Each of the previous national sample assessment exercises had all resulted in an intense examination of the instruction provided by schools. In this respect, at least, the civics assessment exercise will be no different to those which have preceded it.

### **Key Characteristics of the Assessment**

There are to be assessment instruments for both Years 6 and 10 students, with two forms for each year level. The items are to be open-ended and closed. Each form is to contain items which range across the assessment Domain, with special reference to the two Key Performance Measures (KPMs). The time allocated for the test is approximately 50 minutes.

There are to be linked items within the forms at each year level. Two scales will be developed, and student achievement will be described by reference to the scales (the KPMs). Proficiency levels and benchmarking of student learning against standards on both these scales will be undertaken as part of the national assessment. Identification of 'an appropriately challenging band of proficiency' will result in national benchmarks. It is against these benchmarks or proposed standards that the reporting of national learning outcomes will occur, in the first and subsequent years of national assessment.

The sample is to be a national sample, proportional to size, across all states and territories and all three sectors (government, catholic and private). There is also to be a student background survey, seeking information and data about home background and attitudes and actions related to civic engagement, and some school experience related to civic engagement and school governance.

### **The Assessment Domain**

During the trial phase of the project the Civics and Citizenship Assessment Project (CCAP) team undertook an extensive rewriting of the initial conceptualisation of the assessment domain, in consultation with all the jurisdictional stakeholders. The discussions held during this development trial phase were influenced by the CivEd experience, its findings and by the responses to the Australian report. Reference by the full range of the stakeholders to the CivEd conceptualization, items, scales and the national and international findings has been common.

The newly created assessment domain breaks new ground in Australian curricula in several ways. No formal national curricula exist in Australia. This is the prerogative of the states and territories which manage curriculum and education in Australia. Nevertheless there has been recent public agreement by MCEETYA that some common curriculum documentation and provision would be in the national interest. This CCAP Assessment Domain is the first foray in this new endeavour, and it is not at all clear what will be the outcome, at a local systemic level, in state and territory education ministries. Will the assessment domain for the sample assessment testing, once it is formally adopted by MCEETYA, to all intents and purposes become the

national curriculum for Civics and Citizenship in Australia? And what might that acceptance imply for the funding and other administrative arrangements for the provision of civics and citizenship provision in schools? Remember as explained earlier in the paper, that the status of CCE as a serious area of teaching and learning in Australia is not high. It does appear on subject timetables in schools, despite there being learning outcomes in systemic documentation.

The weight of these concerns rested with those who worked in 2003 to develop the assessment domain, with its descriptors, and then wrote items to fulfil the contractual brief. Thus it can be seen that in Australia, at this point in time, the development of the assessment domain is an exercise in political strategy, as much as it is an assessment exercise. And, as all who work in the field of CCE know, the very content is both problematic and one which provokes strong reactions. So one has trodden warily.

The heated debates between stakeholders about the assessment domain during its development are precursors to the wider debates that will ensue. These discussions swirled around about the content of the domain and the degree to which explication can restrict or confirm a particular view of civics and citizenship. They related to which concepts and dispositions are 'key' ones, the subtle distinctions between certain terminology, which examples from history and recent events and actions best exemplified certain concepts, which 'identity should be validated? Underpinning all these discussions were matters of personal beliefs and values, and political persuasion, so-called 'political correctness', and convictions about how teachers and schools may or may not be able to convey such learning. Reference to the CivEd study was constantly instructive, as it represented a 'known' base against which many generalisations could be tested.

## **(DRAFT) AUSTRALIAN CIVICS & CITIZENSHIP KEY PERFORMANCE MEASURES**

**KPM 1: Civics: Knowledge & Understanding of Civic Institutions & Processes:**  
*Knowledge of key concepts and understandings relating to civic institutions and processes in Australian democracy, government, law, national identity, diversity, cohesion and social justice.*

**KPM 2: Citizenship: Dispositions & Skills for Participation:**

*Understandings related to the attitudes, values, dispositions, beliefs and actions that underpin active democratic citizenship.*

The two (DRAFT) Key Performance Measures (KPMs) reflect the agreed importance of a conceptualisation which distinguishes between and incorporates the cognitive and the affective. The Assessment Domain is an attempt to incorporate the constructivist view of civic learning that the IEA Conceptual model displayed, with the student at the heart of the learning surrounded by the influential factors that

make them citizens. It has reflected the Adelaide Declaration's goals. It has also moved beyond the CivEd view, by seeking to explicitly locate the concepts, institutions, actions and dispositions necessary for effective active civic participation. Thus has it sought to both describe and also to operationalise the conceptualisation.

There are three levels to the Assessment Domain. They are:

- The two Key Performance Measures (the KPMS),
- the key Domains for each KPM, and then
- the 'content' descriptors, which further explicate the kinds of knowledge, understandings, dispositions and skills required by students.

The 'upper' level, that of the KPMS, defines the way the two conceptions of civics and citizenship are configured in this assessment domain. The second level, that of the domains (in the boxes), demonstrates the range of concepts and practicalities students are expected to grasp. Many of the domains relate to principles as well as to their operationalising (in Australia). Examples of this combining of requirements are 6.4 and 10.9.

The Conceptual Hierarchy model (Figures 2 & 3, below) displays the two upper levels (KPMS & Domains) of the Assessment Domain, and the inter-connections between the domains, over the two year levels. It also shows how the assessment domain both builds upon and advances the IEA conceptual model, by operationalising the relationships identified in the CivEd model. Students will be expected to have knowledge of the ways in which institutions manage their democratic society, the goals their society has embraced, and recognise that contestation of those goals can be managed by the agreed processes. Most importantly, the role of the citizenry is laid out and the students are encouraged to see themselves as having a legitimate and serious participatory role.

It is believed that a hierarchy of these knowledge levels, understandings, dispositions and skills required by students across the two year levels must and does exist. The national assessment, it is hoped, will demonstrate this hierarchy of understandings, etc. These are the differing proficiency levels which are to be benchmarked. This hierarchy will be further developed in the benchmarking exercises to be undertaken. The Yr10 KPMS assume the Yr6 KPMS have already been achieved by the students.

Figure 2: (DRAFT) Concept Hierarchy for Years 6 & 10.

KPM 1: Knowledge & Understanding of Civic Institutions & Processes:

Knowledge of key concepts and understandings relating to civic institutions and processes in Australian democracy, government, law, national identity, diversity, cohesion and social justice.

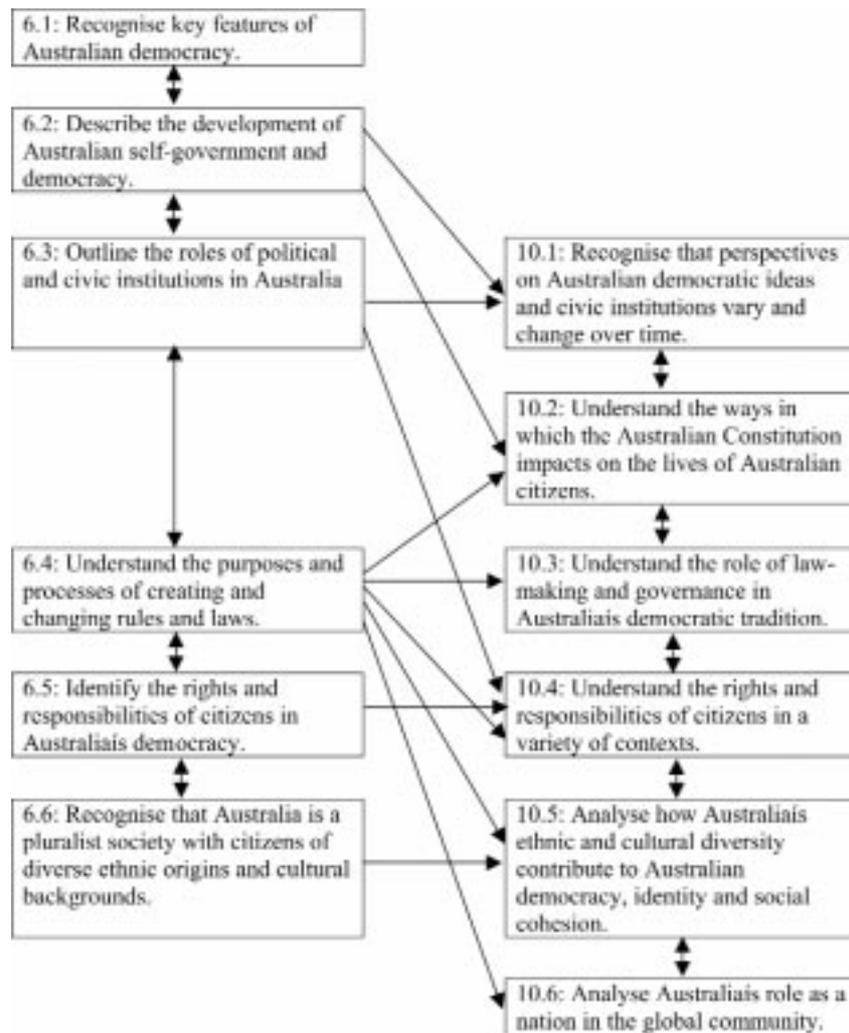
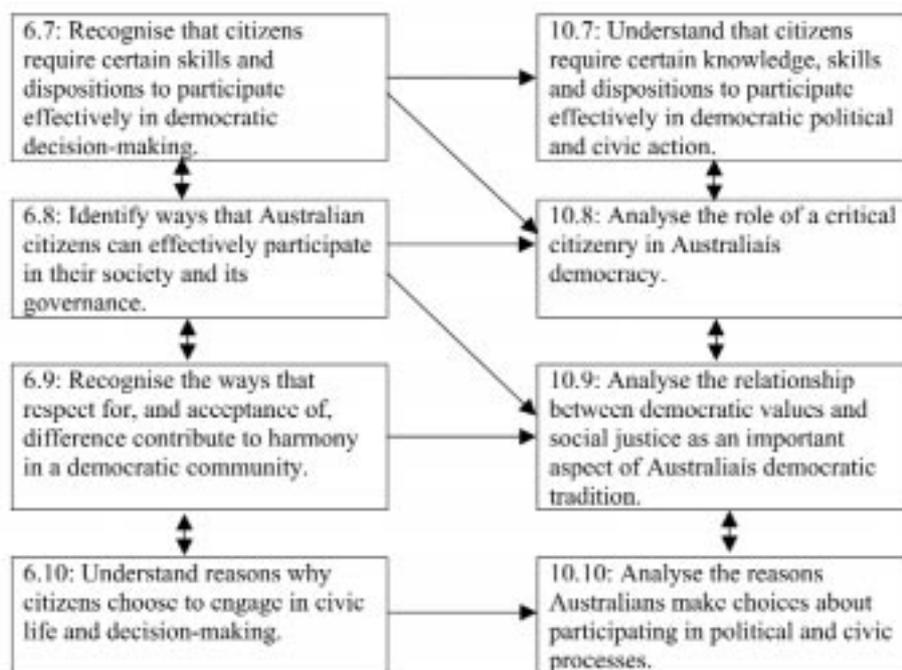


Figure 3: KPM 2; Citizenship: Dispositions & Skills for Participation:

Understandings related to the attitudes, values, dispositions, beliefs, and actions that underpin active democratic citizenship.



Notes:

*This is a mapping of the draft conceptualisation of the two KPMs, for both year levels. It conveys the conceptual and knowledge continuum between the outcomes and the progression across levels. It demonstrates that the Yr10 KPMs assume the Yr 6 KPMs have already been achieved by students. All Yr10 level KPMs extend the concept from the Yr6 level, and thus take it into 'new territory'. Thus for some outcomes the 'fit' is more evident, the continuum is smoother, than with others.*

The third level of the Assessment Domain (not shown in this paper) outlines the content detail through descriptors which are the guide to the kinds of items which will be part of the assessment. The descriptors were the focus of the items as they were developed. These are the learning outcomes being sought. They are also, of course, a guide to what should, in the view of MCEETYA, be taught in CCE.

The test development stage of the project has been a creative one, with a range of item types being employed. Units of groups of items and stand-alone items were developed across all levels of the Assessment Domain, with many third-level descriptors being relevant within the one unit. Whilst each item has only one domain descriptor referenced to it, in reality many of the items relate to more than one domain descriptor. In CCE the divisions between key aspects of the 'content' are not easy to maintain, nor are they as highly valued, as in some other disciplines.

One key concern in test development has been to address the relative 'surprise element' such assessment will present for most students. Since so few of them experience CCE in a formal way in schools, there is a danger that the students will be 'thrown' by the items, as they were in the CivEd study. It is crucial that the 'non-response' category be kept small. One strategy to address this concern is to firmly locate the test material in the real world of the students. The contexts should be ones to which they can readily relate. Some of the units have pictorial material. Further, in order to achieve high levels of engagement in the assessment, the structure of the units and items have frequently placed the students at the heart of the item. The third way of engaging students has been to make many units open-ended (known as short-extendeds). In this way student dispositions, participation and opinion (if based on evidence) are shown to be valued.

Thus the assessment will model, as well as seek evidence of the use of, the pedagogy that is best suited to create a sense of engagement and participation. It will also, of course, enable assessors to collect a detailed picture of what students do know. This Assessment Domain could not be tested by multiple-choice questions only. ACER has a long history of creating such items, and Australian jurisdictions are accustomed to them. A further advantage of short-extendeds additional to those previously mentioned, is that a Rasch analysis of them enables a detailed analysis of difficulty levels. Items, and the students who can achieve the thresholds on those items, can then be located more precisely on a difficulty scale. Multiple-choice questions, having only one threshold, can only result in a relatively more coarse difficulty scale.

Marking such items requires a disciplined and tightly managed marking process. The first step in such a process is to create a marking guide, and to trial it with the items. This occurred with the CCAP trial in 2003. Subsequent to marking and analysis of student responses, revisions to the items and score guides were undertaken.

Figures 4 & 5 below show a Year 10 CCAP unit with 3 items, followed by the relevant Score Guide. It relates to both KPMs and to two domains in the Assessment Domain. (The references to the Assessment Domain are in brackets after the question numbers in the Score Guides.) It is one of the 'early release' items, to be sent to jurisdictions, with the full (DRAFT) Assessment Domain, for circulation to schools in preparation for the first Sample National Assessment in Civics. It demonstrates some of the range of item types that have been written for the CCAP. The Score guide demonstrates the kinds of student responses being sought (and in the trial received).

### **MA 15+**

An office of the public service called the Office of Film and Literature Classification sets the ratings for films.

The rating MA(15+) means that people under 15 years of age are not allowed to watch a film unless in the company of a parent or adult guardian.

**Q1** Do you think this classification is a rule or a law?

Rule OR Law

Put a  in one box and explain your answer.

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Some films that have been rated by the Office of Film and Literature Classification are then also shown to a panel of members of the general public. They are not told the rating the film has been given and are asked to give the film a rating themselves and provide feedback on their decisions.

**Q2** Why might the Office of Film and Literature Classification compare their ratings of some films to those given by a panel of members of the general public?

- to find out how much the general public know about films
- to make sure that they are in touch with community standards
- to understand how accurately the public can rate films
- to inform the government about the types of films the community likes to watch

**Q3** Amber and Carlos are 16. They watched a film that was rated MA(15+) and thought that the rating should be changed to allow younger children to watch the film.

Below are some approaches they could take to try to have the rating changed.

- talking to the manager of the cinema
- writing a letter to a newspaper
- holding a protest outside the cinema

Select one and explain why you think this approach could be effective.

Figure 5

### **MA 15+ SCORE GUIDE**

#### **QUESTION 1 (10.3)**

##### **Full Credit**

Code 2: Selects LAW and explains that it is the same for all people OR that it was made by the government.

- LAW: It is the same for kids everywhere in Australia.
- LAW: The government makes the decision.

##### **Partial Credit**

Code 1: Selects LAW with no explanation or one which support the distinction.

- LAW: You have to obey it.
- LAW: It seems important.
- LAW: Because you can't get into the movies if you're under-age.

##### **No Credit**

Code 0: Selects RULE and refers to the ease (or frequency) with which the law can be subverted OR the nature of the punishment for breaches of the law.

- RULE: Because you can watch MA (15+) movies at home.
- RULE: It is easy to get to watch them anyway.
- RULE: The cinemas decide who can watch the film.
- RULE: It says people must be accompanied by an adult.

### **QUESTION 2 (10.3)**

#### ***Full Credit***

Code 1: (b) to make sure they are in touch with community standards.

#### ***No Credit***

Code 0: Other

### **QUESTION 3 (10.7)**

#### ***Full Credit***

Code 1: Chooses any response and provides an explanation that identifies the value of public opinion/awareness in issues relating to the common good.

- The manager of the cinema could talk to the rating people. She might be able to convince them that many customers agree with them.
- Letters to the paper inform the public, people will get to know more about the issue and this could make a difference.
- If enough people write to the people who make the film ratings, they may realise that the rating is too harsh.
- The manager of the cinema could give you the phone number of the office of film and literature classification.

#### ***No Credit***

Code 0:

- Talk to the manager because he can change the rating.
- If you talk to the cinema manager, it would have an immediate effect.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

At the time of writing this paper, the trial report has not yet been released. But analysis of the trial data indicates that the two scales (KPMs) stand up well and the difficulty map resulting from the Rasch analysis demonstrates appropriate proficiency levels can be described.

The impact of all this documentation and of the sample assessment itself on teaching of CCE is incalculable. But it can, with confidence, be predicted to be substantial. The assessment domain documentation alone, followed by the assessment exercise and the reporting of the achievement of student civic knowledge and disposition to citizenship, by state and territory, will undoubtedly cause discussion at both the policy and practitioner levels. Indeed, the trial has evidently already had an impact. The jurisdictional educational bureaucracy, through engagement in the process of developing the assessment domain, and relevant professional organizations and jurisdictions are planning a dissemination program of publications and forums for teachers, as soon as the trial report is released. One could say it is being 'eagerly awaited'!

The Australian CivEd report findings revealed the conflict between the agreed intent and the capacity of Australian jurisdictions to deliver the CCE learning outcomes they espouse (Mellor et al., 2002). These tensions will doubtless be again identified.

The pre-service teacher training and professional development deemed necessary by the authors of the Australian CivEd report are still is not in place.

The national assessment may also foreground a discussion of the pedagogic skills required to effectively teach CCE as mentioned in the CivEd report. The pedagogies needed to teach CCE is a professional practitioner issue. It is one requiring further discussion at individual practitioner, whole school and jurisdictional levels. Part of the purpose of the national assessment exercise is to foreground and operationalise the Adelaide Declaration goals, and to promote that discussion. This assessment will make explicit the need to deal with contested notions of civic knowledge. School communities and systems will be obliged to talk about how CCE outcomes can be effectively learned in schools and demonstrated by students in classrooms. It may also create pressure for such institutions to recognise the need for them to change their school governance practices and for teachers to adopt a pedagogy which is more congruent to CCE goals. This is dynamic policy development and the assessment will contribute to a continuing conversation about CCE for systems and practitioners in Australia.

The ways in which dominant studies such as those with the IEA can contribute to educational policy in general should be canvassed in research. The role of the IEA Civic Education Study in establishing some of the parameters of the professional conversation is worthy of acknowledgement and evaluation.

In a process which parallels the IEA study, this study of a national assessment models the power of a dominant force more than just the immediate focus of research. The IEA Civic Education Study undertook international assessment, but its impact has been broader than simply the reporting of comparative national statistics. This Australian CCE national assessment trial has already impacted on the broader issues of curriculum development and delivery of CCE, professional development of teachers in CCE and school governance paradigms. This impact can be expected to increase as the assessment is serially conducted and the national benchmark findings reviewed.

There can be no doubt regarding the role of the IEA Civic Education Study in raising Australian educational circles' consciousness of the importance of improving student learning outcomes in CCE and in demonstrating practical feasibility of assessing CCE learning outcomes. These have, in Australia, been manifest as the critical results of participating in the study.

## References

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