

Citizenship Education in Multicultural Australia — The Discovering Democracy Program —

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The Discovering Democracy Program was introduced into the Australian compulsory school curriculum nationwide as a civics and citizenship education program at the end of the 1990s. It was established on the basis of a strong federal government initiative, in spite of each state and territory being constitutionally responsible for education. How should the meaning of citizenship be taught in school with the aim of preparing future active citizens? This has been an important question in the debate on citizenship policy in Australia since the early 90s. Its policy consequence is the Discovering Democracy Program.

It should be noted that some elements peculiar to Australian contexts, especially the approaching Centenary Federation and the republic debate, provided an impetus for public discussion on citizenship and influenced the nature of citizenship education. For this reason, perhaps, the redefinition of national self-image, or in other words, the (re)invention of a national *civic* identity for multicultural Australia, has been emphasised as the object of citizenship education, rather than any attempt to promote active participation in civic life. Another related distinctive feature is that policy makers identified 'Australian history' as an essential vehicle for education in citizenship, the 'heritage' approach to citizenship which is clearly reflected in the Discovering Democracy materials.

The purpose of this paper is to examine critically the meaning and effect of citizenship education in Australia with attention to representation of cultural diversity. Firstly I will shed light on the background to and process of formulation of the citizenship education policy with a focus on its political intention and implications. I will then analyse how and to what extent cultural diversity is reflected in the concept of citizenship and how *multicultural* Australia is narrated in the content of the curricular materials developed by the Curriculum Corporation.