

Australian schools as deliberative spaces: Framing the goal of active and informed citizenship

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Title: Australian schools as deliberative spaces: Framing the goal of active and informed citizenship

Abstract: Educating for active and informed citizenship represents a core goal of Australian education and schooling. Owing to a range of factors – including the contested conceptual nature of citizenship and democracy – there is reason to question the extent to which this goal is being translated into practice. Similarly, while the Australian Curriculum requires students to engage with others in talk, this is framed rather broadly. Recognising the value of greater conceptual precision about citizenship, democracy and discursive interactions, this paper explores the value of deliberative democracy as a frame for active and informed citizenship. In doing so it argues that viewing schools as deliberative spaces which do/could engage in deliberative pedagogies provides a useful and focused basis for conceiving how young Australians do and can engage in, and learn, the capacities necessary for democratic citizenship.

Key words: Deliberation, democracy, deliberative democracy, citizenship, deliberative spaces, deliberative pedagogies

Over the last three decades there has been significant and ongoing interdisciplinary debate about the importance of deliberation for a well-functioning democracy. Within this ‘deliberative turn’ (Dryzek, 2000:1), deliberative democracy is valued for the extent to which it ensures and safeguards various principles core to the effective functioning of democracies. These include maintaining legal and political legitimacy, holding government to account, and empowering citizens by bringing them into decision-making processes in ways that account for, and enlarge, their perspectives about issues which affect their lives. Interconnected to this work has been a burgeoning of interest in *education* for deliberative democracy. This interest has taken two particular forms. First, many advocates of deliberative democracy working in fields such as political science and law have highlighted the need for deliberation to be educated and learned by citizens (see, for example, Gutmann, 1987; Maynor, 2003). Second, an increasing number of educators have sought to draw connections between deliberative theory/practice and democratic education (see, for example, Parker, 2003; Peterson, 2009; Hess and McAvoy, 2015).

Seeking to add to this second area of interest, we examine deliberative democracy in the context of Australian education and schooling. To this end, our argument comprises three interconnected premises. Our first argument is that, similar to other Westernised nations, a key goal of Australian education and schooling is to produce active and informed citizens, able to play a positive role in democratic life. Fundamental to this goal is the desire to engage young people in the lives of their political communities, supporting them to handle the complexities of contemporary life. Our second premise is that the precise nature and form that active and informed citizenship takes is inherently contested, and as such is dependent on the specific form of democracy to which such citizenship connects. Here, we suggest that deliberative democracy provides a valuable frame for conceiving democracy today, and also that citizenship of a deliberative kind requires particular knowledge, skills and dispositions through which citizens can engage with others through democratic processes. Our third argument is that framing democracy and citizenship in terms of deliberation requires Australian schools to be not just *democratic* institutions, but precisely *deliberative democratic* institutions. That is, to prepare young Australians for citizenship of a deliberative kind, Australian schools need to be deliberative spaces within which deliberation is valued, formed and expressed through *deliberative pedagogies*.

In order to advance these arguments, this paper comprises three main sections. In the first we examine the current context of education for citizenship in Australia, suggesting that there is a need to think more clearly and precisely about how citizenship and democratic participation is conceived. In the second section, we explore deliberative democracy as a frame for active and informed citizenship. Here we make use of Shawn Rosenberg's (2007, 2014) criticism that advocates of deliberative democracy tend to make unwarranted assumptions about the competence of citizens to deliberate in the reasoned and communicative ways democratic theory requires. In the third section, we respond to this criticism by suggesting that deliberative capacities can be developed through the design of *deliberative spaces* (for our analysis, schools). To explain and illustrate our position, in section three we draw on existing empirical studies to illustrate a key feature central to schools as deliberative spaces, namely, *deliberative pedagogies*. While deliberative pedagogies include *knowledge* about legal and political institutions/processes and the rights and responsibilities of citizenship, they also include ways of teaching and learning that cultivate the broad set of *skills* and *dispositions* needed to deliberate effectively. These include the ability to speak coherently and intelligibly, to give *reasons* for one's views, to evaluate evidence, to assess arguments, and to make considered decisions. They also include important social dimensions such as how to listen to others, to argue respectfully, to not interrupt others or to speak over others, to appreciate the morally salient features of a situation, and to make decisions that are consistent with moral norms. Deliberative pedagogies are, then, 'a kind of shared inquiry the desired outcomes of which rely on the expression and consideration of diverse views' (Parker, 2003: 129).

Education for democracy and citizenship in Australian schools

The need to educate young Australians for democracy and citizenship is a longstanding, yet contested, goal of Australian education and schooling. While there is not space here to offer a full and detailed account of the history of education for democracy and citizenship in Australian schools (for more detailed analyses see, for example Print, 2017), the last thirty years has witnessed a renewed interest in this endeavor at a policy level. In his analysis, Print (2017: 7) describes the period as one in which the teaching of civics and citizenship in Australia 'can be characterized as mercurial, its fortunes ebbed and flowed in response to political ideology, federal election outcomes and bureaucratic whim', reflecting that 'despite widespread and sustained policy consensus and support, CCE [civics and citizenship

education] remains in a tenuous position’ and that ‘the translation of policy to school practice in the formal curriculum remains problematic’ (2017: 7). Indeed, while the last five years have seen important curricular developments for the teaching of civics and citizenship, how schools and the curriculum can ‘engage more young Australians to become active, informed citizens [remains] a long-term challenge’ (Print, 2017: 20).

In the process leading to the introduction of civics and citizenship as an integrated curriculum subject within the Humanities and Social Sciences for the primary years (alongside history, geography, and economics and business), and as discrete curriculum subject in the lower secondary years in 2015 (as part of the first ever Australian Curriculum¹), various documents produced by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA²) made reference to the role of education and schooling in supporting young Australians to contribute ‘to an evolving and healthy democracy that fosters the wellbeing of Australia as a democratic nation’ (ACARA, 2016). The Australian Curriculum is predicated explicitly on helping ‘all young Australians to become successful learners, confident and creative individuals, and *active and informed citizens*’ (ACARA, 2018a). In addition, the rationale for the Australian Curriculum: Civics and Citizenship subject makes reference to students exploring ways they ‘can actively shape their lives... and positively contribute locally, nationally, regionally and globally. As reflective, active and informed decision-makers, students will be well placed to contribute to an evolving and healthy democracy that fosters the wellbeing of Australia as a democratic nation’ (ACARA, 2018b). Such statements build on the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* which also placed priority on young Australians becoming ‘active and informed citizens’ (MCEETYA, 2008, p. 9).

Despite this policy and curricular interest, recent evidence suggests that the problem of policy translation into school practice identified by Print has continued. A small-scale study conducted in schools in South Australia, for example, found that school leaders had a very different view of education for citizenship than teachers in their schools (Peterson and Bentley, 2017). While school leaders prioritized social values over and above the political, teachers conceived citizenship in terms of critical understanding and in doing so positioned

¹ Previously curriculum was designated at the level of individual states and territories.

² An independent statutory body responsible for overseeing the introduction, implementation and operation of the Australian Curriculum.

the need for education for citizenship as overcoming a deficit of current understanding. Notably, the study reports that school leaders or teachers said very little about political/justice-based notions of citizenship.

Further evidence of the problematic translation of policy/curricular interest is provided by the recently released results of the 2016 sample assessment of Civics and Citizenship within the National Assessment Program³. While results have remained stable for final year students, the results for year 10 students decreased from 49 per cent of those who reached the target in 2010 to 38 per cent in 2016, meaning that 62% of year 10 students failed to reach the standard expected of that age group (Frailon et al., 2017: xvi). The results – described by Federal Education Minister, Simon Birmingham, as ‘woeful’ and ‘of serious concern’ (McGowan, 2017) – suggest that while there has been an increasing focus on civics in Australia’s curriculum, this is not reflected in young people’s civics and citizenship understandings. Moreover, and of particular significance for our analysis here, the assessment found that while ‘Voting in elections and making a personal effort to protect natural resources, such as water, were rated as the most important “citizenship behaviours”, *discussing politics was viewed as least important*’ (ABC, 2017; emphasis added). In their research with young Australians of school-leaving age, Ghazarian, Laughland-Booy and Skrbis (2017) have found that ‘many young people still aren’t sure about how Australia’s system of government works by the time they leave school. And they may also not have the skills to confidently participate in the political process’. It is clear, then, (1) that the official curriculum commits Australian education and schooling to cultivating a commitment to *active* and *informed* citizenship as part of a healthy and functioning *democracy*, and, (2) that there is some evidence to question whether schools are actually achieving this end.

An important question in understanding discourses and practices of education for democracy and citizenship is, of course, the particular forms of democracy and citizenship being prioritized – either implicitly or explicitly. Indeed, a feature common to the educational literature on education for democracy and citizenship in Australian schools is the extent to which *active* forms of citizenship are prioritized over other forms of citizenship which are either passive and/or more limited in nature. Within such work various adjectives have been

³ The Australian National Assessment Program is the Australian government’s main initiative for measuring whether young Australians are meeting key educational outcomes. The Program includes a triennial assessment of civic and citizenship.

used as descriptive prefixes to citizenship. Smyth (2016), for example, has argued for a particular notion of the ‘active’ or ‘activist’ citizen as coalescing around the notion of the socially just school, while Zyngier (2013), in adopting a similar position to Smyth, uses the term ‘transformative citizenship’. Dejaeghere and Tudball (2007: 48-49) use the terms ‘critical citizenship’ and ‘critical citizenship education’ to refer to ‘a citizenry prepared and motivated to address societal problems and to create social change, particularly related to injustice’. While they employ different adjectives, the conceptions of citizenship (and by extension citizenship education) advocated by Smyth, Zyngier and Dejaeghere and Tudball respectively have much in common. Uniting each of their adjectival positionings of citizenship is a commitment to active and participatory involvement within the political communities in which citizens live. Such involvement necessarily entails working in common to challenge social injustices and to ensure that the voices of marginalized groups within society are heard.

However, we need also to be mindful that notions of “active” citizenship, themselves, are heavily contested for the extent to which they have served, and can, serve neoliberal political agendas. Neoliberal forms of active citizenship are multifarious, but key markers are the individualization of citizenship and citizen activity, the instrumentalisation of active citizenship to serve policy-making rather than the polity, the privatization of core aspects of social citizenship (healthcare, welfare etc.), and the marketization of public services (Hindess, 2002; Wilkins, 2018). Generally speaking, through neoliberal constructs of active citizenship ‘citizens are trained and enjoined by way of structured incentives and ethical injunctions to fulfil certain obligations and responsibilities vis-à-vis their relationship to the state and to the market more generally’ (Wilkins, 2018: 2). In such an environment, the conception of the active, politically situated and engaged citizen of ancient Greece and Rome becomes replaced by the active citizen as a ‘rational, calculating, self-maximizing actor’ (Wilkins, 2018: 11).

Our intention here is not engage in criticism of these various adjectival forms of active and informed citizenship, neither is it to offer a full critique of neoliberal forms of active citizenship. Rather, it is to offer an alternative suggestion which recognizes the importance of conceiving democracy and democratic citizenship in clear and precise ways, but which also seeks to both move us beyond more generalized notions of “responsible”, “active” and “critical” and to reject the neoliberalisation of active citizenship. While adjectives such as

responsible, active and critical are *necessary* for conceiving education for citizenship within Australian schools, they are not *sufficient*. Our interest in this paper, therefore, lies in the extent to which deliberative democracy might offer a more specific and substantive conception of democracy to inform education for citizenship in Australian schools.

Before we move to explore deliberative democracy in more detail in the next section, it should also be noted that the extent to which a given democratic polity is or is not deliberative is a matter of degree (and, indeed, that deliberation may be obscured and limited by the tone of political debate, where for example the tone is predominantly uncivil). All democracies involve deliberation to some extent, though such deliberation will differ in extent, form and purpose across democracies and, indeed, within democracies (not least for the reason that a given democratic polity may fluctuate in the extent to which it values deliberation over time).

Deliberative democracy and the problem of competence

Broadly speaking, deliberative democracy is based on two fundamental principles. The first is that decisions must be made collectively and involve participants who will be affected by a policy. The second is that the decision-making is arrived at by way of arguments offered to and by participants, rather than by bargaining between competing interests or the aggregation of private preferences (Parkinson, 2006). Deliberation thus conceived imposes significant cognitive, communicative and moral requirements on participants. Cognitively, it requires individuals to process complex subject matter, including collecting and collating the relevant evidence, an assessment and understanding of that evidence, and a suspension of one's own prejudices and bias (Rosenberg, 2007). Deliberation requires that participants are communicatively competent, which means they can speak intelligibly and clearly, make coherent arguments, and can understand and critically engage with the arguments of others. Morally, deliberation requires participants to take the perspective of others into consideration, thereby enlarging their own perspective of the issue and of other people's situation more generally.

Advocates and critics of deliberative democracy are generally agreed that these three requirements – the cognitive, the communicative and the moral – place particular, and often

very challenging, burdens on citizens. In his work on deliberative democracy, Rosenberg (2007), for example, makes several pressing arguments about these foundational assumptions, arguing that individuals do not display, and are generally unable to meet, the cognitive, communicative and moral demands required by deliberative theories. Drawing on social cognition research, he suggests that individuals are cognitively deficient, evidenced by the difficulties people have with abstract thought and the rational calculation of probabilities. On this basis, Rosenberg suggests that individuals tend to focus on the more visible and distinctive features of a problem, and fail to integrate information in a coherent way. In addition, without an educative function individuals are unlikely to abstract from their own situation and interests in order to consider issues in an impartial and objective way. Of course, it is often the case that participants in debate are often excessively attached to pre-deliberative commitments, which cause them to bring to debate fixed opinions, established political and economic ideologies, and religious beliefs. These commitments may make it difficult for people to give up their various attachments and act impartially, especially when it is these commitments that motivate people to take up political activity in the first place (Shapiro 1999).

Rosenberg argues that advocates of deliberative democracy typically *assume* that individuals are *already* communicatively competent, and that communication in deliberative environments will be smooth and successful. Given the attention many advocates of deliberative democracy place on developing the requisite capacities to engage in deliberation (an aspect of deliberative theory to which we return later in this section) Rosenberg's argument is slightly awry here. However, while Rosenberg's suggestion that deliberative democrats underplay the educative requirement misses the mark, his suggestion that if citizens are unable to meet the burdens of deliberation this will impact negatively on the extent and quality communication is one which needs addressing. As Rosenberg puts it: 'when there are differences in experience and cultural background and therefore differences of belief and value, it is unlikely that most individuals will be able to deliberate with one another productively' (Rosenberg, 2007, p.350). Crucial here is the need to counter situations in which individuals simply talk past one another, deny each other's claims, dogmatically assert their viewpoint rather than presenting reasons, or become aggressive with one another. Alternatively, citizens may communicate civilly and politely, but the discussion might be superficial. Rosenberg's position here also reminds us of the need for expressions of deliberative democracy to take seriously the need for inclusion of multiple voices and

perspectives, including those of the most disadvantaged and marginalized in society. Central here is to recognize that form and style of communication is likely to be affected by socio-economic inequalities. As Iris Marion Young has argued, speaking styles are typically a sign of education and privilege (Young, 1996). As such deliberation can be said to be truly democratic when all concerned interests have a voice.

In advancing his concerns about deliberative democracy, Rosenberg contends that deliberative spaces should not be regarded as simply providing venues for the exercise of citizenship. Rather, 'deliberation must be understood as a site for the construction and transformation of citizenship' (Rosenberg, 2007, p.354). The point Rosenberg makes here is crucial to our own analysis for two reasons. The first is that engagement in deliberative spaces is not only an expression of citizenship, but actually shapes and fashions citizenship. The second is that the education that citizens need to deliberate effectively *can be realized through sites of deliberative spaces*.

In his analysis, Griffin (2011) reminds us of the importance of social and environmental factors to the learning of deliberative capacities. Summarising critiques of deliberative democracy, he suggests that both deliberative theorists and their critics have underplayed the social and environmental factors which cause individuals to develop capacities in particular ways. As he puts it:

They do not consider the possibility that the observed behaviour of individuals in contemporary societies is contingent upon environmental factors, such as education, societal norms and the influence of family ... they can only indicate that at present (in these particular circumstances) many individuals could not act as competent deliberative citizens. Although deliberative democrats should be willing to accept and address these concerns, they do not provide grounds for abandoning the deliberative project. (Griffin, 2011, p.2)

As we hinted to above, the idea that deliberation acts a form of pedagogy for and through citizenship is not inconsistent with deliberative theories of democracy, indeed in many ways the idea is central to deliberative democracy. Several leading proponents of deliberative forms of democracy have all argued that deliberation and deliberative institutions play a crucial educative role, for example to develop the capacities necessary for reflecting and

interacting with others in ways that are rational, just, considered, self-critical, and concerned with the common good, understood as the general welfare of the political community (see, for example, Gutmann and Thompson, 1996; Benhabib, 1996; Dryzek, 2000; Maynor, 2003; Fishkin, 2013). If it is the case that deliberation requires a set of capacities which make effective deliberation possible, it follows that the more citizens use these capacities in the appropriate contexts (and are able to reflect upon such use) the better at deliberation they will become. Given this, deliberative spaces operate in themselves as crucial pedagogical sites where not only citizenship is expressed, but also constituted.

We would suggest, therefore, that deliberative sites perform an important pedagogical function in giving individuals the opportunities for developing and exercising deliberative capacities. While we agree with Rosenberg's view that deliberation provides an important educative function, relying on deliberative spaces to cultivate adult citizens' capacities might be too late, and leaves the cultivation of deliberative capacities somewhat to chance. As Griffin puts it: 'the emphasis, instead, is on free development, and on allowing the deliberative citizen to organically develop through the act of participation. As a result, the internally competent deliberative citizen has largely become (and at present remains) an *assumed* component of the wider deliberative project (Griffin, 2011, p.1). In other words, while an individual's reasoning, communicative and moral skills will be improved in appropriately deliberative contexts, we cannot exclusively depend on informal education alone to inculcate these capacities; to do so is to underestimate or fail to acknowledge the importance of formally developing these capacities early in citizens' lives.

Our argument here is that rather than being an assumed component of the wider deliberative project, the capacities necessary for deliberation – rational, communicative and moral – require careful cultivation throughout formal education. In this regard schools are clearly crucial. However, for students to be and become deliberative agents they need supportive environments within which the requisite capacities can be practised, formed and expressed. Indeed, the importance of the learning environment is a common feature of research evidence on education for democracy and citizenship (Parker, 2003; Keating, 2010). If we follow this argument through, we can posit that a necessary condition for the learning of deliberative capacities within formal education is that schools operate as deliberative spaces. Central to schools as deliberative spaces is the use of 'deliberative pedagogies' through which children

engage in focused and reciprocal dialogue about matters that affect themselves and their communities.

Schools as deliberative spaces through deliberative pedagogies

In the previous section we argued that deliberative sites and processes (1) require the cultivation of key capacities for deliberation and (2) act as spaces in which those capacities can be expressed, formed and refined through purposeful dialogue with others. We also suggested that alongside more informal sites of deliberative learning, formal education settings – for our purposes here, schools – provide crucial possibilities for cultivating the requisite cognitive, communicative and moral capacities. In this section, we focus more specifically on this latter suggestion, and in doing so explore the idea that schools can (and do) act as deliberative spaces, a core element of which is the use of deliberative pedagogies. While the arguments made are likely to hold resonance for schools in other democratic contexts, our analysis focuses specifically on Australian schools; that is, we are interested in how Australian schools are, and could be, deliberative spaces. On this basis, we argue that ‘being and becoming deliberative’ could provide an important frame for Australian schools in their work to educate active and informed citizens.

In her work on deliberative democracy and democratic education, Amy Gutmann (1987) has argued that because habits and principles are easier to instil in children than in adults, any theory of deliberative pedagogy must begin with the education of children from early childhood through to adulthood. In addition, she also contends that because imperfect adults are educating children it is also necessary to discuss the education of educators. As Gutmann argues, we cannot assume that children are born ready for rational deliberation. As children grow, they become more responsive to rational and intellectual instructional methods, and they also develop the skills for criticism, rational argument and decision-making by being taught how to think logically, to argue coherently and to consider alternatives before coming to conclusions (Gutmann, 1987, p.50-1). These skills are ‘democratically desirable’ because they enable citizens to understand, communicate, and negotiate disagreement (Gutmann, 1987, p.51). It is through deliberative, democratic dialogue that students are able to evaluate the idea and ideal in ‘the open-minded and deliberative spirit that prefigures the way in which democratic citizens ideally govern themselves’, namely, ‘deliberatively rather than dogmatically’ (Gutmann, 1987, p.37). It is important to reiterate here that talk so conceived is

not a general, ambiguous form of talk. A key aspect of such deliberative dialogue so conceived is the sharing of interests and the giving of reasons. That is, through open-minded and deliberative encounters students come to understand the interests of others and make their own interests known.

A corollary of this sharing of interests is that students can adopt a reflexive outlook, revising their own position in light of positions exchanged and information received. Here, moral capacities – such as discernment, sensitivity and humility – are vital. Not least, the general moral commitment to deliberation as a shared endeavor is crucial for, as Gutmann (1987: 51) explains, ‘people adept at logical reasoning who lack moral character are sophists of the worst sort: they use moral arguments to serve whatever ends they happen to choose for themselves. They do not take morality seriously nor are they able to distinguish between the obvious moral demands and the agonizing dilemmas of life’ (Gutmann, 1987, p.51).

While not the only institution for deliberative engagement, schools provide a key site within which young people learn to become and be citizens of a particular kind (whatever that kind may be). It is now widely accepted that schools are not neutral spaces, either in terms of their curricular or in the sorts of relationships they embody and enact. Given this, and as we suggested at the outset of this paper, the key question is not *whether* schools prepare young people for democracy, but *what type* of democracy they are prepared for and *what form* such preparation takes. This recognition is not a claim that schools are *partisan* Political sites, but instead is an appreciation that schools involve relationships between teachers and students (and indeed between students themselves) who act in various ways politically. In this sense, *politics* refers to a social and public activity through which we engage with others in matters affecting our interests, our communities and our lives. On this reading, politics is ‘always a dialogue, and never a monologue’ (Heywood, 2013, p. 1), and such dialogues can be both formal and informal (in both a practical and educative sense).

At present, the Australian curriculum, and the documents which support it, is largely silent about the specific form of participatory democracy which is to be learned, experienced and promoted. So too, while there are various references to dialogue and communication across the curriculum (not least in the General Capability Intercultural Understanding (ACARA, 2018)), the precise form and nature of such dialogue is not stated specifically. In one sense,

this ambiguity provides flexibility for schools to develop and enact their own preferred sense of democracy and forms of dialogue. However, viewed from another perspective the ambiguity can lead to vastly different interpretations of democracy between, or even within, schools. Problems associated with such differences between and within schools in their perceptions and enactment democracy and citizenship are reported in small-scale studies in Australia (Peterson and Bentley, 2017) and large-scale studies elsewhere (see, for example, Keating, 2010). Moreover, there is evidence from a range of contexts to suggest that while schools and teachers visualise democracy and citizenship as involving skills necessary for participation, in practice teaching often emphasises developing knowledge in the classroom (Evans, 2006). In his comparative study of teachers in Ontario, Canada and England, Evans concluded that, across the board, participation in civic life was widely asserted but rarely practised (Evans, 2006). Currently, then, both democratic participation and discourse are constructed as largely unproblematic, and this in turn presupposes that teachers understand their nature and purpose.

Though we would not necessarily suggest a compulsion for all Australian schools to become deliberative spaces for deliberative democracy (such a compulsion would seem overly prescriptive), our proposition is that deliberation *does* provide a way of conceiving both participatory democracy and dialogue with others and that, as such, it holds important potential for preparing young people for democratic life in today's complex socio-political environments. As children, as young adults and as adults, students will have to make political and moral decisions (either formally or informally) about many issues. If they are not exposed to different views early in life, or taught the necessary capacities for communicating with others in a respectful way and negotiating differences to reach a decision, students will undoubtedly find making decisions more difficult. Moreover, learning how to communicate effectively, to weigh up and critically examine arguments, to give reasons for one's view, and to make a decision based on the best available evidence are high-level skills. They require that educators not only have those skills themselves but are able to impart them in the appropriate way. If these skills are left to chance, or solely to other socialising agencies – such as families or other, voluntary associations – then such difficulties are likely to be compounded.

While it is one thing to argue that students need to be taught these deliberative skills, the more complex question is *how*. In other words, what might be the most effective ways to

develop deliberation and deliberative capacities within schools and classrooms? In order to respond to this question, and indeed to advance further our proposition that deliberation democracy offers a valuable prism for Australian schools, it is worth noting that while there is a now established corpus of conceptual work which advocates the involvement of school students in deliberative forms of political action, there is also an increasing body of empirical research from school contexts which highlight the benefits of engaging students in political deliberation through what we refer to here as *deliberative pedagogies*. Broadly speaking, deliberative pedagogies refer to the multiple and complex processes through which citizens not only come to acquire knowledge about political life, law and institutions, but also come to *be* deliberative citizens. That is, deliberative pedagogies are concerned with the teaching, learning and acquisition of the cognitive, communicative, and moral capacities necessary for deliberative life.

In their case study of a school in West Scotland, Maitles and Gilchrist (2006) found that when democratic decision-making was encouraged in the classroom, the students had a positive attitude toward the approach of the school. In addition, they found that through deliberative practices, students' attitudes to issues such as homelessness, asylum seekers and fair trade became more informed, and that students became interested in political issues more generally. In a comprehensive study on different ways of facilitating discussion on political issues in the classroom in the United States, Hess and McAvoy found that, in 'Best Practice Discussion', teachers used discussion frequently, facilitated student-to student dialogue, and taught students *how* to discuss (Hess and McAvoy, 2015).

There are some salient features of Hess and McAvoy's findings that bear highlighting in terms of deliberative pedagogies. The first feature is that deliberative pedagogies, including the school curriculum to which it relates, are not *given* or *static*. Hess and McAvoy detail, for example, an interesting, effective, yet somewhat *atypical*, school curriculum within the American Government program taught at Adams High. Students undertake a simulation in which they pretend to be legislators expressing their own political viewpoints, culminating in a 'full session' where each student/legislator is given an opportunity to debate the advantages or disadvantages of particular bills (Hess and McAvoy, 2015, p.90).

The second feature is the *explicit* and *intentional* planning of the school's curriculum and pedagogies to develop capacities for democratic dialogue. The course detailed functions as a

‘capstone’ for the senior year. The entire school’s curriculum in lower years is designed to prepare students for participation in the senior course by embedding the skills of public speaking and discussion throughout. The ethos of the school is to teach ‘inclusive participation’. The curriculum and pedagogy is thoroughly grounded in deliberative theories of democracy, and emphasises the importance of diversity, negotiating and managing political disagreement, reason giving, and civil discourse. Explicitly teaching these capacities has developed a robust political culture in this school environment (Hess and McAvoy, 2015, pp.87-90). The simulation does not assume that students already have the capacities necessary to deliberate about political issues, but begins with the cultivation of a regulated public space, which gradually teaches the students the skills they need. For example, the first few weeks of the course are devoted to providing a foundational understanding of the US Constitution and political parties and processes, with subsequent weeks designed to establish norms of discussion and conduct and the capacities necessary for deliberation. Explicit teaching includes how to signal disagreement without making *ad hominem* attacks, how to address interlocutors, how to chair discussions, and how to take responsibility for enforcing parliamentary procedure (Hess and McAvoy, 2015). Discussions are carefully monitored, and in the event that a student ‘crosses the line,’ the teacher explains why a given response was inappropriate. In interviews, students attested that it took discipline to be civil, underscoring the extent to which civil discourse must be taught, practised and reflected upon (Hess and McAvoy, 2015, p.94).

A third feature concerns *cultivating diversity* within the deliberation. The school reported does not ‘track’ students and is committed to providing all students with access to the *same* curriculum. By ensuring that students learn in a diverse classroom, the curriculum seeks to instil in students the belief that diversity is a deliberative and democratic asset, that people from different backgrounds are deserving of equal consideration and respect, and that political issues are best addressed when publicly and rigorously interrogated and decided in a democratic way (Hess and McAvoy, 2015, p.88). Including diverse students also seeks to enlarge the perspective of individual students, giving them a better understanding of the complex issues involved. If a classroom includes students with immigrant backgrounds, or who come from disadvantaged backgrounds, then other students can hear from those who may be most affected by the political issues under consideration (Hess and McAvoy, 2015, p.88). In surveys and interviews with students in these classes, Hess and McAvoy found that the students had become more confident in their ability to discuss controversial political

issues, had a better understanding of political processes, and were more interested in listening to viewpoints that differed from their own. They had become more proficient deliberators.

The fourth feature concerns the interconnections between classroom and whole-school environment. A number of studies point to the importance of a supportive, democratic environment as a necessary foundation for deliberative classrooms. In this sense, deliberative pedagogies within deliberative schools will be enhanced or restricted by the extent to which a school is a deliberative space itself. At Adams High, students are taught the skills of negotiating and managing political differences, and of considering all sides of a debate before making an informed, reason based decision. For example, teachers try to activate natural political disagreement between students, and when necessary, play the role of devil's advocate to encourage students to think about the issue in different ways. The result of these activities is that the 'students become involved in a school culture steeped in political talk' (Hess and McAvoy, 2015, p.96).

The forms of deliberative dialogue we have alluded to here are not detached or radically different from what Australian schools may already be doing. Rather than being a question of whether schools are deliberative spaces or not, the significant questions are in what ways are schools currently deliberative spaces, how explicit and intentional are deliberative capacities and pedagogies, and how deliberative pedagogies can be enhanced. For this reason, for schools to become (more) deliberative spaces may not necessarily require a fundamental shift of mindset and practice. Rather, deliberative pedagogies may simply require a change in focus and intimation. For example, while formal debating has a role to play in democracy (and by extension democratic education), debating alone is unlikely to be sufficient as a form of deliberative engagement – particularly when priority is placed on point-scoring, bettering others, and “winning the debate”. In such circumstances, the cognitive, communicative and moral capacities required for deliberation can become subverted towards personal, self-interested ends. This contrasts with the acceptance that deliberation is a collaborative, co-operative and shared endeavour. Approached in this way, deliberation is a constantly reflexive experience involving speaking *and* listening to others. As Barber (2003: 174) suggests, we must remember that we ‘talk as communication... involves receiving as well as expressing, hearing as well as speaking, and emphasizing as well as uttering’.

To conclude this section, it should be noted that forging schools as deliberative spaces is not without its challenges. While we cannot answer all of these in the scope of this paper, two challenges seem particularly pertinent. First, Hess and McAvoy's work references the 'political education paradox'. On the one hand, schools need to equip students with the necessary skills to participate in political life in a nonpartisan way, while, on the other, schools need to prepare students to participate in the actual, highly charged and partisan political community of which they are a part. As Hess puts it: 'part of the ethical challenge of teaching about politics is determining where political ends and partisan proselytizing begins' (Hess and McAvoy, 2015, p.4). Moreover, as 'emerging citizens' students may not be easily able to disengage and remove themselves from deliberative spaces which they may find uncomfortable or confronting. Thus, there is challenge for schools and teachers to balance engaging students in deliberation in a way which places the students interests as central, thereby avoiding compelling students to participate in discussions about topics in unduly forced ways.

A second challenge is that while deliberation requires the sharing of interests and different perspectives, it does not immediately dictate which interests and perspectives are legitimate. Of course, in detailing the scope of legitimate interests Australian schools will be guided by a range of contextual factors, including national legislation and local community interests. While some interests (those which discriminate or are prejudiced on the basis of race or sexuality, for example) are clearly illegitimate, others are more contentious. Of these, religious viewpoints provide an illustrative example. It has been argued, for example, that the use of the concept 'secular' within the Australian Curriculum may lead to its exclusion of religious standpoints from discussions within Australian public schools (see, for example, Peterson, 2016). Crucial in this line of argument are the ideas, first, that the secular might be interpreted as the exclusion of religious viewpoints and, second, that learning religions in Australian schools is too often viewed through the prism of denominational, confessional special religious *instruction* rather than non-denominational and non-confessional religious *education*. A pertinent example here is the "secular" (i.e. absence of religion) ethics education course in New South Wales state schools which exists as an *alternative* to special religious instruction. Though the state government has recently made it difficult for parents to enrol their primary school aged children to the ethics classes, a move criticised by some

religious groups⁴, the choice between courses based on scripture and “secular” (render here as the absence of religion) ethics excludes the deliberative interactions between religious and secular (i.e. non-religious) viewpoints. Clearly, more work is required, therefore, in understanding what interests and perspectives schools and teachers themselves consider legitimate within student deliberation.

Conclusion

We have argued that there is likely to be important value in providing a more developed conceptual and practical model of democracy to underpin the goal of educating young Australians to be and become democratic citizens. While there is a developing body of empirical research studies which report on practises of deliberative democracy within schools (see, for example, Hess and McAvoy, 2015; Schuitema et al., 2018; Nishiyama, 2018; , very little exists on such practises within Australian schools. Clearly, there is a need for research in the Australian context (and perhaps elsewhere) which interrogates how schools are (or indeed are not) deliberative, how such deliberation is fostered and experienced, and how these relate to student understandings and engagements with democracy. A core, and much needed, feature of such empirical research is whether, and how, deliberative democracy as it is practised and experienced in Australian schools serves to engage diverse interests and ideas.

Our argument here has been that by connecting citizenship in contemporary democracy with dialogical interactions, deliberative democracy offers a more specific frame for this endeavour than the current, somewhat ambiguous intention for active and informed citizenship found within the Australian Curriculum. A central aspect of deliberative democracy along the lines we have examined here, is that engagement in deliberative spaces, and through deliberative pedagogies, acts as both an educative site for citizenship and an expression and act of citizenship. It is through deliberation in deliberative spaces – such as schools – that young Australians can learn and exhibit the cognitive, communicative and moral capacities requisite for citizenship. In this sense, schools can act as what Nishiyama (2018: 11) terms ‘mediating spaces’, enabling students to experience how democratic encounters can unfold, perhaps even expanding their horizons of democracy as they mature. Without understanding and appreciating the role of schools to be and become deliberative

⁴ See <http://www.smh.com.au/national/education/nsw-government-making-it-harder-for-children-to-get-into-ethics-classes-warns-ethics-group-20160202-gmjr6o.html>

spaces, it is likely that young Australians will remain interested in politics, but lacking in the capacities and opportunities to turn this interest into meaningful, democratic action.

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