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To cite this article: Ian Davies & John Issitt (2005) Reflections on citizenship education in Australia, Canada and England, Comparative Education, 41:4, 389-410, DOI: 10.1080/03050060500300915

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/03050060500300915

Published online: 18 Jan 2007.

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Reflections on citizenship education in Australia, Canada and England

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In this article we describe the background to the recent development of citizenship education in Australia, Canada and England and then, following an account of our methods, discuss issues arising from an analysis of a sample of textbooks from these countries. We suggest that the current policies to introduce versions of citizenship education have emerged in these countries in the context of diverse challenges to the legitimacy of the nation state. We argue, generally, that all three countries tend, in the textbooks we have examined, to emphasize forms of citizenship education that may submerge citizen empowerment under essentially orthodox agendas. We see differences in textbooks between and within the three countries but argue that, despite many exceptions, we are able to characterize textbooks in Ontario, Canada as education in civics (provision of information about formal public institutions), those in England as education for citizenship (a broad-based promotion of socially useful qualities) and those in Australia as social studies (societal understanding that emerges from the development of critical thinking skills related to existing academic subjects such as history and English).

Introduction

We describe the background to the recent official sanctioning of citizenship education in Australia, Canada and England, suggesting that policy-makers have acted in response to what they perceive to be a diverse range of challenges to the nation state. We do not want to suggest that all those challenges are perceived negatively. Indeed key politicians and others have made a range of very positive responses to the rapid development of a global culture and seem to be seeking democratic and pluralistic ways forward. Official policies supported by government agencies and departments and agencies in the three countries certainly do not display obvious nationalistic goals. Nevertheless the motivation, generally, for the introduction of citizenship education seems to owe much to the perceived need to respond to new political relationships within and between states and the desire to develop more knowledge and

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ISSN 0305-0068 (print)/ISSN 1360-0486 (online)/05/040389–22
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DOI: 10.1080/03050060500300915
active participation within existing social norms. This approach is reflected in the ways in which textbooks in the three countries have been constructed. Thus, we do not suggest, crudely, that policy-makers intend citizenship education simply to support the status quo; rather, we argue that new initiatives may have origins and purposes that are, at least in part, conservative and that those purposes are given expression in textbooks. Our analysis of textbooks (which are themselves perhaps an expression of a non-radical form of teaching and learning) from the three countries suggests that, there is a consistent conservatism but that this is developed in different ways in each of the three countries. Much of the material from Canada relates to the provision of information and broader contextual considerations about and arising from constitutional structures. (Education falls under provincial jurisdiction in Canada and is an area of responsibility that the provinces guard jealously. We have examined Canadian textbooks from only one province, Ontario. There is, however, considerable evidence of substantial commonality in the basic approach to citizenship education across the country, e.g. Sears et al. (1999); Osborne (2001a); Lévesque (2004); Sears (2004)). Those textbooks from England in our sample seem to be concerned with the promotion of broad social qualities of being cooperative and positive in the face of dilemmas that need to be faced by individuals; while those from Australia seem to promote the development of skills related to academic subjects for the purposes of understanding society. The rhetoric of policy-makers that might seem to suggest a radical conception of citizenship education is not congruent with the dominant discourse that led to the introduction of citizenship education, nor is it reflected in the textbooks written to support relevant initiatives.

Context

Citizenship education has recently been introduced by governments in many different countries and international comparisons can lead to insights that are useful for the purposes of understanding a range of issues including policy development, the implementation of new initiatives with reference to professional development and student learning (e.g. Torney-Purta et al., 1999). The National Curriculum for Citizenship was introduced in England in September 2002 and the first possibility for those aged 16 to take optional short course GCSE examinations in citizenship came in summer 2003; the civics curriculum had been introduced in 1999 in Ontario, Canada; and the distribution of the Discovering Democracy curriculum kits took place in Australia in 1998. Initiatives for citizenship education are still developing (e.g. clearer guidance on assessment in Australia in 2004; a new project (www.citized.info) is being funded by the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA), (formerly the Teacher Training Agency in England), for work in teacher education in citizenship; and Canadian provinces are moving in a variety of directions in developing their policy for civics or citizenship) but it is possible now to begin to reflect on emerging issues.

We decided to explore the official sanctioning of the current versions of citizenship education in Australia, Canada and England in the light of a sense that these countries were sufficiently similar to allow for an interesting and valid exploration of responses
to common challenges. Although the three countries are clearly distinct in a number of ways (e.g. size and demography) they share a good deal of their histories, are similar economically, espouse liberal ‘western’ pluralistic democratic beliefs and are facing some common challenges. These common challenges will be referred to below as a means of explaining the perceived need for the formal introduction of citizenship education but it should also be admitted prior to that discussion that there were other more simple reasons for deciding to embark on this study that focuses on textbooks. It was relatively easy for us to access and read the materials on which we would base our remarks and we felt reasonably confident about our ability to understand contexts beyond our own national boundaries due to longstanding professional relationships with colleagues in Canada and Australia which have already led to joint projects and publications (e.g. Davies et al., 2004; Davies et al., 2005).

It is now almost a cliché to assert that citizenship and citizenship education is contested (Gallie, 1964) but we wish to argue that the nature of relevant debates is characterized principally not by rival interpretations but instead by a series of potential contradictions. Davies (2001) refers to the difficulties of people as subjects who are trying to act as citizens in school contexts where the rhetoric of democratic participation occurs within hierarchical structures. Some advocates of political education (a curriculum initiative obviously similar to citizenship education) such as Stradling (1987) declared that the contradictions overcame any possibility of implementation. If policy-makers assert the need for participation in existing structures a defence is being made of a particular rather conservative form of citizenship education. If only superficial attention is actually devoted to citizenship education there will be no real challenge to existing norms. Supporters of civic education can refer to key omissions from school and college curricula and point convincingly to the low status of such work when it can be found (e.g. Fogelman, 1990; Print, 1996). In Canada, for example, any form of social education is seen as ‘a marginal subject’ (Sears, 1996) with the teacher who does not work to an agreed curriculum left in the difficult ‘position of not knowing what is expected about citizenship education generally and yet vulnerable to criticism for failing to achieve what society at large has been unable to articulate and unwilling to resource adequately’ (Sears et al., 1999, p. 130). In Australia Mellor (2003) reports that even by 1999 70% of Principals indicated that students spent less than one hour each week on civics and that ‘the definitions of civic education they used were very broad and possibly problematic’ (p. 2). Our interpretation of the reasons for the introduction of citizenship education is therefore one that stresses the need for conservatism to be practised in a changing context.

In the interests of developing our critique clearly we will refer to only a few of the particular challenges that are faced by all three countries in the development of citizenship education. Firstly, there are shifting notions about the historical relationships between the countries and the new links that are being formed. The ties between all three countries are still very strong but, of course, the imperial links have been dissolved with the Australian Constitution coming into effect on 1 January 1901 when the new Commonwealth of Australia was established. This is seen as ‘one of the great triumphs of the democratic spirit’ (Kemp, 1998, p. 3) and the celebrations of the bicentenary
of the original European settlement, the centenary of Federation, the Sydney Olympic Games in 2000 have all contributed to and emerged from a context in which republicanism is debated. Links with the US and other Pacific Rim countries are vital to the sense of a new Australia. In this context debates about citizenship are seen to be of great significance. Canada’s modern constitutional framework emerged from confederation and the British North America Act of 1867. Trudeau’s work helped to patriate the constitution meaning that changes would in future be made within Canada (rather than the UK) within the context of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1982). While there does not seem clear evidence of republican leanings in Canada in the same way as in Australia there is certainly a need for a new understanding of citizenship that goes beyond imperial relationships. The proximity of the USA, with all that implies in terms of economic relationships, means that the bonds with the UK have already changed. Nevertheless, perhaps the similarities are seen to outweigh the differences. The ties that still bind (however loosely) the countries are reflected in the citing of the Australian and Canadian experiences in developing citizenship education by the key report on citizenship education in England (DfEE/QCA, 1998). As each country moves towards a new citizenship the others follow suit. We are struck by the symmetry of policy intervention. While this cannot be described as a simple assertion of the status quo it does seem interesting that the changes are introduced simultaneously as if the longstanding links between the countries are to be preserved.

Secondly, in each country there are debates about the most appropriate form of relationship that should be established between what could broadly be called the centre and peripheries. In Canada the ‘Quebec issue’ has focused attention on issues relating to the nature of the Canadian state and citizenship. In Australia (again a federal state) the relationships between the central government and the states is often the cause of heated debate about citizenship and is a catalyst for the promotion of citizenship education. The United Kingdom is developing devolutionary strategies in which a Welsh Assembly and a Scottish Parliament have been established and attempts made to promote a new relationship with Northern Ireland. Citizenship questions now arise frequently, such as who has the right within a national parliament to vote on policies that affect one of the four UK nations more than another (the so-called Midlothian question). Again, change is being handled in common ways and this congruence may be in part inspired by the perceived need to ensure that a role exists for the central national government.

Thirdly, within each of the three countries there are very significant questions concerning the extent and nature of diversity. Several issues are felt including those to do with social class and gender but probably citizenship debates are most keenly enacted in relation to first nation peoples in Australia and Canada and in multiculturalism in all three countries. In England David Blunkett was the Minister for Education who was responsible for the introduction of citizenship education as part of the National Curriculum. He continued when he was Home Secretary to emphasize a form of citizenship that looks to the development of ‘strong communities’ (Blunkett, 2003). He has developed policies on naturalization as a response to a perceived crisis about asylum seekers with an argument that:
As we live in a society with a diversity of cultures, what we need both to bind us together and to enable us to respect our differences are common beliefs in the democratic practices of citizenship itself and the rights and duties that go with it. (Blunkett, 2003, p. 8)

In Australia the abandonment of the white Australia policy and a continuing debate about the best way to respect and recognize the rights of Aboriginal peoples show clearly the urgency of debates about diversity. Canada quite clearly sees itself as an immigrant society, is, at least in its big cities, obviously multicultural and is exploring (e.g. through the establishment of Nunavut’s Legislative assembly) the ways that democratic processes can be appropriately pluralistic. The right of Aboriginal self-government, although recognized constitutionally, is controversial (Joshee, 2004). The common emphasis on the search for a coherent cohesive society is clear. Citizenship education seems in the eyes of policy-makers to be the instrument by which societies can find a way still to cohere in the face of new challenges. Again, there is no simple assertion of the status quo (and we would resist some of the criticisms that see citizenship education as a deliberate intention to exclude majorities, e.g. Gamarnikow & Green, 2000; Osler, 2003) but there is a form of conservatism being practised in the need to ensure continuity of the state.

Fourthly, economic considerations are perhaps important in any discussion about the factors that have given rise to citizenship education in the three countries. Each country is relatively prosperous but also keenly aware of the need to create a flexible workforce that can cope with the demands of a changing global economy. There is some debate about the extent to which educational systems allow for economics as not only a matter to be studied as part of citizenship education but also part of the means by which economically efficient actors are created. However, in England Bottery (2002) suggests a link between citizenship education and the economy; Kennedy (1998) draws attention to ‘economic problems facing Australia’ (p. 2) as one of the principal considerations in the development of citizenship education and in Canada Osborne (e.g. 1980, 2001b) has for many years argued that a particular sort of civic education is being developed in order to help sustain a particular economy. There is a clear recognition of the challenges of a new economy and a determination to ensure that success is achieved within existing liberal economic discourses.

Fifthly, there has been well-publicized concern about the low levels of civic knowledge and understanding of all people, but especially young people. In Australia the phrase ‘civic deficit’ emerged following work undertaken by the Civics Expert Group (CEG). This concern about knowledge can be clearly seen in the report of the Expert group (Civics Expert Group, 1994) and also in analyses and commentaries upon that work from teachers (e.g. Dickson, 1997) and academics (e.g. Kennedy, 1997). In Canada there has been a longstanding concern since at least the 1960s (Hodgetts, 1968) about the low level of civic knowledge and understanding among young people. In England this concern, although referred to less frequently recently, has been noticeable at various points and especially following the publication of a Hansard report in the 1970s (Stradling, 1977). There has been considerable general disquiet about the disengagement from communities (Putnam, 2000) and a possible decline in the number of young people engaging in public
issues (e.g. Wilkinson & Mulgan, 1995; Crewe, 1997). The implication of this, as shown in the reports provided by experts in the three countries, as well as media comments, is that something must be done by schools to arrest a decline into apathy. The worries about disengagement give rise to new initiatives such as citizenship education that reveal a determination to ensure that it is broadly what already exists that will provide the focal point for engagement. Crudely, politicians who operate within traditional political forms are worried that they will not be known or understood.

In this context it matters little that many of the concerns raised above are probably not well founded (e.g. Jowell & Park, 1998). The data regarding voting patterns of young people is simply not good enough to draw dramatic conclusions. It might matter little whether young people can remember specific pieces of information (Porter, 1999) and there is also recent research that draws attention to a rather more positive picture of young people’s involvement and understanding (e.g. White et al., 2000; Kerr et al., 2003; Mellor, 2003). It is likely that the crises that are used to justify citizenship education initiatives are never quite as serious as is originally suggested (Davies, 1999; Sears, 2001).

The absence of data to back up alarming suggestions is, of course, unlikely to affect a particular sort of response if the claims are taken seriously. The demands of globalization are met by support for the nation state that can operate internationally; greater diversity is met by calls for cohesiveness; disengagement is responded to with a call for understanding of how things currently work. Above all, once the initiative is established it is of sufficiently low status to ensure that radical intentions are not carried forward. We now need to explore the messages that exist in one of the principal ways of implementing citizenship education, the ways in which textbooks are written.

Our insights about implementation are based principally on an analysis of a sample of textbooks from each of the three countries. Of course, we must be extremely cautious not to suggest that our sample of books is enough in itself to indicate the sorts of practice that are taking place in classrooms and whether that action leads to a particular sort of impact. Unintended outcomes arising from resistance may emerge following attempts to develop specific sorts of policy for citizenship education. Certainly, it has been suggested that in Hong Kong and mainland China policies to promote specific forms of political education have had the opposite effect to that intended (Fairbrother, 2003). It is possible that the textbooks may have a different message (intended or received) to that meant by the policy-makers. Although in our three countries educational work is taking place within agreed national guidelines, in only one country (Australia) are there common resources distributed automatically to all schools. Even in that country one commentator has nevertheless expressed the hope that the federal structure will mean that the national initiative will be ameliorated and there are in all countries programmes of professional development and room for flexibility. Indeed, although large research programmes are taking place about the implementation of citizenship education (e.g. Kerr et al., 2003) as well as smaller pieces (e.g. Halpern et al., 2002) we must be alert to all possibilities. The
extent of the use of textbooks is variable. Lubben et al. (2003) for example have suggested, on the basis of research in science education, that 40% of the classes observed made no use of the textbooks that had been provided and when use did occur it was limited and infrequent.

However, the study of textbooks is accepted as a way of gaining understanding of the intentions of educators and may offer insights into what could occur. The ways in which textbooks have been constructed offer particular interpretations (Altbach, 1991; Demel, 1996; Foster, 1999; Crawford, 2000). As the issues that characterize citizenship education are those which have been explored generally as being ‘conceived, designed and authored by real people with real interests’ (Apple & Christian-Smith, 1991, p. 9) or, less explicitly and insidiously, by those who follow existing norms (e.g. Osler, 1994) there is a need to explore the ways in which this new curriculum area is being displayed. While there can be no guarantee that the development of understanding about textbooks will lead to better practice in classrooms, we would certainly wish to avoid a lack of knowledge about a key feature of the means to implement a new curriculum area.

The recent introduction of citizenship education in Australia, Canada and England

We do not intend to provide a detailed history of the ways in which citizenship education was developed in the three countries (some of this work for at least England has already been published: see Kerr, 2001) but some brief indication of the particular approaches might help to place the textbooks in context. Arising from the general causal factors discussed above three points can be used to explain the approach to the development of citizenship education in each country. Firstly, the existence of determined political will seems necessary. In England the various unsuccessful attempts to introduce some form of political or social or citizenship education had been hampered by inconsistent support from politicians. The political education project of the 1970s had gained some official support (Crick & Porter, 1978) but that faded rapidly in the face of the first Thatcher government from 1979. By the time the Conservatives had begun to think about education generally, and citizenship education in particular (1990) Thatcher was about to fall from power and there was little prospect of any innovation succeeding. However, one of the early actions of the Blair government was related to citizenship education and the enthusiasm of David Blunkett (a former student of Crick) carried things through. In Australia the Civics Expert Group was established by Paul Keating (Labour Prime Minister, 1991–1996) but its work continued with very little alteration by John Howard, who came to power as Prime Minister in 1996 as leader of the Liberal–Country party coalition. This surprising continuity (given the differences between the political parties on other matters) allowed citizenship education to become established. ‘Civics education has been one of the rare areas of bipartisanship in Australian politics’ (Kennedy, 1998, p. 1). In Canada education is planned as a provincial rather than a national matter so it is necessary to look beyond simple generalizations and search for specific provincial
initiatives. The Ontario provincial government was consistently supportive of the need for citizenship education and, despite controversial debates about the nature of the full range of policies, Ontario makes it clear that civics is related to its conception of a high quality lifestyle (e.g. Ontario, 2003). The fact that politicians in all three countries have been strongly criticized for following a neo-conservative agenda is perhaps relevant to the analysis of the textbooks.

The second issue about the development of citizenship education concerns the appointment of a group of experts. Reference has already been made to the creation of the Civics Expert Group (CEG) in Australia. That group was prestigious and high profile with its principal members keen to make an impact on a range of political and educational issues (e.g. Macintyre & Clark, 2003). Earlier reports by expert groups (principally Education for Active Citizenship produced in 1989 by a Senate Standing Committee on Employment Education and Training) led to the CEG. It is also interesting, in terms of the support offered for the points made here about the links between the countries as they develop citizenship education, that one of the key figures in CEG has now moved to England to take up the role of chief executive of the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA). In England, Blunkett established the Advisory Committee on citizenship and the teaching of democracy in schools under the chairmanship of Professor (now Sir) Bernard Crick. The committee was made up of politicians and community figures of different backgrounds and political persuasion. The initial report was complete by 1998 (DfEE/QCA, 1998) accepted by the government and transformed into a National Curriculum Order. In Canada educationalists were introduced as a group of experts.

Thirdly, the precise means of development differed across the countries. In Australia the national initiative was mediated through states. An overarching formal political statement was not made. In 1998 Kennedy (1998) suggested that: ‘the only written text available for analysis is Minister Kemp’s speech [Kemp, 1998]… It remains the only extant statement of the Howard government’s position on civic education’ (p. 7). However, a large-scale curriculum exercise was initiated in 1997 and late in the decade all schools were sent copies of the Discovering Democracy kits (Mellor, 2003). The framework consists of 4 organizing themes: who rules?; law and rights; the Australian nation; and, citizens and public life. Although in the federal system detailed central control is not anticipated, the expectation seems to be for Discovering Democracy to take place within existing courses and that, drawing from New South Wales as an example, ‘this responsibility will largely rest with teachers of History’ (Dickson, 1998, p. 8). A recent national report (Taylor, 2000) as well as the expertise in history by key figures in CEG, such as Macintyre, suggests that the history education community are seeing an opportunity to contribute to citizenship education and to shape it in particular ways. The national enquiry concluded that

school history has a vital role to play as the main arbiter and interpreter of civics and citizenship education (CCE) (that) all specialist history teachers are, by definition, teachers of CCE … (and) … that there is no shortage of desire to see school history as the main vehicle of CCE. (Taylor, 2000, ch. 8, p. 5)
Taylor asserts that ‘There is some evidence to suggest that the implementation of DD [Discovering Democracy] whilst successful in parts, is hampered by a variety of factors including lack of whole school commitment and lack of preparation’ (ch. 8, p. 5).

In Ontario, civics has been introduced in September 2000 as a compulsory half credit course to be taken in grade 10 (secondary school). The broad purpose is described as that which allows young people to develop their understanding following separate history and geography courses (each worth 2 credits). The province has declared that ‘The Grade 10 Civics course rounds out students’ understanding of the individual’s role in society by teaching them the fundamental principles of democracy and responsible citizenship’ (Ministry of Education and Training, 1999, p. 3). The course:

Explores what it means to be an informed, participating citizen in a democratic society. Students will learn about the elements of democracy and the meaning of democratic citizenship in local, national and global contexts. In addition, students will learn about social change, examine decision-making processes in Canada, explore their own and others’ beliefs and perspectives on civics questions, and learn how to think and act critically and creatively about public issues. (Ministry of Education, 1999, p. 47)

The Ontario curriculum guidelines make clear three key strands of the civics course: informed citizenship; purposeful citizenship; and, active citizenship. A variety of support mechanisms are in place for teachers but one of the key points for our current research is that four commercially produced textbooks have been published. There is little evaluation data available regarding the implementation of the new programme.

In England the Crick report (DfEE/QCA, 1998) characterized citizenship education as consisting of social and moral responsibility, community involvement and political literacy with a broad aim stated very ambitiously:

We aim at no less than a change in the political culture of this country both nationally and locally: for people to think of themselves as active citizens, willing, able and equipped to have an influence in public life and with the critical capacities to weigh evidence before speaking and acting; to build on and to extend radically to young people the best in existing traditions of community involvement and public service and to make them individually confident in finding new forms of involvement and action among themselves. (pp. 7–8)

Crick’s intention was to give teachers the ‘strong bare bones’ of a curriculum framework that would allow for the possibility of collaboration across subject boundaries but which would see citizenship education as being ‘A vital and distinct statutory part of the curriculum, an entitlement for all pupils in its own right’ (DfEE/QCA, 1998, p. 13).

The National Curriculum Order for citizenship became compulsory for secondary schools in September 2002. The following indicates the three key aspects of the requirements: ‘Teaching should ensure that knowledge and understanding about becoming informed citizens are acquired and applied when developing skills of enquiry and communication, and participation and responsible action’ (DfEE/QCA, 1999, p. 14, emphasis added).

Citizenship teams have been established within the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) and Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA). The
Association for Citizenship Teaching (ACT) has been established, schemes of work have been produced by the QCA, and the TDA is funding a project designed to strengthen action in teacher education for citizenship education. Almost all educational publishers active in the schools sector have rushed to produce materials for the new commercial market in citizenship education. The context is potentially problematic with early evaluation and inspection reports pointing to a range of challenges being faced by schools (Kerr et al., 2003) including the delivery of citizenship education through Personal and Social Education (PSE), which Crick had explicitly warned against (Crick, 2001), and teacher uncertainty about the implementation process.

Methods

The books that formed our sample were principally for secondary school students (11–16 years) although we did look at some examples of material for elementary examples that were part of the Discovering Democracy packs from Australia. Some were intended to be used as preparatory material for examination courses while others are used as part of a scheme that would be assessed less formally within elementary and secondary schools. All the books are texts that are widely known to schools. This was achieved in the case of England by the inclusion of particular respected authors and publishing companies. In Canada all the four textbooks that had been produced within Ontario to support the new official curriculum were included. In Australia we drew as many resources as we could from the officially sanctioned Discovering Democracy project. As such we achieved a blend of materials written for a curriculum designed for a whole country (England), province (Ontario) and national project mediated through states (Australia). Schools would be able to choose the materials that they would study. We were aware (perhaps especially in the Australian context) that teachers use textbooks and resource packs sparingly and as an addition to their own resources. We do not claim that we have achieved a comprehensive overview of all the resources that are available to secondary school teachers and students in the three countries but we suggest that we are able to comment on the sorts of material that will be familiar to schools.

The bibliographical details of the books we used are shown in the appendix to this article.

The Canadian books are in hard covers with the shortest being 184 pages and the longest 265 pages. Colour is used extensively with a closely packed written text. Some photographs and boxed text have been used. The Australian titles are soft bound and include a range of material of fairly brief readers (62 pages) and longer collections (74 or 82 pages) of assessment resources for lower, middle and upper secondary and texts of 202 pages for secondary ‘units’. Some colour has been used with large amounts of text which is especially dense in the collection of ‘units’ and less so in the readers. The pages are broken up with some photographs in the readers and some boxed sections in other resources. The England material is soft bound, and shorter (for lower school, normally 64 pages; for GCSE 144
pages). Colour has been used but there is much less use of written text. That text is broken up by extensive use of boxes, illustrations and photographs. The England books employ a lower language level than the books from Canada and Australia.

We developed a semi-structured process of analysis involving two people who worked independently and then jointly. Following independent reading to get a general ‘feel’ for the books categories were developed associated with context. We wanted to know what sort of general contexts are included (e.g. social, moral, political, economic) as well as what sort of content (as information) and concepts (such as power, justice) are included. We explored the specific citizenship focus as mediated through what could be seen as a geographical focus (local, regional, national, continental, global) and as such considered whether different forms of citizenship are emphasized (e.g. a formal legal status of national citizenship or a notion relating more to identity). Books were searched to see if specific purposes could be identified. In other words, we wanted to know, for example—put very crudely—if the books were concerned with a description of existing conditions or whether they were more concerned with accounts of change. Finally, the educational context was explored for work likely to take place using these books. As such we investigated three areas. We wanted to know whether there seemed to be an intention to use these books in specialist citizenship lessons or in other settings. We considered the pedagogical process, asking what sort of teaching and learning styles may emerge from use of this material. We reflected on what seemed to be the intended educational purpose of the resources in terms of the likely learning outcomes following the use of the material.

The individual interpretations that arose from the above were discussed. Three drafts were produced prior to a paper being sent to an expert in each of the three countries who commented on the material that we had developed. Acknowledgement is given at the end of this article to those three experts. A final version of the paper was produced following further discussion between the two authors.

Discussion

We argue, generally, that all three countries have avoided in their textbooks any radical conceptions of citizenship. Almost all textbooks across the three countries are concerned to promote knowledge, understanding and involvement for democratic purposes. They are concerned to promote diversity and democracy. However, beyond these general positive interpretations our findings are consistent with the analysis of civics and citizenship presented by Osborne (1985) who has suggested that there is a limited and limiting approach to this field. We have found that most of the material contained within the textbooks focuses on national rather than global issues, that diversity is given only limited attention and that most of the pedagogical processes that are implied by the books seems, largely, to favour cognitive thinking or reflection about personal issues as opposed to active involvement in political issues.
More specifically we wish to support Osborne’s (1985) view about Canada, produced as a result of an investigation (including textbook analysis). He argues that civics is the dominant model and explains that:

civics meant little more than a factual knowledge of governmental and political institutions with a sprinkling of desirable social virtues …. Civics portrays a consensus view of politics in which questions of conflict and power play little part. This approach is still very much alive. (pp. 7–8)

Although there are many exceptions (and in particular the text by Evans et al., 2000), textbooks in Ontario are concerned with the transmission of information about the development of parliamentary democracy, with some encouragement to take part in established institutionally framed procedures. Osborne suggests that: ‘civic education is political education without the politics’ (p. 9) and we have found evidence of this approach in the recently published books, especially such as those by Brune and Bulgutch (2000) that focus on the celebration of contemporary governmental structures. We are keen to avoid simplistic interpretations but there is a sense in which the more solidly bound and more densely packed texts of the Canadian sample suggest a more traditional approach to a form of knowledge that is ‘weighty’ and fixed. (Although civics courses do not exist in all parts of Canada, British Columbia and Quebec are considering following Ontario’s lead in a return to that form of teaching and learning).

In our interpretation of the textbooks from England we have also found Osborne’s (1985, p. 9) arguments to be useful. We suggest that our sample of books could be labelled examples of what Osborne calls ‘citizenship education’ in that they are concerned to embrace ‘the whole range of socially useful and desirable qualities that youngsters should acquire’ (p. 9). Osborne has suggested that this approach is even more apolitical than civics. In England the inclusion of very many matters relevant to individual young people, including health, personal finance, helping others and charities, suggest that a very broad based focus on personal responsibility is being promoted. We are not suggesting that other more obviously political matters have been completely ignored but we do suggest that the overall impression in the English context is of texts that encourage young people to think broadly about their personal role in society. The personal is foregrounded at the expense of a sharper political awareness.

The Australian dimension is harder to classify. We are aware of concerns from Kennedy and others that a neo-conservative agenda is being promoted through the Discovering Democracy materials. However, we feel that the infusion of citizenship education principally through history and English has allowed for an approach that we would wish to characterize as an academically based social studies. The goals are related to societal understanding but the means are traditionally those of the academic specialist especially using the disciplines of history education and English education, with some inclusion of social science methods.

We develop the above general argument that different forms of education exist (civics in Canada, citizenship in England and social studies in Australia) by exploring
the ways in which the textbooks explore the national-global focus, the emphasis on
diversity and the extent to which a critical pedagogical process is being promoted.

National and global orientations

The issues we raised earlier about the development of citizenship education possibly
as part of a reaction to challenges to the nation state seem to find expression in the
content chosen for the resources we analysed. All books devote most of the available
space to their own country although we do not wish to suggest that global matters are
ignored. In the England sample Fiehn (2000) devotes 15 pages of 114 to global citi-
zenship and the corresponding figure for Culshaw et al. (2002) is 45 pages of 144 and
is less reliant on the national context. One of the three Activate! books is devoted to
global citizenship but each of the other 2 containing only one chapter on the links
between local and national citizenship and global matters. Thorpe (2001) and
Thorpe and Marsh (2002) include some brief material about global matters at various
points, principally when discussing the environment, but essentially focus on personal
rights and responsibilities in immediate contexts.

In the Canada sample there is some significant inclusion of international and global
material. Evans et al. (2000) devote one chapter of 6 (40 pages from 230) to global
citizenship. Watt et al. (2000) give one of four units (66 pages from 184) and Skeoch
et al. (2000) one of seven chapters (30 pages from 205) to global citizenship. Brune
and Bulgutch (2000) do not include a separate section on global citizenship but
instead mention various people, events and issues from around the world (e.g.
chapter 9 contains information about ‘model citizens’ including Mother Theresa,
Martin Luther King and Nelson Mandela). However, as will be shown below there
are some rather striking assertions in the Canadian material of the importance of the
national context.

The Australian books normally do not include separate sections on global issues or
other countries and there is a strong emphasis on the home nation. The lower second-
ary units, for example, mostly include material only about Australia. However, there
are very many examples and case studies in the resources for students who are not
lower secondary that are taken from beyond Australia. For example, in the introd-
uction to the reader for upper secondary it is claimed that: ‘The texts in this theme focus
on aspects of change and the future of civil society. Who is our neighbour in a globa-
lised world? Will national borders dissolve to make way for a global citizen?’ (Curric-

Of course, there is no necessary link between global perspectives and radical
approaches to learning about and through political issues. The nature of the specific
approach that is taken when learning about the home country is explored in more
detail below. However, we wish simply and generally to argue now that all three coun-
tries emphasize their national priorities and tend largely to avoid broader conceptions.
The authors of textbooks have worked according to a range of priorities, some of
which will emerge from national policy guidance in the form of officially sanctioned
projects or statutory curricula. This tends to suggest that the textbooks do not emphasize radical notions of citizenship but will present ideas either to do with civic or personal or academic conceptions of society. These textbooks are unlikely to conform to Osborne’s preferences for a more political orientation or Pike and Selby’s (1988) call for a global perspective on teaching and learning.

**Diversity, inclusion and critical approaches**

The approach that is taken towards the home country varies greatly across the different authors. The resources from England and Australia tend to ask rather difficult questions about their own countries. The *Activate!* series (Algarra, 2002) uses question marks to suggest an exploratory approach (e.g. ‘ethnicity: who are the British?'; ‘The UK: one nation?’). Each of the chapters in Fiehn (2002) uses a title in the form of a question (e.g. ‘what rights should all children have?’). Thorpe (2001) and Thorpe and Marsh (2002) include many examples of dilemmas for young people to consider, often involving distinctions between law and justice, such as what should be done if a bank were mistakenly to place money in an individual’s account. The Australian resources also use questions such as ‘who should rule?’ and emphasize that a questioning approach is necessary as ‘words make worlds’. Young people are asked to consider: ‘what is the political impact of the ways words are used in given contexts?’ The Canadian books include questions as part of exercises at the end of sections (e.g. Skeoch et al., 2000) includes a ‘think–discuss–act’ feature at the end of each chapter) and also as ways of focusing students’ thinking (e.g. Watt et al., 2000) asks ‘How does Quebec challenge Canadian citizenship?’; ‘What is the function of political parties in the Canadian system?’).

The Canadian material seems relatively conservative when compared with that from Australia and England (see Joshee, 2004). The Canadian books more frequently provide summaries of material that young people are deemed to need to know. Most of the material by Watt et al. (2000), Skeoch et al. (2000) and Brune and Bulgutch (2000) is in the form of factual accounts of important events and individuals. In Brune and Bulgutch (2000) this material about Canada is interpreted very positively. The following are a few quotations chosen to illustrate that unusual degree of national pride:

In a Canada full of wondrous sites, there’s no better place than home when you’re a Canadian by conviction. (p. vii)

Canadians just don’t seem to understand what a great place this is …. You must be willing to show that you love Canada. (p. xi)

What we need is that soldierly pride in Canada, that confident passionate pride in Canada that men who had worn the uniform and put the maple leaf badge on it. What we also need is the patriotism that will put Canada ahead of its parts. (Lester Pearson, quoted on p. 5)

Canada’s government is modern, sophisticated and advanced. (p. 17)

Is our government doing a reasonably good job? It would seem so. (p. 18)
It is perhaps unsurprising in light of the above that the book by Brune and Bulgutch (2000) focuses principally on what could, loosely, be termed ‘majority’ groups. There is only a limited amount of space by those authors devoted to ‘minorities’ such as women or Aboriginal peoples. For example, there seems to be mere tokenism at work on pages 18–19 and 30 with some comments about women and brief paragraphs on Aboriginal peoples. At times omissions and a failure to address key issues is clear. There is, for example, no mention of any people displaced in the creation of Canada in the following: ‘After the incredible promise of starting a transcontinental railway within 2 years and completing it within 10, British Columbia became the 6th province the year after in 1871’ (p. 25).

Watt et al. (2000) begins by stating the Canadian oath of citizenship. There is a 15-page chapter about Aboriginal peoples but there is a sense in which the reader is being asked to study ‘their’ (p. 88) problems. We are told that:

It is clear that Aboriginal Canadians have recently changed their political goals as Canadians. They have been active citizens using every available method to influence and, at times, force Canada to listen and change. And it has all occurred rather quickly when you consider their long history as the first peoples of Canada. To understand the Aboriginal aims, we have to know something about their history. (p. 88)

In Skeoch et al. (2000) the early historical chapters hardly mention Aboriginal practices. Although there are some exceptions in that book (e.g. on page 147, Paul Okalik the first premier of Nunavut’s legislative assembly is featured), there is very little coverage of Aboriginal peoples. These are books about a particular sort of Canada in which the majority is encouraged to learn about the ‘other’.

Evans et al. (2000) is much more inclusive with material, for example, on traditional Iraquois decision-making (p. 24), discussion of a key individual as an immigrant (p. 49) and forms of Aboriginal government (p. 100). This is not to say that Evans does not emphasize constitutional structures but there is a sense of a more open inclusive approach and a determination to explore issues.

The Australian materials refer more explicitly and critically to issues of diversity. For example, the middle secondary units of Discovering Democracy assert: ‘rights denied to indigenous Australians’ in an exercise designed to explore violations in the context of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Women are frequently included (and at times the challenge of tokenism is deliberately faced in, for example, the material on Margaret Guilfoyle, who is said to be ‘more than a token woman’). The books in the England sample, as shown above, all include material designed to raise issues about identity and diversity. The ways in which the English and Australian books raise issues about identity and diversity is normally not related explicitly to political perspectives. The English books explore the nature of communities asking about, for example, the role of individuals in making friends and encouraging greater awareness of religious practices. There is something of the multiculturalism of the 1970s that was so strongly challenged by Troyna (1986) and others. The Australian material is, as acknowledged above, more obviously concerned to explore issues about power but do so through exploring the nature of history and literary culture.
Pedagogical process

The types of activities and questions used in the resources show that the rhetoric of active participation that is used in the introductions to some of the books is usually not achieved in the activities that are provided for school students. This seems especially true for some of the Canadian resources where the goals are ambitious. For example, Watt et al. (2000) say that:

We invite you to take part in an interactive exploration of the topic of civics—the study of government, political decision making, and what it means to be an informed participating and responsible citizen in local national and global contexts. (p. 1).

The nature of the interaction that is most likely to be achieved seems in the Canadian resources rather academic. This may be due to a range of activities being provided in other formats (such as additional teachers’ resources meant to be applied directly in the classroom). A review of the textbooks suggests that, at times, rather low-level involvement is required. This can be seen in the book by Watt et al. (2000) in, for example, chapter 2 when some descriptive material about structures relevant to citizenship are followed by questions such as ‘Discuss why it is vital to have your rights written into the constitution’ (p. 21). Similarly, many of the questions posed by Brune and Bulgutch (2000) seem to require only limited comprehension (e.g. following a passage that uses three bullet points to explain the principles of government that emerged at Charlottetown in 1864, students are asked ‘What were the three fundamental principles for a federal government that arose from the Charlottetown conference?’, p. 23). The regular ‘think–discuss–act’ sections in Skeoch et al. (2000) include some academically demanding questions (e.g. ‘In their writings do Locke and Jefferson provide a recipe for chaos or a recipe for justice? Explain your opinion.’ (p. 20)). Evans et al. (2000) claim that they intend to provide resources to support substantive knowledge acquisition, engaging narrative and interesting authentic sources, skill building, beliefs, values and multiple perspectives and active involvement. These are all achieved up to a point. In particular, in relation to issues about critical engagement each chapter ends with ‘focus on an issue’ (e.g. ‘should Canadians under 18 be eligible to vote?’; ‘how well do our representatives reflect our population?’; ‘do lobby groups work for the common goals of the people?’). The general impression is that the questions and activities are encouraging, with the possible exception of Evans et al. (2000), responses to questions principally about constitutional structures, are, at times, rather low-level and are often provided without the detailed explication that would assist the development of structured interactive learning.

The England resources contain less information than those produced in Canada. The books are relatively short (normally 64 pages for all students and 144 pages for those taking the short course GCSE examination for 16-year-olds). Most of the pages have more white space than the Canadian sample. The questions contained in the England books are related strongly to individual students including topics about matters such as sexual relations and personal finance. The activities are structured in a detailed way with, for example, ‘the power of advertising’ being explored through
instructions to collect advertisements and then categorize them in a table to show various factors such as price, age group and gender to which they are directed. A task on soap operas is constructed to encourage students to debate and diamond rank factors associated with their significance in society. Very commonly stories (real or imagined) are provided, with the student being asked to identify the issues and to suggest ways forward. These activities are engaging and would teach young people about a range of matters that affect them personally. They frequently do not require a well-developed political awareness or skill.

The Australian books include some activities that relate to civics (e.g. an explanation of preferential voting). There are comprehension questions about formal political processes. However, in general, the Australian resources tend to express the dominant approaches of traditional academic subjects such as history and English in order to develop critical thinking skills. The readers provide a range of literary and historical sources for students to analyse and respond to. For example, the story of Antigone leads to questions about the nature of unjust laws and the character of leaders. Extracts from *Lord of the flies* (Golding, 1968), *Huckleberry Finn* (Twain, 1996) and the *Diary of Anne Frank* (Frank, 1997) are provided without questions or activities but as source material for teachers and students. Detailed advice is given so that students may undertake research projects suggesting that there has been rigorous attention to the procedures of academic social science. This approach seems close to the ‘thinking skills’ school that has recently become common in England (e.g. Leat, 1999; Fisher *et al.*, 2002).

**Conclusion**

We do not wish to argue that the textbooks for citizenship education in Australia, Canada and England are not valuable. We acknowledge the impressive specialist input by authors who have wealth of experience in the provision of curriculum materials. There is potentially a great deal that can be learned from all the approaches that we have identified here. Students can enjoy and profitably learn when developing thinking skills through material drawn from traditional academic subjects (Australia), remembering information about constitutional structures (Canada), exploring their personal perspectives in the context of society’s values (England). We do not wish to suggest that textbooks are necessarily a good guide to what happens in classrooms or what young people will learn. We also accept that powerful contextual forces, such as the work of policy-makers and the demands of commercial publishers, will influence what sorts of books are produced. Further, citizenship education is in its infancy and perhaps more radical approaches will appear later after professional confidence has grown.

We are aware, however, of the arguments that have often been presented to suggest that citizenship education is prone to somewhat contradictory impulses. On the one hand the justification for its development rests on the need for greater participation in order to strengthen democratic structures and processes further; on the other hand, citizens are perceived as subjects to be moulded to state authority
(Morris & Morris, 1999; Print, 1999) and that this latter tendency can be seen particularly in textbooks (Thomas, 1990). The citizen is free and not free at the same time. We wish to draw attention to the variety of perspectives and practices that are being developed by textbook authors and by implication make it clear that any fears about citizenship education becoming the source of political activism by extremists seems hopelessly misplaced. We need to celebrate the professionalism that is seen in the textbooks we have explored and perhaps also hope that there will in future be other attempts to meet the ambitious goals associated with promoting political involvement.

Acknowledgements

The authors wish to acknowledge the very helpful advice given by three in-country experts concerning the analysis of the textbooks: Professor Murray Print, University of Sydney, Australia; Professor Alan Sears, University of New Brunswick, Canada; David Kerr, National Foundation for Education Research, UK.

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References


Porter, T. (1999, October 11) It’s a sad day when Canada’s Prime Minister doesn’t know when the country was founded, The Fredericton Daily Gleaner, p. A7.


Appendix. List of books reviewed

Australia


Bastian, A. (Ed.) (1998b) Civics and citizenship: we will take part (Canberra, Department of Education, Training and Employment).


Canada


England