

Citizenship Education at High-Schools in Australia: New South Wales

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Abstract: The citizenship education programs in Australian as a multicultural society has been reviewed for nearly two decades and both major parties in the Commonwealth Parliament are intended to support this progress in the citizenship education. They also allocated funding for curriculum materials and professional development for teachers and educators. In recent years, both commonwealth and New South Wales (NSW) government have tried in making civic and citizenship curriculum as an educational priority in Australia. In this process teachers and educators have occupied a vital role in promoting of student's knowledge, skill and understanding of civic values, as they are responsible to the way of how and what they have to teach students from different backgrounds and cultures. This paper investigates the role of citizenship education programs in NWSs' high-schools in encouraging new generation to collaborate with each other in the multicultural society as good citizens as well as to explain how teachers and educators in high-schools play a central role to educate students from different backgrounds and cultures. The significance of citizenship education is that improve young student's participation in political and civic life, and a developing body of evidence demonstrate that citizenship education can really have an influence on new generation's participation in the society.

Keywords: Multiculturalism, Citizenship, Citizenship Education, Curriculum Studies, Rights and Responsibilities

1. Introduction

In every society, different organizations and factors directly or indirectly affect the life of citizens. Australia today is described by highly diverse populations, diverse immigrant groups who have arrived at the overseas and borders of countries historically and in the present day, or different ethnics, religious, and linguistic groups who have been integrated into a single state. Diverse groups of people living together in a democratic state (Dejaeghere, 2009, p.223). Therefore, Understanding the impacts of citizenship education in Australian high-schools as a multicultural and diverse society requires explaining the status of a citizen establishes the fundamental rights and obligations that an individual has under the law of a multicultural country. Australia placed its own rules for when and under what circumstances an individual can become a citizen of the country, and also it has own citizenship education programs in high-schools to educate its own diverse citizens from different backgrounds and

cultures. This interest for citizenship education in Australia has been motivated by a fundamental review of the concept of citizenship because of the rapid step of change in political life, in modern societies, social life and economic, and the need to respond. This rapid change is having important effect on the kind of relationships in modern society at a number of levels, including those between community groups, individuals, nations, states, regions and economic and political blocs (Lopes, Benton & Cleaver 2009, P. 1). In order to explain the significance of citizenship education in high schools, this research is constructed in the following ways. In the first section the progress of education citizenship will be investigated for more than two decades. In the second part of this research has devoted to find the role of teacher as a central character to promote student's knowledge, skills and understanding of civic values in multicultural society. Finally, the impacts of citizenship education will be explained through the answer of the question: Does citizenship education have an impact?

2. Methodology

The methodology used within this research is qualitative. This research proposal has utilized a historical approach in order to effectively explain the initial stages of building citizenship education at high-schools in Australia as well as the progresses of developing curriculums in Australian high-schools. A wide range of sources has been utilized in this paper including books, journal articles and official web sites. An acknowledged limitation of this research is that it is always difficult to evaluate the effect of education in society without conducting survey questionnaire to investigate the outcomes of citizenship education on student's behavior toward multicultural and diverse society. It is also not easy for researcher to conduct surveys in this research; therefore, the researcher will rely upon the former and previous surveys questionnaires which have been done in this area by other researchers.

3. Theoretical Framework

Populations in Australia especially in NSW consist of different ethnics, religious, and linguistic groups. Therefore, compared with other theoretical approaches in civic and citizenship education to research, multicultural theories of citizenship education is an explicitly theoretical approach that has been theorized as a transformative curriculum reform effort that seeks to help students from diverse backgrounds to develop the knowledge and skills needed to mediate and cross cultural borders by engaging in authentic dialogue and also to understand their rights and responsibilities in their multicultural society. This research paper will focus on multicultural theories of citizenship education to explore the effects of citizenship education in Australian high-schools in promoting the skill and knowledge of the new generations. As Bennett explains that

Multicultural education consist of four interactive dimensions: the movement toward equity, or equity pedagogy; curriculum reform, or rethinking the curriculum through multiple perspectives; multicultural competence, the process of becoming conscious of your own as well as other cultural perspectives as a foundation for informed cross-cultural interactions; and teaching toward social justice, the commitment to combat prejudice and discrimination of all kinds, especially racism, sexism, and classism (Bennett, 2003,p. 14) .

These four dimensions can be applied to Australian high-schools as multicultural and diverse society, therefore, multicultural theories compatible within this research proposal

4. Progression of Citizenship Education in Australia

Australia as a multicultural and diverse society the citizenship education programs has been revised for nearly two decades in different states of Australia in order to foster the knowledge and skills of Australian citizens. The clear feature of the late 1980s was the establishment of the parliamentary education office (PEO) in Canberra. Under the supervision of the Senate, the PEO has played a central and useful role in inspiring interest in parliament and politics within Australia, especially within schools. Founded in 1989, the PEO has been really involved in educating students about parliament and political processes through such activities as arranging and funding conferences, developing curriculum and program materials, publishing newsletters and printed materials on parliament, producing sophisticated programs and databases particularly on CD-ROM, offering opportunities for student contribution in parliamentary activities and in encouraging research (Murray Print, 1995, p.8). The primary goals of the PEO were '[t]o bring to all Australians an increased awareness, understanding and appreciation of the significance, functions and procedures of the parliament' (Parliamentary Education Advisory committee, 1995, p.5). In 1989, the Australian Education Council's (AEC) had decided to contain citizenship as one of its ten common and agreed national goals for schooling in Australia. the Minister's agreement on essential learning for all Australian children in the area of citizenship: 'To develop knowledge, skills, attitudes and values which will enable students to participate as active and informed citizens in our democratic Australian society within an international context' (Pascoe, S. 1996, p. 19). The process of developing civic education has been continued until '[i]n 1991 the Australian (Labor) government initiated a ten-year formal reconciliation process. The primary remit of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation (CAR) was to improve relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the wider Australian community through education'(Muldoon, P. & Schaap, A. 2012, p. 235) . As Andrew states that reconciliation process had three goals. Firstly, to inform wider Australian community about indigenous issues and reconciliation process and Secondly, to solve socioeconomic disadvantage and to discover desirability of developing some form of document of reconciliation, and if it was considered desirable, to provide advice concerning the content of such a document (Andrew, 2005, p. 2). Therefore, once Australian government intend to make a revision education citizenship curriculum, they should consider the aboriginal peoples as citizens and provide opportunities to participate in political and social activities as Australian citizens. After that, in the early 1994 the Civics Expert Group (CEG) established by the commonwealth government, has worked as unifying group and facilitator in endeavours to reach a critical mass of support for civics (Print, 1995, p.8). This group was significant and high profile with its principal members keen to make an impact on a range of political and educational issues (Davies & Issitt 2005, p. 395). This group was responsible to write reports about civic and citizenship education in Australia. They found that 'widespread ignorance and misconception about the structure and function of Australia's system of government, about its origins, and about the ways it can serve the needs of citizens' (Macintyre & Simpson 2009, p. 124). Generally speaking, in the early 1980s and 1990s, there were many efforts at the national level in the area of civics and citizenship education and revising the curriculum to include citizenship education for students in the Australian schools. Those developments were welcomed by teachers, parents and politicians as opportunity to revive citizenship education, The CEG found 'there is a demonstrable need for a non-partisan program of public education and information on the Australian system of government, the Constitution, Australian citizenship and other civics issues'(Macintyre & Simpson 2009, p. 124). This group prepared a detailed report about the education program in Australia. It suggested that the program be

obligatory in the compulsory years of schooling should be inclusive of Indigenous, multicultural, gender, regional and international perspectives without excluding any classes of the society. These recommendations were accepted by the labor government and in 1995 the government dedicated funding for a considerable program of civics and citizenship education. In early 1996, the package was in the early stages of performance when the new government came to office led by John Howard was doubtful of the political origin of the procedure and put it under review, but in 1997 decided to continue backing with relatively minor changes (Macintyre & Simpson 2009, p. 125). These progresses in the citizenship education had paved the way to further stress to bring education citizenship within the high schools in Australia in different states including New South Wales. It seems that the Australian government will persist to develop and review civic and citizenship curriculums in the schools as Australia in recent years has become more multicultural society because of the flow of refugee come from outside borders such as African countries and the Middle East.

5. Teachers' Role in Citizenship Education

Educators and teachers occupied a central role in the process of education because they are responsible to teach students from different background and culture, the knowledge and skills which students taught must be correct and valuable. Young students learn through their experiences and their observation, as well as what the teachers teach them. Sometimes there is a consideration what teachers say and what they do, and young students are quick to discover the contradictions (Dally 1998, p.51). Therefore, it is important for teachers to be aware of the goals and purpose of this study in the high school; the results of the citizenship education are associated with the perceptions of those school teachers who participated in teaching activities. Print (1995, p. 39) points out that 'any policy or program which aims to promote the teaching and learning of citizenship will need to include a clear focus on the characteristics of the teacher who will teach it, what teachers know and believe about citizenship and the political process will be an important part of this'. Teacher's skills and abilities could be improved through providing, workshops, training and seminars before they start to teach related subjects to citizenship education, indeed this is the duty of the department of education in New South Weals government to prepare skilled teachers to educate related curriculums. Pascoe (1996, p.26) states that '[t]he skilling of Australia's teachers is a necessary prerequisite for a renaissance in civics and citizenship education. We have seen an erosion of the skills base of professionals in this area with a 30-year gap in formal educational provision'. In the 1996, the commonwealth government allocated \$ 6.3 million for teacher professional development and the Civics Expert Group also recognized the need to instigate teacher training programs. Moreover, University Association for Citizenship Education which created in many universities has the capability to provide pre-service and in-service teacher needs and training programs (Pascoe 1996, p. 26). In multicultural society, Teachers require 'to develop reflective cultural and national identifications if they are to function effectively in diverse classrooms and help students from different cultures and groups to construct clarified identifications' (Banks, 2001, p. 10). Social studies and researchers have also investigated the role of teacher in the process of promoting civic education. 'Some researchers suggest that the focus of program content can influence students' notions of teaching if they overlap messages from other sources, and if the individual is receptive to change' (Mathews & Dilworth 2008, p. 358). In citizenship education class it is important for teachers to respect student opinions and encouraged them to express them and also try to get students to speak freely and openly (Hahn 1999, p. 241). Tudball (2009, p. 11) point outs that 'teachers have to get students talking and

interacting, and able to engage actively in debates about issues that matters to them'. From this, teachers play a significant role to manage and master the class room and allow all students from different backgrounds and cultures to express themselves. To progress students' critical and multicultural civic skills and competence, teachers and educators should drive students to obtain the necessary skills and knowledge for more critical and active citizenship in the multicultural and diverse society (Antonio 2013, p. 223). Therefore, 'teachers' evaluations have a strong influence on students' beliefs about their own and others' competence' (Webb 2009, p. 8). Spillane et al. (2002, p. 393) state that teachers' prior knowledge, emotions, values and practice affect how they attend to understand and interpret policy. Teachers have a tendency to be biased towards policy interpretations that apt their values and beliefs. Moreover, teachers should be familiar and knowledgeable about the policy and curriculum, and be provided opportunities to construct and discuss shared meanings. Jasmine and Murray argue that 'many would argue, teachers must be given the space and support to be able to interpret policy in ways different from the official stand without worrying about the possible consequences that might befall them personally' (Jasmine & Murray 2009, p. 383). However, the knowledge construction process defines the manners in which teachers assist students to investigate, understand and determine how the implicit cultural assumptions, frames of reference and biases within a discipline influence the ways in which knowledge is formed. When the knowledge construction process is applied in the class room, educators help students to understand how knowledge is constructed and how it is affected by the, ethnic, racial, social-class, and gender positions of individuals and groups (Banks 2001, p. 10). It is also obvious that In Australia, parents have conventionally agreed that teachers and educational managers are best placed to construct 'academic' curriculum decrees but at the same time those parents also have the rights to know how moral, religious and social issues are taught in schools especially those subjects relate to citizenship education (Haynes 2009, p. 438).

6. Dose Citizenship Educations Have An Impact?

The significance of citizenship education has been increasingly emphasised for nearly two decades in Australia, therefore, citizenship education has become the main concern of the federal government as well as local government especially New South Weals. It is clear that citizenship education improve young student's participation in political and civic life, and a developing body of evidence demonstrate that citizenship education can really have an influence on new generation's participation (Opes, J., Benton, T. & Cleaver, E. 2009, p.3).in democratic society, voting is an important pointer of democratic engagement, and a minimum indictor of an individual's participation as a citizen in political life and there is some discussions about the significance of voting in the democratic states. Among these debates voting has defined as important appearance of one's involvement in a political entity (Print 2007, p. 328). In Australia, for eligible voters, voting in all elections is compulsory both in federal and local election, citizens have the right to vote on 18th birthday. Citizens are free to give their vote to preferred party, but if eligible voters do not go to vote in an election they have to legally provide plausible explanation or receive a fine. Therefore, the stress in citizenship education in terms of the functioning of democracy and politics in Australia is considered important as adult citizens are compelled to 'be active', at least regarding of voting – a key part of adult citizenship in a democratic nation (Ailwood 2011, pp. 464-465). Therefore citizenship and civic Education foster the skills, values and knowledge that prepare high school's students to be active and informed citizens of Australia's democracy. Citizenship education may include of knowledge and understanding of our democratic

legacy, political and legal structures and the shared values underpinning our pluralistic and multicultural society, such as, tolerance, freedom, responsibility respect and inclusion. It also includes participation and development of the skills and dispositions needed to practise citizenship. (Tudball, 2009, p. 10).

The concept of active citizenship provide as a useful entry point to explain the impacts of education citizenship on high school students in the society. Neo-liberals have defined active citizenship as the social obligation to improve the personal abilities as a self-confident member of society who participates through individual enterprise and, where necessary, private volunteer institutions and charity. While radical democrats have recognized active citizenship by democratic involvement and participation in civil society, from this perspective, the active citizen is socially committed and engaged to collective problem solving at all stages of the political community (Howard & Patten 2006, p. 459-460). Citizenship education encourage students to be active citizens in the society, active citizens are able to recognize their rights and responsibilities as a citizen of Australia. Students as active citizen consider themselves as agent of change and recognise that their capacities can make a difference in the society; they also understand how to construct a plan of active that addresses a problem and will act toward making change (Lewis-Ferrell & Ponder 2009, p. 130). In this sense, civic and citizenship education help students to be self-reliant and reactive to the issues and problems in the multicultural society, it also provides students more knowledge and understanding of civic values. Butts has advocated ten civic values as the core citizenship education in the multicultural society: freedom, equality, justice, authority, participation, privacy, authority, due process, international human rights and personal obligation for the public good (Lynch, J 1993, 66). These values can be divided into rights and responsibilities because some of them include responsibility to citizens such as participation, it is a responsibility of eligible citizens to vote during federal and local election in Australia as mentioned before, while some of them can recognize as rights for citizens like freedom, justice, equality. It is a duty of the Australian government to guarantee these rights for all its citizens equally. Tudball (2009, p.) states that all young Australian students should have opportunities to know and understand the cultures and history of Australian indigenous and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and develop greater respect and consciousness for aboriginal cultures and identity, and knowledge of past injustices and present inequality as a means of understanding current issues and to counter racism. Aboriginal issues and reconciliation are still key subjects for civics and citizenship education and Australian public life.

7. Conclusion

There is evidence that both commonwealth and New South Government have tried in recent years to make civic and citizenship curriculum as an educational priority in Australia. The process of revision was supported by the federal government and funded for professional development and curriculum materials. It is likely that Australian government will continue on developing civic and citizenship education in the school's program because of the rapid step of change in political life, in modern societies, social life and economic, and the need to respond. Citizenship education to be effective in the society requires the skilled and professional teachers and educators to teach students because they are responsible to implement and practice the subjects to the real life. Citizenship education can affect young people to recognize their rights and responsibilities, and it helps them to understand the civic values such as freedom, equality, justice, authority, participation, privacy, authority, due process, international

human rights and personal obligation for the public good. It also guides them to be an active citizenship in the society.

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