Title: What teachers believe about democracy and why it is important - how (should) we prepare students for democracy and citizenship: Lessons from Australia.

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Abbreviated chapter title: What teachers believe about democracy and why it is important

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Abstract:

Democracy means many things to many people. There is much discussion that democracy is in now in decline or even in crisis citing apparent youth apathy and disengagement. The research which this chapter reports on seeks a more robust, critical, or thicker interpretation of what democracy is; what it should be; and, significantly, how it can be beneficial to all peoples. The traditional approach in civics and citizenship education focuses on understanding political structures, often isolated to a single unit of study on and teaches *about* democracy not necessarily *for* democracy. This chapter argues that a broader, more participatory, critical, and relevant educational experience that includes a critical use of social media and critical digital literacy is fundamental to facilitating a process of meaningful societal transformation through *thick* democracy. Three questions related to democracy are framed within the context of empirical and qualitative data gathered from a study of over 600 teachers. The chapter uses a critical framework to elucidate the potential for transformation of our individual and collective sense of democracy and builds on previous studies in the U.S. and Canada together with research being conducted in over 25 countries with educators internationally through the Global Doing Democracy Research Project.

100 word biography

David Zyngier is a former teacher and principal and is a senior lecturer in the faculty of education at Monash University. His research focuses on teacher pedagogies that engage all students but in particular how these can improve outcomes for students from communities of disadvantage focusing on issues of social justice and social inclusion. He is co- founder and co-director (with Paul Carr) of the **Global Doing Democracy Research Project** an international project examining perspectives and perceptions of democracy in education to develop a robust & critical democratic. He was awarded an Australian Research Council grant 2013-2016 "*Can Educators Make a Difference: Experiencing Democracy in Education*".

What teachers believe about democracy and why it is important - how (should) we prepare students for democracy and citizenship? Lessons from Australia.

<u>Introduction</u>

> Negative stereotyping of younger generations as apathetic, apolitical and disengaged is mad, bad and dangerous for the health of Australian democracy. (Evans, Halupka, & Stoker, 2014)

Democracy means many things to many people. There is much discussion that democracy is in now in decline (Diamond, 2015) or even in crisis (Ercan & Gagnon, 2014). The research which this chapter reports on seeks a more robust, critical, or thicker interpretation of what democracy is; what it should be; and, significantly, how it can be beneficial to all peoples (Carr, 2010). The traditional approach in civics and citizenship education (CCE) in schools focuses on understanding formal political structures , and is often, problematically isolated to a single unit of study on government in both primary (elementary) and secondary (high) school education (Brophy & Alleman, 2009) and it teaches *about* democracy not necessarily *for* democracy.

The notion of normative democracy is, simultaneously, highly contested and often benignly accepted. Beyond the hegemonic zeal that proclaims that elections equate to democracy, replete with political parties, fundraising, polling, media manipulation, and other components that frame a *thin* conceptualization of democracy, this chapter argues that a broader, more participatory, critical, and relevant educational experience that includes a critical use of social media and critical digital literacy is fundamental to facilitating a process of meaningful societal transformation through *thick* democracy. Three questions related to democracy are framed within the context of empirical and qualitative data gathered from a study of over 600 teachers across a diverse range of schools in Victoria (Zyngier, 2013b). While considering specific concerns, issues, and themes raised by participants in the study, the chapter uses a critical framework to illustrate and elucidate the potential for transformation of our individual and collective sense of democracy. I ask "How do educators understand democracy? How do they connect democracy and education? What are their concerns and proposals for enhancing democracy in and through education?"

This research builds on previous studies in the U.S. and Canada (Zyngier, 2013a) together with research being conducted in over 25 countries with teachers as well as education students conducted internationally through the Global Doing Democracy Research Project[1].

Attempting to determine the salience of a linkage between education and democracy **beyond** the civics classroom is important as it may have implications for the conceptualization and delivery of teaching and learning in relation to democracy (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004) both in the classroom and in the education academy. Indeed as the mantra of "every teacher is a teacher of literacy and numeracy" spread through education systems world-wide, followed by "every teacher is a teacher of ICTs", it is also critical that *every teacher become a teacher **of and for** democracy.* The need to critically interrogate and understand the perspectives, experiences and perceptions of teachers in relation to democracy in education informs the context of this research (Carr, 2007, 2008).

<u>The perspectives, experiences and perceptions of the young in relation to democracy in education</u>

> Young people are the sail and not the anchor of [Australian] democracy and not as is so often thought disenchanted but are more active than any other generation in terms of social media use,

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[1] http://doingdemocracy.ning.com/

in terms of collective action through the internet—they are information activists—they share information and debate public policy in a degree of detail that leaves the Australian parliament to shame. (Professor Mark Evans, Institute for Governance in Alberici, 2014)

There have been detailed studies of students' attitudes to democratic values and participation in society that conclude that while Australian students have a well-developed set of democratic values, they adopt a passive rather than an active style of engaging in conventional citizenship activities. They will participate formally through voting and they will pursue issues where they see some community benefit, but they do not see themselves exercising an effective presence in the formal political system (Mellor & Kennedy, 2003).

New research commissioned by the Museum of Australian Democracy (2014) shows that young people are increasingly politically active online, rather than channelling their energies into traditional party politics however it all depends on how you define political engagement. If measuring traditional actions like joining political parties or street protests or writing a letter to a parliamentarian, young people are more disengaged than ever. This is discussed in detail below in the next section.

But if online activities such as joining advocacy groups or engaging with campaigns or issues by sharing or commenting on Facebook, YouTube or Twitter are included, then youth political engagement soars. These traditional forms have really fallen to the wayside but in their place these new forms, which the youth seems to be a lot more comfortable with, have really picked up in their place (Evans et al., 2014).

School education can and does contribute to the production of citizens' identities as the IEA-CIVED[3] studies indicate, but such contribution cannot be controlled or measured in the same way systems assess how much a student has learned about mathematics or literacy in any given year. Citizenship education is:

Always an educationally unfinished project, an unsolvable tension, that cannot be learned and understood through conscious rationality alone and thus not solved through the delivery of explicit instruction on what democracy is and how a good citizen should act. (Fischman & Haas, 2012, p. 174)

Hahn's study (1998) shows schools are implicated in promoting civic education through certain types of political experiences. Schools and classrooms can play a part in the education of democratic citizens through the way they are organised. However, the opposite is also true—if schools and classrooms are not democratically organised they are also helping to shape a more authoritarian one. This highlights the discrepancy between what the CIVED data show and what is possible in schools that establish effective practices including debating of controversial issues, lobbying politicians, raising money for charities, interviewing community figures, and volunteering in community organizations and international agencies.

What students experience in schools—what topics they discuss and how they are discussed—and their attitudes and beliefs concerning a particular range of political issues are of fundamental importance in their civic development. What takes place in schools, not just in the classroom but also in the school lunchroom or cafeteria, the corridors, playground, gymnasium, and assembly areas, and elsewhere within the school, apart of course from the classroom will have a determining effect on students (Hyslop-Margison & Thayer, 2009). Is there bullying, racism, sexism, homophobia, marginalization, a detrimental hidden curriculum, meaningful parental involvement, engaging school trips, and guest visitors, etc.? What happens, and what does not happen or is omitted, is important. How issues are presented and discussed, and how they are open or closed to diverse epistemological vantage

points is also critical (McLaren, 2007). In sum, students learn explicitly, but also in a very significant implicit way to develop their own sense of democracy and it is here where our teacher research   could have a lasting effect on broadening or restricting the reach of democratic knowledge, engagement, and action in our students now and in the future.

The focus on education provides a more distinct linkage into how democracy is constructed within schools and the broader education field. The formative years of public education (i.e., primary and secondary) can represent the platform for future development of what has been termed the active citizen which stems, in large part, from social experience and learning within the first two decades of a person's life.

Has Gen Y really gone off democracy?

> The health of a democracy depends on the largest number of people engaging in it, taking an interest and participating in it and if we have significant groups of people that don't so that then potentially if we have a crisis in democracy, if there are some economic problems or there is some threat to democracy then this can become a real problem. They can look to charismatic leaders, to protest parties and they can turn away from the major established political parties which are the ones that provide the long term stability in our political system. (Professor Ian McAllister, ANU 2014; O'Neill, 2014)

A 2014 national survey in Australia found that young Australians' are ambivalent towards the democratic system of government and that they have lost faith in Australia's democracy. Over the last three years, polling has uncovered a surprising ambivalence amongst Australians about the value of democracy, despite Australia being one of the oldest continuous democracies in the world. In 2014, only 60% of Australians believe that 'democracy is preferable to any other kind of government'. This confirms previous findings, with only 42% of 18-29 year-olds in 2014 view democracy as preferable to any other kind of government, compared with 65% of those 30 years and over.

When asked the question 'if you had to choose between a good democracy or a strong economy for Australia, which one would you personally choose?', only a small majority (53%) choose a 'good democracy', with 42% opting for 'a strong economy'.

To those Australians who have indicated in the Lowy polling that they do not believe democracy is preferable to any other kind of government, they posed five propositions in the 2014 Poll and asked whether each was a 'major' or 'minor' reason for their views. In responding, 45% say 'democracy only serves the interests of a few and not the majority of society' is a major reason for not preferring democracy. For 42%, the proposition that 'democracy is not working because there is no real difference between the policies of the major parties' is cited as a major reason for not preferring democracy. The third strongest response is that 'I have become disillusioned with Australian politics and think another system might work better' (36%).

Twenty per cent cite as a major reason for not preferring democracy that 'a more authoritarian system where leaders can make decisions without the processes of democracy achieves better results'. Similarly, it does not appear that Australians' equivocal support for democracy can be ascribed to mere apathy. Only 21% say that 'democracy is the usual form of government now and always will be, so I don't worry about it'.

The problem is not mere apathy, but genuine misgivings about Australian democracy with 33% believing 'in some circumstances, a non-democratic government can be preferable' because 'democracy only serves the interests of a few and not the majority' and a further 19% saying it doesn't matter what kind of government we have. Of concern was the fact that 21%

prefer 'a more authoritarian system where leaders can make decisions without the processes of democracy achieves better results'. Only 42% believe that 'democracy is preferable to any other kind of government' (Oliver, 2014). These misgivings are replicated in the teachers in this research.

These findings are replicated by the 2014 Scanlon Report Mapping Social Cohesion (Markus, 2014) which has for a number of years sought to enhance the evidence base available for interpreting Australian opinion on government. Their findings confirm 'research … revealing a sharp drop in satisfaction with the political system'. Since 2007 the Scanlon Foundation surveys have included a question on trust in government. Respondents are asked: 'How often do you think the government … can be trusted to do the right thing for the Australian people?' and are presented with four response options: 'almost always', 'most of the time', 'only some of the time', and 'almost never'. The highest proportion indicating the first or second response, 'almost always' or 'most of the time', rose from 39% to 48% in 2009; this was followed by a sharp fall to 31% in 2010, in the context of a loss of confidence in the then government. A low point of 26% was reached in 2012, representing a decline of 21 percentage points since 2009, followed by stabilisation in 2013. There was an expectation that in 2014 there would be significant upward movement, in the first year of the newly elected Abbott government, on the pattern of the increase in confidence in the early period of the Rudd government. This expectation has not, however, been realised. While the level of trust has increased, it is by less than three percentage points. Analysis by age group finds a relatively high level of trust amongst those aged 18-24 and 65 and over, with the lowest level amongst those aged 35-54. Later polls in 2014 and 2015 indicate a further dramatic decline for these figures.

Clearly there is a malaise that is not to be explained purely in terms of political alignment, identification or lack of identification with the party in government. A further concern is indication of a decline in participation in political life: in 2009, 87% indicated that they had voted in an election over the last three years, in 2014 a lower 82%; in 2009, 56% indicated that they had signed a petition over the last three years, in 2014, 48%. Contact with a member of parliament was down from 27% to 23%.

When asked to consider systems of government other than democratic, a substantial minority indicated approval. Thus 49% agreed with a system in which 'experts, not government, make decisions according to what they think is best for the country', and almost one in four respondents (26%) agreed that it was good to have a system of government in which a 'strong leader …does not have to bother with parliament and elections'. This finding is consistent with the understanding that a substantial proportion of the population lacks firm or reasoned views on political systems and may not be aware that they are indicating agreement to contradictory propositions

The 2013 national survey (Markus, 2014) found that federal parliament and political parties were the lowest ranked among people to trust. In 2014 Federal parliament again was ranked last, with just 5.3% indicating 'a great deal of confidence'.

The survey also asked respondents if the present system of Australian government works well or is in need of change. Just 15% indicated that it 'works fine as it is'; 48% considered that it needed minor change, 23% major change, and 11% that it should be replaced – close to the 9% who disagreed with the view that democracy, despite its faults, 'is still the best form of government'.

Further an ANU-SRC Poll released in August 2014 focused on views of government. A key finding was that 'satisfaction with democracy remains at a low level of 72% in comparison to the 2007 when it was 86%, although it was relatively high by international standards, at the same level as Canada and Germany'. Only 56% believed that their vote mattered down from 68% in 2007. Only 43% believed that it made a difference whichever party was in power, the lowest level recorded, and only 56% considered that their vote made a difference, compared to 70% in 1996. Contrary to the view that young people lacked confidence in institutions, the ANU Poll reported that 'overall, younger people have the same level of confidence in institutions compared to the rest of the population'.

If these figures are alarming it is also relevant to point out that at the last Federal election (2013) almost 20% *opted-out* from voting—they didn't enrol, didn't show up or voted informally—that is 20% of the eligible voters[2]. As disenchantment rises this percentage tends to increase especially among the young, poor, less educated and those living in outer metropolitan and rural areas. However there is a significant difference between *disenchantment* and *disengagement* or apathy. Disenchantment means that people take a conscious decision believing that somehow the system is failing them—that democracy is only serving the interests of the few not the majority, where *ordinary people* have been shut out of the conversation by politicians and the media. Eighty to 90 per cent of Australians believe they have little or no influence over national decision making[3].

Such negative stereotyping of younger generations as apathetic, apolitical and disengaged is "mad and dangerous for the health of Australian democracy" (Evans, Halupka, & Stoker, 2014, p.9). "Our research shows that young Australians passionately believe in democratic values, possess strong political views and are actively engaged in democracy. They simply do not like the current politics on offer." But the the research shows that 19 per cent of Gen Y Australians is dissatisfied with the way democracy works in Australia, making them the most dissatisfied generation in comparison to Generation X (15 per cent) and Baby Boomers, (16 per cent). In the research, 30 per cent of those surveyed had negative views on compulsory voting. Younger generations were more likely to have negative views with 39 per cent of Generation Y and 36 per cent of Generation X against compulsory voting. This compared with Baby Boomers (27 per cent) and the older Builders (16 per cent). Negative views on compulsory voting include that the government should not be able to force people to vote, or that it forces voters to make uninformed decisions just to avoid fines (Museum of Australian Democracy, 2014).

Democratic deficit or democratic disengagement: Teaching about but not for democracy.

> Democracy cannot go forward unless the intelligence of the mass of people is educated to understand the social realities of their own time (Dewey, 1936).

The debate over democracy in education (Lund & Carr, 2008) has been characterized in terms of *representative* versus *participatory* democracy[4], with the former highlighting electoral processes–*thin* democracy–and the latter focusing on critical engagement and social justice or *thick* democracy. *Thin* democratic teaching focuses on activities such as students contributing food to a food drive or in a more active participatory manner organising a food

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[2] Voting is compulsory for all above 18 years of age in Australia

[3] Museum of Australian Democracy and the Institute for Governance has an online survey http://www.sbs.com.au/powerof1/ *Does Your Vote Count:* Discover the changing nature of Australian democracy and the power of your voice within it. See Appendix 1 for details

[4] Others have referred to democratic binaries such as weak and strong Swift (2002), passive and active (Criddle, Vidovich, & O'Neill, 2004), minimalist and maximalist (McLaughlin, 1992).

drive for the poor while *thick* democratic teaching would explore why people are hungry, and then empower students to act to make decisions about and to solve its root causes (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004).

The research of the author and his associates over the past several years has raised the pivotal concern of the role of education in forming, buttressing, cultivating and sustaining a meaningful, critical democratic experience for all sectors of society (Banks, 2001; Lund & Carr, 2008; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004b). The shift and acceptance toward market-based policies in education has had a wide range of effects and consequences on society which are well documented and accepted (Porfilio & Carr, 2010).

According to Crick (2000), democracy is a *promiscuous* word, archetypically difficult to pin down with as many meanings as there are uses for the term because of its conceptual complexity this article clearly preserves the contested nature of the term. The notion of *thick* and *thin* democracy (Gandin & Apple, 2002), builds on the seminal work of Barber (1984, 2004) who raised pivotal questions on the saliency of liberal democracy, including the tension between individualism and the rights of all citizens framed by concepts of shallow and deep democracy (Furman & Shields, 2005) suggesting that participatory citizenship demands every member of the community to participate in self-governance which leads to a strong(er) democracy.

What Furman and Shields (2005) call 'deep democracy' attaches "significant value to such goods as participation, civic friendship, inclusiveness and solidarity" (p. 128). Deep democracy espouses a number of principles that champion individual rights and responsibilities within diverse cultural communities in the interests of the common good.

Discussions on democracy often result in platitudinous affirmations that it is naturally desirable, and, as a corollary, anything that is not democratic is considered virtually irrelevant. Kahne and Westheimer (2003) found that schools and teachers largely teach a *thin democracy* which "emphasiz[es] individual character and behaviour [but] obscures the need for collective and often public-sector initiatives" (p. 36). In their research, they conclude that each vision of citizenship reflects a relatively distinct set of theoretical and curricular goals. Significantly, they claim that these visions as delivered in programs are not cumulative. The core assumptions behind each of the different perspectives reflect a particular approach to problems and solutions in society: the *personally responsible citizen* solves social problems and improves society, by having a good character; they must be honest, responsible, and law-abiding members of the community. The *participatory citizen* solves social problems and improves society through active participation and leadership within established systems and community structures. Finally, the *justice oriented citizen* solves social problems and improves society by questioning, challenging and changing established systems and structures when they reproduce patterns of injustice over time.

Through the notion of **thin** versus **thick** democracy, we can conceptualize the visible tension between the superficial features often associated with teaching *about* democracy and the fundamental scaffolding which permits people to appropriate the deeper meaning of teaching *for* democracy. Bolstering efforts to teach through the academic disciplines— whether pursued through high-stakes exams or well-crafted curriculum frameworks — is insufficient to further the goals of teaching *for* democracy (Davies & Issitt, 2005).

Carr (2010) has further developed the notion of (thick) democracy, infusing it with social justice and political literacy and the notion of how knowledge is constructed into a

spectrum of possibilities, potential, experiences and realities in relation to how we can consider and conceptualize democracy in education.

Insert Table 1 about here

Using the thick–thin[5] democratic education model (Carr 2010, p.19) as a framework to understand the potential for critical, transformative democratic work in and through education, this research underscores the myriad difficulties, barriers, problems, issues, and complexities to doing thick democracy within institutional and school environments in education. It would appear that a large percentage of participants in my study, as is the case in the previous studies, had a less than enviable democratic experience in their own education, which includes after the formative years to comprise as well teacher education experience. There has been a great deal of research focused on the shortcomings of teacher education programs, highlighting the obsession with standards, expectations, and outcomes while overlooking social justice, power relations, and political literacy (Kincheloe, 2008).

A conservative agenda promoted by rhetoric of active participation

The 1990s saw the implementation and uptake of what have been termed *neo-liberal* policies in the guise of privatization of state concerns; the selling of public resources; and deregulation of private companies and their business practices. This resulted in the accelerated privatisation of education in many countries.

Democratic and social advances are now seemingly under attack with the rising influence of neo-liberalism in education policy as documented by Pasi Sahlberg through what he calls the **GERM,** the Global Education Reform Movement. When states began to slow and then reverse their commitment human rights, civil rights, diversity, and equality, they began also to reverse support for public education and moved more towards supporting market-driven imperatives in society and education. The well-documented struggle over the development of suitable content for history and civic education curricula—what some countries have called "the history wars"—for example is part of this influence.

The International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) (Torney-Purta, Schwille, & Amadeo, 1999) examined the civic knowledge, engagement, and attitudes of 14-year-old students in 28 democratic countries. Its results support the notion that democracy is understood by both teachers and students in a *thin* way, focused on the notion that young people should (and do) believe that good citizenship includes the obligation to vote and to obey the law. However, four out of five students do not intend to participate in conventional political activities, such as joining a political party, writing letters to newspapers, or being a candidate for a local office. Nevertheless, students are willing to become engaged in other forms of civic life, such as collecting money for a social cause or charity, and they believe it is important for adult citizens to participate in community and environmental groups.

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[5] The notion of *thick* and *thin* democracy is attributed to Gandin and Apple (2002), who build on the seminal work of Benjamin Barber (1984). Barber raises pivotal questions on the saliency of liberal democracy, including the tension between individualism and the rights of all citizens within concepts of *shallow* and *deep* democracy. Others have referred to democratic binaries such as *weak* and *strong* Swift (2002), *passive* and *active* (Criddle, Vidovich, & O'Neill, 2004), *minimalist* and *maximalist* (McLaughlin, 1992).

The IEA study also found that schools that model democratic practices in classrooms, by creating an open climate for discussing issues are most effective in promoting civic knowledge and engagement among students developing the potential for democracy to be understood in a *thick* way that includes participation and transformation of society.

However, across countries many students do not experience this positive type of classroom environment. In practice, *thin* democracy is exemplified in activities such as students contributing food to a food drive or in a more active participatory manner by organising a food drive for the poor. *Thick* democracy in the classroom would, however, explore why people are hungry, and, significantly, act to solve the root causes (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004) so that students know that civic engagement is not an individual, private endeavour. Kahne and Westheimer (2003) conclude that bolstering efforts to teach the academic disciplines—whether pursued through high-stakes exams or well-crafted curriculum frameworks—is insufficient to further the goals of teaching democracy. Carr (2010) has, further, argued that the institutionalization of mainstream or *thin* democracy has made it difficult to problematize inequitable power relations but the (critical pedagogical) effort consecrated to validate diverse epistemological and lived experiences can lead to a greater sense of inclusion, participation and engagement, which is at the base of a *thick*er democratic experience.

In Australia public discussion about citizenship, democracy and education is over 20 years old, beginning with a Senate inquiry in 1988. This resulted in recommendations for improvement in school curricula, pedagogy and teacher preparation. While the Federal government had no direct responsibility for these issues (as they are constitutionally devolved to the States), it formed a Civic Experts Group that prepared a strategic plan for a national program resulting in the development and implementation of the *Discovering Democracy*[6] curriculum program (DD).

The CCE project in Australia, like others elsewhere, places a "growing emphasis on the promotion of civic awareness and individuals' rights and responsibilities embedded in discourses of citizenship" (Garratt & Piper, 2008 p. 486), highlighting the conflicting discourses in approaches to citizenship education (Criddle et al., 2004), which "permeate both policy production and policy practices across all levels" (p. 32) of the DD project. On the one hand, there is an emphasis on passive consumption of knowledge about citizenship with a strong historical focus—*thin democracy*—and, on the other, critical and active participation in change, which is labelled as an 'active citizenship'—*thick democracy*. This confusion is even found at a ministerial level. Criddle et al. (2004, p. 32) suggest that at the school level the "narrow historical knowledge version" was often contested by individual teachers. Further, despite the narrow or thin objectives for CCE at the Commonwealth government level, these were resisted by so-called 'trainers' who were "determined to impress their own agenda … to encourage critique of government in a more comprehensive 'active citizenship' model" (p. 32) of CCE. According to the teachers surveyed, they perceived that the knowledge **and** activity components were equally important. While CCE in Australia has been largely a *top-down* process, at the macro level it is "doubtful that policy initiators … achieved what they expected" as a result of teachers "actively interpreting the policy to suit their own needs" (Criddle et al., 2004, p. 33). As a result, a counter-resistance occurred at a micro (classroom) level where teachers "pick and choose" and "completely

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[6] See
http://www.civicsandcitizenship.edu.au/cce/discovering_democracy_curriculum_resources,9067.html
for background and http://www1.curriculum.edu.au/ddunits/ for details and examples of the materials

rejected any notion of a prescribed curriculum" (Criddle et al., 2004, p. 35). Despite this resistance, the teachers interviewed in this research were still pessimistic that their attempts to imbue a more active component into CCE were efficacious.

The so-called crisis of civic engagement was used by politicians from 1988 onwards to gain support for the nation state under a perceived threat from globalisation; where "greater diversity is met by calls for cohesiveness; disengagement is responded to with a call for understanding of how things currently work" (Davies & Issitt, 2005, p. 394). A broadly neo-conservative or neo-liberal agenda was promoted through most of the materials produced by the *Discovering Democracy* Project. Significantly it is claimed that the new CCE was used to ensure that "radical intentions are not carried forward" (Kennedy, 1998, p. 394). The rhetoric of active participation found in these programs and in various ministerial statement about CCE are usually "not achieved in the activities that are provided for school students"[10] (Davies & Issitt, 2005, p. 404).

Dejaeghere and Tudball (2007) conclude that most recent assessments of the CCE suggest "further work is required to promote depth and breadth" (p. 41) and propose an alternative to the thin democracy espoused in the neo-liberal CCE. They argue for a compromise(d) pragmatic 'Critical Citizenship' as an "expanded conceptualization of citizenship education [that] is being enacted in many schools" that would include investigation of and participation in activities that "support sustainable practices, social justice and underpin the future well-being of societies from a local to a global level" (Dejaeghere & Tudball, 2007, p. 44). What in their view, would a maximalist *critical citizenship* look like? They eschew the *minimalist* content led focus on civic knowledge confined to promoting the 'good' citizen–which Print (2000) described as "either a direct or implied goal of civic education, [and] was generally seen as one who contributes to society" (p. 16), to focus on *critical* citizenship. Dejaeghere and Tudball draw from Westheimer and Kahne's three forms of citizenship (2003) to prepare and motivate students to address social problems, but still they do not see the necessity for students to act. While stating it is necessary for "students and teachers [to be] involved as proactive agents of change" (Dejaeghere & Tudball, 2007, p. 49) this is confined to participation in

> Decision making processes, [to] critically analyze knowledge and what happens when that knowledge is put into practice … including an examination … of the structures of social injustice. The goal of critical citizenship is to provide the conditions for collective social change. (p. 49)

Asserting the importance of student participation in school democratic processes, they suggest these include items like peer support and community service – including "greater participation in school governance … developing students' understanding of critical concepts" (p. 50) this leaves the students to learn about agency without being agentic. Once again we are left with students *play acting* and pretending to develop solutions but not enacting them as Freire's praxis suggests is necessary (Freire, 1973).

Schwille and Amadeo (2002) in their analysis of the IEA-CIVED Civic Education Study (Torney-Purta, Schwille, & Amadeo, 1999) argue that "as long as parts of the political system aspire to foster active, informed and supportive citizens, schools will be considered a possible means to this end" (p. 105). However, they add as a rider "their success in this respect has been mixed" (Schwille & Amadeo, 2002, p. 105).

The Australian analysts of the IEA-CIVED Study (Print, Kennedy, & Hughes, 1999) have become pre-eminent in discussions of the CCE Project publishing multiple papers about both the IEA-CIVED Study and the subsequent DD Project and related CCE in Australia.

Significantly in their IEA-CIVED initial study the authors already understand that this is about education for a *thin* democracy "where the teacher provides information and discusses with students in a structured classroom environment" (Print et al., 1999, p. 48) that involve activities but not any action component. This raises significant questions such as do students learn about democracy by experiencing democracy, do teachers use democratic pedagogies, are students encouraged to be responsible for their school and wider community (Torney-Purta et al., 1999)?

Schwille and Amadeo (2002) conclude that there is little evidence of adoption of this 'radical challenge' because the issue for schools (and democracy) is, "how much freedom and autonomy can citizens enjoy without undermining the social order" (Schwille & Amadeo, 2002, p. 117). Their argument however is still about a *thin* democracy that deals with "attitudes, dispositions and behaviour" so that teaching about democracy will "allow debate over controversial issues" (Schwille & Amadeo, 2002, p. 127) so that students are "learning to become competent democratic citizens"(Schwille & Amadeo, 2002, p. 125 emphasis added).

In 2003 Print and Coleman repeat that the "primary goal of CE is to prepare the next generation of citizens for enlightened political engagement" (Print & Coleman, 2003, p. 130 emphasis added). Parker singularly contends that such political engagement requires the purposeful involvement of students in schools in "contacting public officials … campaigning … civil disobedience, boycotts, strikes, rebellions and other forms of direct action" (Parker, 2001, p. 99). Print and Coleman dismiss this suggesting "in practice CCE is considered to be the school based experience for the **preparation** of democratic citizenship" (Print & Coleman, 2003, p. 130 emphasis added). Print, both here and in other articles, repeats that the primary goal of CCE in schools is about the preparation for the real world but never actually suggests that it might be necessary for such education—significantly for students—to actually engage with the real world except for added on 'practice' through the informal curriculum. This practice, he suggests is for future participation as adults, in other words this could be seen as *playing* at a pretend democracy. For Print and Coleman, the "problem of low and declining voter participation by young people" (Print & Coleman, 2003, p. 135) is the key or significant feature of political engagement and the future of democracy (Print, 2007). They argue that CCE in so-called divided societies plays an "apparently passive role through the manipulation" of 'truth' within schools which they characterise as "cultural forgetting" where the goal "is to prevent open learning" ((Print & Coleman, 2003, p. 141). However, they also envisage that the CCE should "generate cooperation, networking, trust and cohesiveness" (Print & Coleman, 2003, p. 136), but in reality CCE is promoting compliance and homogeneity in Australian schools.

Similarly Kennedy (2003)—writing in the context of global terror post the Bali and Twin Towers attacks of 2001—emphasises that if Australia is to protect democracy there is a powerful need to know **about** democracy and that the new CCE has not delivered a "great depth of civic knowledge for many students" (p. 56). Kennedy asks "what, though, should they know" (p. 57)? Focussing on the neo-liberal individual contribution she calls for a "willingness to support those institutions and values that allow individual interests to flourish" (p. 58). Kennedy refers to the need to develop 'civic capacity' which ensures that future citizens know how to act, but significantly not to act while they are in school, but only in the future. In agreement with Print and Coleman, Kennedy argues that CCE has three objectives—building cohesion, inclusion and trust; tolerance and respect; critical thinking and problem solving—again more about compliance and homogeneity. These authors see that practice in the sense of the 'add-ons' of student councils and perhaps open classroom

dialogue where students *play* at being democratic. Kennedy (2003) concludes that CCE while:

> Cannot consist of the passive reception of decontextualized information it must allow students to engage with both the knowledge they are expected to learn, and which is necessary to equip and active citizenry, and with activities that will give them experience with the practice of democracy. (p. 65)

Mellor and Kennedy (2003) reporting on the 1999 IEA-CIVED Survey state that while Australian students expressed commitment to traditional values associated with a democracy they do not participate in "conventional forms of political participation"; activities that they suggest epitomise active citizenship – joining political parties, running for office or writing to newspapers about issues of social concern. Mellor and Kennedy conclude that students are not engaging in the "very political system that guarantees [democratic] values" (p. 535), but that this reluctance is not reproduced "when it comes to participating in broader social movements" (p. 535). They explain this as the result of either the lack of adequate understanding of the "relationship between the formal political system and their freely expressed democratic values" or as a result of a "sense of alienation because of a perceived lack of self–efficacy" (p. 535). Raising the neo-liberal spectre of future threats to democracy post Bali and Twin Towers they conclude "citizens need to know what is worth protecting from either internal or external forces" (p. 536). In addition, their suggested *panacea* is for students to be engaged in more role-*play* acting "in activities outside their classrooms such as Student Councils". This is described elsewhere as extending "the culture of performativity, with a concomitant focus on adult-led prescription, formalised assessment and top-down imposition" (Garratt& Piper, (2008, p. 488). Acknowledging that passive reception of decontextualized information does not work, they call for students to engage with "knowledge that they are expected to learn to equip an active citizenry, and with activities that will give them the experience with the practice of democracy" (p. 537).

Print (2007) argues that the challenge to democracy is not from an external or internal enemy but from its own citizens "who have grown distrustful of politicians, sceptical about democratic institutions and disillusioned about how the democratic process functions" (p. 325). However, he points to the paradox of over 20 years of CCE "as the demand for democratic citizenship grows, youth participation in formal democracy is declining" (p. 326). He reiterates the importance of "learning about participation… developing of political engagement … to learn about democracy, government and citizenship … to acquire civic knowledge, and skills and values" (p. 336). He concludes that this may "enhance political knowledge and probably political engagement" (p. 336) … [and] "can influence engagement and participation" (p. 337) in the future. Criticising "participatory pedagogy" (p. 338) as weak in schools, Print defines this pedagogy in *thin* terms of "class voting, group inquiry, simulations, fieldwork and co-operative learning" which he also calls "engaged or conversational pedagogy" which he claims has a strong correlation with future civic engagement which he understands is epitomised by casting a vote.

Learning about but not doing democracy: rhetoric of active participation

What seems to emerge as a policy response is a call for students to learn **about** democracy but to not—at least in a serious way—**do** democracy. Giroux (1999) suggests that "there has been a shift from responsibility for creating democracy of citizens to producing a democracy of consumers" and that:

> When public education becomes a venue for making a profit, delivering a product, or constructing consuming subjects, education reneges on its responsibilities for creating a

democracy of citizens by shifting its focus to producing a democracy of consumers. (Giroux, 2000, p. 173)

Missing in this debate was a thorough understanding of what is a good citizen – the civics versus citizenship debate can be seen in terms of the struggle between *thin* and *thick* democracy. Producing curriculum materials will not in itself deliver the results expected or intended.

The approach to CCE through the Discovering Democracy project (DD) was to produce material without teacher input with the focus only on civic knowledge which was to be "ineffective in achieving its own goal in citizenship education programmes of encouraging students in effective participation" (Prior, 2006, p. 125). Teachers were very negative about the attempts by government to influence and impose one view of citizenship because "the culture of their practices and beliefs [was not] taken into account by policy makers" (Prior, 2006, p. 125). Prior concludes that the existence of stand-alone unlinked or de-contextualised one-off programmes did not provide the lasting affects planned for, while the schools were accused by students of '*talking the talk but not walking the walk*' because teachers were not able to model good citizenship in their practices.

Thick Democracy - ACTION and Praxis

Thick[7] democracy goes beyond the championing of electoral and legislative processes, rule of law and basic civil rights (Howard & Patten, 2006). It acknowledges the legitimacy of collective citizen and civil action as external to government and business. Such a citizenship would be more inclusive as were the various social movements that contested past forms of domination. It is a commitment to individual and collective agency that ensures inclusiveness. *Thick* democracy envisages a 'social citizen'—an individual always in relationship with others—capable of reflexive agency (Giddens, 1994) where *recognitive* justice is more important than the *redistributive* justice that has been in contest with the neo-liberal *retributive* discourse (Gale, 2000; Gale & Densmore, 2002; Young, 1990). Paradoxically as Giddens argues, many of the democracy exporting countries are experiencing crises of democracy at home. Active citizenship is based on a "social activist, the doer of public good within the collectivist decision making process" (Seddon, 2004, p. 177) and involved in capacity building and community development.

In contradistinction the active citizen of neo-liberalism is conceived as an entrepreneur and a '*can do achiever*' to primarily benefit the individual. While schools are expected to prepare students to live in a diverse democratic societies (Furman & Shields, 2005) school practices remain largely undemocratic (Duignan, 2005). Therefore, what is required is a fostering of public debate, thoughtful critique of existing social and political institutions and a respect for the value of political action "ranging from public service to community action to protest politics" (Howard & Patten, 2006, p. 470). This is the antithesis of the neo-liberalised CCE currently promoted in Australia (and elsewhere) which increasingly adopted the narrative of humans as inherently competitive and self-interested and resulted in the mitigation of reflective and reflexive human agency.

Howard and Patten (2006) explain that despite the common rhetoric of active citizenship there are two perceptible trends within the new civics – the *thin* neo-liberal and the *thick*(*er)* radical democratic trends. They suggest that the latter is motivated by egalitarian

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[7] The notion of *thick* and *thin* democracy is attributed to Gandin and Apple (2002), who build on the seminal work of Benjamin Barber (1984). Barber raises pivotal questions on the saliency of liberal democracy, including the tension between individualism and the rights of all citizens within concepts of *shallow* and *deep* democracy. Others have referred to democratic binaries such as *weak* and *strong* Swift (2002), *passive* and *active* (Criddle, Vidovich, & O'Neill, 2004), *minimalist* and *maximalist* (McLaughlin, 1992).

commitments and "the desire to extend democracy while enhancing the political agency of once marginalised citizens" (p. 459). Being active in this sense means being "socially engaged and committed to collective problems solving at all levels of the political community" (Howard & Patten, 2006, p. 460). Politics then, is more than elections and includes all power structured social relationships. In essence they explain that this requires the ability to "navigate and influence the power-structured social relations that characterize the politics of civil society" (p. 460). Educators must acknowledge that what is necessary is an equalisation of agency for students, otherwise this is not possible.

Thick democracy actively challenges the view that "unregulated markets are by definition realms of freedom that produce equality of opportunity" (Howard & Patten, 2006) with "extensive social and cultural citizenship rights" (p. 461) associated with a politicized empowerment in the social processes that shape society where all are visible and heard despite their social status. Thick democracy must be about "voice, agency, inclusiveness and collective problem solving" that is "rooted in the capacity to see oneself reflected in the cultures of society" (Howard & Patten, 2006, pp. 462-463), and not in the freedom to pursue one's own individual self-interest. Therefore thick democratic teaching will be concerned with a recognitive, not just redistributive social justice (Gale & Densmore, 2002). Recognitive social justice is incorporated in Westheimer and Kahne's vision that goes beyond the *personally responsible citizen* of the so-called 'critical democracy' urged by Dejaeghere and Tudball (2007) to incorporate both the *participatory* and *justice orientated citizen*. Nevertheless, Westheimer and Kahne warn:

> While pursuit of both goals may well support development of a more democratic society, it is not clear whether making advances along one dimension will necessarily further progress on the other. Do programs that support civic participation necessarily promote students' capacities for critical analysis and social change? Conversely, does focusing on social justice provide the foundation for effective and committed civic actors? Or might such programs support the development of armchair activists who have articulate conversations over coffee, without ever acting? (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004, pp. 242-243)

Thick democracy is not easily achieved, in society either generally or in schools in particular. As the agents of society in which they exist, teachers (rightly) can claim they are therefore restricted in what they alone can achieve as the national agendas and budgets are nationally and state controlled.

Conclusions

Dobozy (2007) asks is it possible to educate tomorrow's citizens to create a more democratic society without democratizing education? How authentic is the student experience in exercising democratic decision-making? How are students encouraged to be active citizens of their school? This introduction has argued that schools and teachers play an important role in preparing individuals for democratic citizenship (Kennedy, 2001a, 2001b; Sachs, 2001). Schools and teachers provide one of the first opportunities to introduce children to democratic principles and practices.

Civics related knowledge is necessary but not sufficient for "becoming a competent democratic citizen" (Schwille & Amadeo, 2002, p. 125). Thick democracy has the potential to become the site of struggle for social justice and equity, and not necessarily assimilationism (Taylor, 1996). The pedagogical framework as expressed in CCE is "fundamentally anti-democratic because it denies legitimacy to educational debate about the form and content of education" (Armstrong, 2006, p. 4).

Thick democracy goes beyond the championing of electoral and legislative processes, rule of law and basic civil rights (Howard & Patten, 2006). It encourages and facilitates the legitimacy of collective citizen and civil action. Thick democracy envisages a 'social citizen'—an individual always in relationship with others—capable of reflexive agency (Giddens, 1994).

Research into how democracy is understood, experienced, cultivated and demonstrated among educators therefore is extremely important. Such research can have great benefit to educators, scholars, decision-makers and others in developing, implementing and assessing democratic education programs, practices and pedagogy in schools (Zyngier, 2013a;b).

Teachers who held a *thin* perspective of the role of democracy in society would include cultivating voting, explaining the mechanics and the virtues of election is the focus; linkages to the community are not undertaken with a view to addressing problems; when there is service-learning, there is real no connection to the curriculum and the educational experience. Concern about "taking sides", being "biased," "indoctrination," "being political" would be evident, and lead to omitting, avoiding and/or downplaying controversial issues. Those minority of teachers with a *thicker* understanding would acknowledge that knowledge is constructed, reject the "banking model" of education and would make an effort to have students engage with diverse groups, problems, realties, etc., outside of the mainstream media lense of society; service-learning, for example, would link to the educational experience, and not simply be an add-on with little pedagogical and epistemological value. In this case they understood that to be neutral is to side with hegemonic powers, and that discussing controversial issues does not equate to indoctrination; avoiding critical discussions can lead to passive acceptance of injustice, war, and hatred, and also cultivate compliance and docility among students.

But can this be done without facilitating students' "understanding of the value of social justice" without "education *in* and *for* democracy" (Dobozy, 2007, p. 116). School students cannot acquire the knowledge, attitudes and skills to successfully become agentic citizens in Australia without the simultaneous democratization of pedagogy, schools and school systems. The role-playing of democracy and pretend parliaments—extolled in CCE and reflected by the majority of teachers (Zyngier, 2013b)—means too often that students are involved in decision making on "an abstract and often detached level" (Dobozy, 2007, p. 118). Programs associated with a *thin* democracy are unable to take the "social organisation of specific schools and the everyday life of individual students into consideration" (p. 118). The responses of the teachers in this research indicate that it requires a change in educational practice to "inspire political empowerment" beyond the implementation of off the shelf products or programmes.

Recommendations

Civics related knowledge is necessary but not sufficient for "becoming a competent democratic citizen" (Schwille & Amadeo, 2002). However, thick democracy has the potential to become the site of struggle for social justice and equity (Taylor, 1996). While neo-liberalism seemingly has a stranglehold on education in many of the countries studied so far, it is potentially at least vulnerable—educators have an opportunity to construct a transformative curriculum that includes the following possibilities for advancing education for democracy through:

- A revised curriculum based on social justice as part of the democratic process;
- A move away from viewing students as insecure "objects" to agentive "subjects";
- Understanding and promoting democracy at both super-structural and micro-structural levels;
- Centralizing the participation of "critical citizens" in the process of becoming more democratic;
- Working for both conceptual and practical understandings of democracy in schools;
- Furthering the awareness of the power of "reflection-action" and praxis;
- The generation of contextual teaching spaces; and,
- Analysis of mass-media as part of political/democratic literacy

Ongoing research will not only enable the development of a framework for conceptualizing democracy in education, highlighting, in particular, what educators can do to become more critically aware and engaged in democracy within their teaching, but will also be able to better understand any correspondence between teacher habitus, their cultural and social capital and their perceptions and beliefs.

Instead of education reproducing the current *thin* democracy that leads to disengaged citizens (Dejaeghere & Tudball, 2007), examples of excellent teacher practice would enable the development of an educational framework of teaching for thick democracy leading to a more participatory, empowered and engaged citizenry and a more inclusive participation in, and therefore safeguarding of, democratic society.

A more holistic and dynamic approach—pedagogical, experiential, political, social, economic and cultural—is a necessary step to attaining a more decent society— to produce citizens who are engaged, critical, and productive agents of positive change.

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Thick-Thin democratic continuum (Carr 2010, p.19)

THIN⬅--➡THICK

Voting and elections are the key to democracy	Voting and elections are but one component to democracy, and must be problematized
Studying mainstream political parties, processes and structures forms the core of teaching about democracy	Studying about democracy necessarily involves preparing (and engaging) for democracy, including dialectical critique, and a focus on power
Democratic education is generally concentrated within a single class or subject (i.e., Government, and/or Social Studies)	Democratic education is infused across the curriculum, and involves all aspects of how education is organized (i.e., assemblies, extra-curricular, staff meetings, parental involvement, community linkages)
Weak connection between democracy and education	Explicit, engaged connection; democracy must involve a politically literate populace
Support for democracy involves an uncritical assessment of foreign policy, militarization, conflicts, neo-liberalism and patriotism	Foreign interventions, war, conflicts, racism, injustice and human rights abuses are critically interrogated, linking local issues/concerns with the international/global context
Politics generally pertains to elections, the predominant political parties, and the agenda set by the mainstream media	Politics pertains to all aspects of education, including decisionmaking, oppression, marginalization and power (what is omitted is as equally important)
Concern that teaching for and about democracy may be contentious, and could even be considered indoctrination	To not teach about and for democracy in a critical fashion is to privilege dominant hegemony; avoiding contentious matter and concepts can lead to great harm (racism, war, injustice, poverty, etc.)
Weak linkage between school experience and the broader societal experience	Education is linked to society, and should seek to understand, and, in some cases, to transform it
Limited formal curriculum on the vastness, richness, and complexity of democracy, with limited opportunities to experience democracy outside of the voting process	Formal and informal opportunities to cultivate, stimulate and inculcate democracy and democratic practices; what is most important here is that knowledge is constructed, not merely conveyed or transmitted (as in the "banking model")
Narrow engagement with alternative visions, movements, concepts and phenomena outside of formal curriculum and mainstream hegemony	Seeking to understand political and social movements not mentioned in mainstream media and the formal curriculum is important; linking what we know with what we do is encouraged
Diversity is generally understood in an essentialized way, with limited linkages to White power and privilege, and inequitable power relations	Democracy cannot be understood without a critical linkage to social justice, which problematizes identity, diversity and social change, including intersecting forms of power and privilege
Curriculum is generally prescriptive, with limited emphasis on critical analysis and engagement, and assessment often suffocates dynamic and complex interplay between groups and power-structures; formal democratic education avoids political nature of education	Assessment is not the focus of thick democratic education; seeking critical engagement with authentic encounters, understanding that knowledge is constructed, and accepting that teachers do not have all of the answers are key; Freire's generative themes and Dewey's progressive education underscore notion that education is a political project
Discussion about and for democracy is limited, contrived and aims for comfort and reassurance rather than questioning complicity, change, and power	Deliberative democracy must be made more authentic with engagement with a broad range of groups/interests/concerns; students should be encouraged to question and challenge problems
Literacy is constructed in a limited way, often focused on skills and knowledge considered relevant for employment	Political and media literacy are fundamental pillars, seeking what Giroux calls "emancipatory literacy" and democratic conscientization

Table 1