

Social capital and civics and citizenship: Developing a framework for activist education

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Previous scholarship has outlined possible models of civics education but have neglected to provide frameworks for evaluation of the way such educative programs contribute to ongoing active citizenship amongst the participants. This paper explicates a framework that can be used to analyse how effectively programs are developing active citizenship and activism amongst the participants, especially with a view towards their ongoing participation in civil society. Such a framework will be of use to practitioners seeking to analyse their programs, as well as policy makers interested in developing new programs of civics and citizenship education, or evaluating existing ones. Foregrounding the research in the context of civics and citizenship education in Australia, I illustrate the development of the framework through an activist education program, *Justice Citizens*, which took place in a Western Sydney high school. *Justice Citizens* is a useful example to examine the efficacy of the framework; it was a student-centred film voice project that required students to engage with issues in their local community.

Introduction

Within modern liberal democracies, including countries like the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada and South Korea, the role of civics and citizenship education is seen as being vitally important and is often linked to overarching statements about the aims of education (Schulz, Ainley, Fraillon, Kerr & Losito, 2010; Nelson & Kerr, 2006). In Australia, one of the roles of public education, as espoused by the *Melbourne Declaration* and agreed upon by all education ministers in Australia is to develop “active and informed citizens” (MCEETYA, 2008, p. 7). In recent times, there has been a growing concern about what is perceived as apathy and ignorance amongst young people (Senate Standing Committee on Education and Training, 1989; Dobozy 2004), especially in Australia, and this has led to a range of different policies and programs aimed at developing the knowledge, skills and attitudes required for citizenship in a modern democratic state.

While the focus of this article is on civics and citizenship education, I acknowledge that such approaches to education are associated with similar streams of education – for example, social justice education and human rights education. A number of reports describing how these forms of education should be implemented within schools and other educational spheres have been published recently (Ang, 2010; Burridge, Chodkiewicz, Payne, Oguro, Varnham & Buchanan, 2013). These three streams of education (civics and citizenship education, human rights education and social justice education) share common themes, content and pedagogies and are often interwoven (and mixed with other kinds of education, including democratic and patriotic education) (Down, 2004). In Australia, there have been calls for the development of a human rights culture in schools (McLeod & Reynolds, 2010), as well as the implementation of a range of different programs that seek to address social justice issues. In the international context, human rights education is

supported by the United Nations and the *Millennium Development Goals* (Singh, 2015). Winter stated that

A human rights-based approach specifically highlights the human rights entitlements of people and the corresponding obligations of governments, and encourages empowerment, participation and capacity building with local communities so that vibrant civil societies can hold their governments to account. (2009, p. 5)

Civics and citizenship education has had a presence in Australian school curricula since 1997 and the advent of *Discovering Democracy* (Holt, 2001; ACARA, 2014). However the spaces in which human rights education and social justice education operate are considerably more complex, and they often function on an ad-hoc, school-by-school basis, supported by non-government organisations like Amnesty International.

This paper takes this context into account as its starting point. The purpose of this paper is to provide a framework for the analysis of activist education programs. I propose a model where the framework, consisting of five key questions, can be applied to the program in question and thus determine its efficacy in developing social capital amongst the participants. While it is not within the scope of this paper to unpick the differences between human rights education, social justice education and civics and citizenship education, it is worthwhile highlighting a few of the ways that these approaches differ in order to more fully develop the context for my explication. It is worth keeping in mind that the activist education program discussed later in this paper is seen as being part of a civics and citizenship curriculum, but it equally draws from the traditions of social justice and human rights education.

The scope of human rights education can be of a global as well as a local nature. For example, organisations like Amnesty International (Amnesty International, 2014) emphasise the importance of making students aware of issues such as human trafficking, torture and slavery. The focus of Amnesty International's educational campaigns is often on ways that students can contribute to the campaigns to bring these issues to an end. On the other hand, civics and citizenship education is often seen as being related to matters pertaining to the nation of which the citizens are members, and the mechanisms and institutions by which they are governed (Holt, 2001). It deals with political ideas that are often absent from discourses about social justice. For example, the *Discovering Democracy* curriculum requires students to engage with ideas of rights and responsibilities of citizens at both a local and national level (Curriculum Corporation, 1998). However, in a similar manner to civics and citizenship education, social justice, too, has a local focus – for example, much of the social justice education that is present in Australian schools is focused on fund-raising for various charities that support homeless people, or becoming involved in non-governmental organisations that help marginalised groups (e.g. St Vincent de Paul Society, 2015). I acknowledge that these are quite broad generalisations and certainly do not apply to all programs. In effect, with the advent of globalisation and the development of 'global' or 'justice-oriented citizens', the differences between the three forms are becoming more and more liminal and blurred.

Moving on from that point, this paper seeks to explicate a framework for examining how different programs drawn from these approaches encourage social activism amongst their participants, specifically after the conclusion of the programs, in order to more fully illuminate the discourses at work within educational sites. I acknowledge that the nexus of civics and citizenship education, human rights education and social justice education is a cluttered space, and so I have chosen to focus on those aspects of similarity between the schools of thought, rather than their differences.

As an example of one such program, this article uses *Justice Citizens*. It is worth describing this program briefly before I discuss the impact of it and the way it applies to the framework. *Justice Citizens* was a student-centred film voice project for students in Year 9 at a Catholic school located in Sydney's western suburbs. This program, which was developed by myself and then implemented by a team of teachers who were all passionate about social justice and activism, required students to work in groups to examine local issues in their community, to select one or more of those issues, and to research it and then make a film about the issue. Groups worked with teachers but also community members (film-makers, journalists and stakeholders in the issues that they identified) to learn the skills necessary to make the films. These films were then shown at a public film festival at a local community centre. Students invited guests to this festival, including members of parliament, councillors, interested parties and people who had assisted in the filming process. The films were then published to a *YouTube* channel specifically set up for the project.

It is important to now provide definitions for the terms used above. The most important term used in this paper is 'activism'; I use it to refer to the actions encouraged by programs because it allows us to take the broadest possible meaning of civic and justice-focused action; within this term, I can include such examples of civil action as volunteering, awareness-raising, art and film-making and many other forms of activism that are related to one of the schools of education discussed earlier; that is, civics and citizenship education, human rights education and social justice education. I also take a geographically broad perspective: activism can include both local and global issues. Equally, activism can and does encompass a range of different modes: political, social, community and, more recently, virtual sites like *Twitter* and *Facebook*, have all become locations for activism of different forms. By doing this, I am adopting the most commonly adopted definition of activism: that is, the concerted and vigorous campaign to change social and political conditions. By focusing on the actions that constitute activism and not the activists themselves, I am mirroring Alinsky's (1971) description of activism. For Alinsky, everyone is capable of activism and thus, everyone can be an activist. This inclusive definition is important because part of my work requires developing an activist identity amongst students. Therefore, I am analysing the programs, and developing my framework, with this question in mind: how do education programs seek to encourage amongst the participants an ongoing desire to engage in campaigns to address social injustice and inequality?

In saying this, I am conscious that the discourses about what counts as activism are often framed by those in power (Nicoll, Fejes, Olson, Dahlsted & Biesta, 2013), and the

arguments of young people are conspicuously absent from these discourses; my analysis strives to take into account these marginalised discourses as well as the more mainstream discourses. The framework, which will be discussed later, builds upon my own empirical research, but also makes use of the concept of social capital as deployed by Putnam (2000), which is discussed below.

The role of social capital in the development of activism

I have used a conception of social capital to underpin a framework for the evaluation of activist education programs. I will discuss the evaluation shortly, but firstly I will briefly highlight the main features of social capital and how they apply in this context.

Central to my understanding of the development of active citizenship is the concept of social capital. Social capital has been of interest to researchers for a long time, but it rose to prominence due to Putnam's (2000) work, *Bowling alone*. Putnam was exploring the decline in memberships of community associations in the US. From this starting point, he conceived the idea that our memberships of social networks - sporting clubs, hobby groups and so on - have value and can contribute to increased productivity. Putnam was clear that, while we often form these connections for our own benefit, there are also 'externalities' that affect the wider community. Thus, the development of social capital is both a private and public good.

The most important concept related to social capital was the idea of reciprocity. Putnam suggested there were two different kinds: specific and general. Specific relates to an individual paying back another individual for a favour, whereas general reciprocity is the notion that helping some one out will mean someone else will help you out at some undefined point in the future. According to Putnam, the development of general reciprocity led to a more efficient society because it facilitated cooperation.

Putnam identified two specific kinds of social capital. The first was 'bonding' - this was a kind of social capital that strengthened ties between groups of people that already knew each other. This was, according to Putnam, inward-looking. An example of this kind of social capital being developed might be between the members of an environmental group who meet regularly. These members, due to the bonding activity of regularly meeting, would be more likely to show reciprocity towards each other than if they did not meet as regularly.

The second kind of social capital was 'bridging'. This kind of social capital was outward looking and was developed as individuals or groups made links with other individuals or groups. To continue the example from the previous paragraph, bridging might occur when members of the environmental group attend a conference, and make connections with other environmental groups or recruit new members to their group.

According to Putnam, 'bonding' is good for getting by - although it might not even succeed at that in the long term - while 'bridging' is good for getting ahead. It is also

important to recognise that these forms of social capital are not necessarily exclusive - some groups and activities perform both functions. Putnam also acknowledges the difficulty of measuring these forms of social capital.

Social capital has often been linked to the development of social activism and active citizenship (Hoskins et al., 2006; Esau, 2009). In fact, according to Hoskins et al. (2006) active citizenship is part of a much larger strand of research into social capital. The development of active citizenship is predicated upon civic engagement, which builds social capital. Drawing on Putnam's work, Hoskins et al. defined social capital as the reciprocity and shared goals within a community. The idea of shared goals is a facet that I believe is particularly important in activist education programs. Importantly, Hoskins et al. took pains to explain that there is more to social capital than simply a political dimension:

It includes new and less conventional forms of active citizenship, such as one-off issue politics and responsible consumption, as well as more traditional forms of voting and membership in parties and NGOs. (Hoskins et al., 2006, p. 11)

When taken in this context, programs like *Justice Citizens* can be conceived as tools to develop social capital amongst young people. Although they fit into the broad categories of active citizenship and social justice education, they achieve these goals through the development of various forms of social capital as part of the programs.

The social capital accrued by students taking part in these different programs takes different forms. Essentially, by taking part in these programs, students are gaining social capital that they can choose to 'spend' in different ways. The kind of the program that they take part in, as well as the level of previous capital that they bring to the program, determines the ways that they might choose to use that social capital. These ideas, especially in relation to *Justice Citizens*, are discussed below.

Common problems in activism education

Although there have been a number of programs instituted to increase civic participation, active citizenship and activism in Australia, these programs have varied widely in both content and pedagogies employed within them (Krinks, 1998; Print & Gray, 2000). In the early history of the colony of New South Wales, for example, there was an emphasis on moral and patriotic education, but after the Second World War, this was changed to embrace multiculturalism (Krinks, 1998), due to the increasing number and diversity of migrants arriving from overseas. Kalantzis identified the way that civics education has been the tool of governments:

In fact, at each stage in the development of Australian policy, the state has always seen education this way: as one of the most important places where the real work of assimilation, or integration, or multiculturalism - whatever the policy at the time happened to be - took place. (Kalantzis, 1989, p.3)

However, there have been specific weaknesses common to many of the programs. Firstly, there was an emphasis on transmitting values and attitudes to students, for example, the moral and patriotic education in early 20th century New South Wales - but this kind of approach was also present in the 'values education' that was to be taught in Australian schools from 2007. This approach to education owes more to indoctrination and efforts to force adherence to the status quo than it does to any real effort to develop critical faculties among students (Krink, 1998).

Secondly, there has been an emphasis on content knowledge of governmental institutions and the mechanics of government in many of these programs. *Discovering Democracy* for example, which was implemented across Australia in 1997, privileged a knowledge about the content of civics institutions over the experience of actually taking part in democratic process (Kemp, 1997) and was roundly criticised by a variety of academics and teachers for this omission (O'Loughlin, 1997; Kennedy, 1996). Thus it was more important for students to understand what the bicameral system of government was, and the heritage of the Westminster system than it was for them to engage with issues of injustice and democracy within their local communities. Even those opportunities for action within the curriculum were more likely to be simulations within a classroom setting, rather than a real-world, community based opportunity. I acknowledge that learning about previous historical examples of active citizenship (such as the Freedom Rides, in *Discovering Democracy*) might be powerful experiences for students in the hands of the right teacher, but I would argue that such material, if it is to be effective, must be translated into contemporary issues with which students are familiar. Furthermore, there is a requirement for these contemporary issues to have a democratic response, and not just be a lifeless collection of facts. There is evidence from a wide variety of sources (Ang, 2010; Zyngier, 2007) that the best way for students to learn social activism – and hence democracy, because it is contended here that the health of democracy is intrinsically linked to the level of activism – is to actually practise it. There is limited value in teaching young people about the mechanisms of government; certainly, there is no guarantee that having a knowledge of how a government passes legislation is likely to make young people more socially and civically active. As North American scholars Shermis and Barth wrote,

By passively storing up information about historical events... students are held to be disciplining themselves and thereby acquiring the knowledge and attitudes essential for citizenship at a later time. (Shermis & Barth, 1982, p. 27)

A third limitation of these programs, and arguably the most concerning one, was that few of the formal programs undertook longitudinal analyses of the participants. Although programs like *Discovering Democracy* had formal assessments at specific points within the program (Year 5 and Year 10), there was no assessment after the program to determine whether the young people had retained the knowledges, values and attitudes that were developed as part of the programs. While this would be challenging to do in anything but the most heavy-handed measures - perhaps by measuring number of informal votes or engagement in political parties, both of which have serious weaknesses - this is still an important issue to consider: after all, there is little purpose in developing various forms of

social activism education if there is no improvement in civic participation and social activism at the conclusion of the education in question.

This is a clear failing and one that my empirical research has targeted. By exploring an activist education program, *Justice Citizens*, I have been able to develop a framework for analysing these programs from the perspective of how effective they are in developing social activism, and not from a perspective rooted in content knowledge or observation of the program in progress. It is my contention that such a framework provides a holistic picture of social activism education efficacy, and can guide the future development of civics and citizenship education programs, social justice education programs and human rights education programs.

Justice Citizens

I have already briefly described *Justice Citizens*. It is worth, however, examining the program in greater detail in order to gain a better understanding of its philosophical orientation and practical implementation. As stated earlier, *Justice Citizens* was a film voice project for Year 9 students that took place in a Catholic High School in Western Sydney in 2011. The school was located in a low socio-economic status, semi-urban area. More than 100 students took part in the project, which ran for more than six months. Based on my own research into critical pedagogy and civics and citizenship education, I devised *Justice Citizens* and, along with two other teachers, I was responsible for delivering the program in my capacity as a teacher. The purpose of the project was to examine the efficacy of an alternative model of civics and citizenship education. Rather than the traditional *Discovering Democracy* approach, which had in the past been delivered in a 'thin' way, meaning that it was teacher-centred, didactic and emphasised the product over the process, *Justice Citizens* instead took on a critical pedagogical approach in which students were encouraged to act as agents of their education, rather than objects. The emphasis was on developing their own knowledge and sense of agency about issues that were local to their community via increasing the social capital that they had at their disposal. Thus, it was as much a community education program as it was a centralised school education program. I discuss these ideas in more detail below.

Drawing heavily from Freire (1970), *Justice Citizens* was a form of problem-posing education in which students had the opportunity to identify an issue that they felt was important to them and their local community. Then, working as part of that community and also with the community, they researched the issue and created a film (aided by journalists and film-makers from a range of sources), which was then presented to the community at a film festival. The idea of group work was important. I was conscious that opportunities for students to work on meaningful projects together is quite limited in schools, especially as students approach the senior years. I wanted to challenge this, and I also wanted to encourage some creative friction amongst the groups. Students were able to select their own groups.

The types of these films varied; some were quite straightforward documentaries and included pieces to camera by students and interviews with stakeholders, while other films were more creative and adopted techniques like dramatic re-creations of events in order to communicate their message. Students were encouraged to make reasoned and thoughtful assessments about the best way to communicate with their audience about the particular issue they had chosen, with the aim of either making their audience more aware of a particular issue, or convincing the audience to change their behaviour.

The film festival was a powerful experience for many of the students. For some of them, it was the first time that their work had been showcased to an audience wider than the school community, and the prospect that strangers could view their films filled them with a degree of trepidation. What really made them nervous, though, was their concern about how the people who had been involved in their films (for example, the teenage mothers or the refugees who had been interviewed) would respond. Fortunately, the response was very positive, which affirmed the students' learning.

The topics that students chose for their films were wide-ranging and contextual to their own lived experience. They included domestic violence, drug and alcohol abuse, road safety, bullying, racism, and refugee perspectives. Students were encouraged to pick a topic that they wanted to find out more about; almost anything was acceptable, as long as it was somehow related to the notion of justice. In particular, the teachers encouraged students to look beyond the school gates for topics, and provided them with exemplar films from other, similar projects to show what young film-makers were capable of doing. The film festival itself was funded by a grant from the local council and was held for the specific purpose of providing a showcase for the films and then generating further discussion between community members.

To determine the success of *Justice Citizens* in developing 'justice-oriented citizens' (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004, p. 8), a selection of ten students was interviewed before and after the program. These students were either nominated by their peers or self-nominated, and they included the range of cultures and academic abilities present in the school. Six of the students were male, and four were female. Three students identified as Indigenous Australians, while one was of Filipino heritage. The rest were white Australians. The percentage of students from minority groups involved in *Justice Citizens* was slightly higher than that of the whole school body.

During the interviews, the students were asked questions about their understanding of active citizenship, politics, rights and responsibilities and social activism and advocacy, as well as the role of the media, before *Justice Citizens* took place. These initial answers were then contrasted in the later interviews to identify the ways that *Justice Citizens* might have contributed to the development of the students' social capital, critical consciousness and justice-oriented citizenship.

The findings were illuminating about the way that, in this context, *Justice Citizens* had altered and developed the students' understandings of their place in society and their

agency. Although not all students' experiences were the same, there were a number of common themes that came out of the project that are relevant to this discussion.

Firstly, students felt that they had 'become' active citizens over the course of the project. This was much more than I had originally expected, but students were able to identify the way that they had contributed to the civic life of their community through the films. In particular, students were very proud of the way that they had tried to let the voices of marginalised groups (teenage mothers, refugees) be heard through the medium of film. One of the most powerful experiences – for me, as a teacher and researcher, and for the students (most of the students interviewed referred to it) – were the discussions about the topics related to the issues. In the case of teenage mothers, there was quite a heated discussion between groups of students who had radically different ideas about the 'fault' of teenage mothers. In the case of refugees, again, the discussion was heated with arguments about what Australia's responsibilities to them were, and the merits of community detention versus off-shore processing. These discussions were an important part of the process because they provided the students with starting points for their research and an opportunity to engage with differing opinions. After the students had watched each other's films at the film festival, these discussions were revisited, and a number of students were able to describe how their opinions had changed – either through the process of making the film and speaking to individuals, or through watching other group's films.

Secondly, students intended to continue being socially active. This is important, but I acknowledge that there is often a difference between a student's intention and their actions, and it was for this reason that I was curious to see what physical actions the students took in the future. This intention to take further action was displayed differently by each student. Some students planned to continue the relationships they had developed as part of the program (for example, continuing to take part in environmental work with the Nepean Waterkeepers) while others were going to make films about other issues that they felt were important (for example, one group originally made a film about dirt bike safety, but now intended to make films about safety in the industrial technology workshops for younger students). In addition, a number of students from the group who were interviewed explained that they were intending to run for election to the Student Representative Council, something which they had not considered before.

To explain these shifts in identity and agency, I used the ideas of social capital and critical consciousness to formulate a number of concepts related to social activism. The first is the follow-up effect. This term (and its partner, 'knock-on effect', described below) was coined by me to describe the different ways that students demonstrated activism at the conclusion of this program. This effect is exhibited when students continue to pursue an interest after the conclusion of the formal education program. For example, a number of students participating in *Justice Citizens* had identified that environmental degradation of the Nepean River was an issue. They made a film about this for *Justice Citizens*, but at the conclusion of the program, they were not interested in making other films, but instead chose to maintain their links with Nepean Waterkeepers (a local environmental organisation), and be active citizens in that respect.

In this case, students were able to leverage the social capital that they had developed as part of *Justice Citizens* to make further connections and maintain those connections with community groups. In Putnam's terms, *Justice Citizens* acted as a bridge to other communities, and students could then work on bonding with and within those communities. All of this was facilitated by development of a critical consciousness predicated on the realisation that the students themselves were capable of acting to change injustices within their own communities.

On the other hand, some students chose not to pursue any links that they had developed as part of *Justice Citizens*. Instead, these students took the skills that they had learned and applied them in different arenas. One of the best examples of this was the number of students who wanted to involve themselves in student politics after *Justice Citizens*. These students explained that they felt they had something to say about justice in the school, and the Student Representative Council (SRC) was the mechanism for this to take place. Students, without any advice or guidance from teachers, had identified the SRC as a starting point to engage in activism. As an example of their commitment to this cause, the students who had chosen this course of action suggested this voluntarily in the interviews, rather than providing it as a response to any particular line of questioning. The involvement with the SRC is particularly important because, in previous years, the SRC had not been a particularly vibrant or dynamic body. This newfound interest and attitude I explained through the 'knock-on' effect. Students in this instance became 'bridge-makers' themselves; that is, they made connections with other groups and communities to pursue their own goals. This is different to the 'follow-on' effect, but is no less valuable. Rather than using existing sources of social capital that might be present (for example, in the Nepean Waterkeepers group, as described above) students who exhibited this effect sought out new sources of social capital – or attempted to build their own through new links and groupings.

A framework for analysing activist education programs

This conception of the links between social capital and active citizenship and social justice education can be applied to the study of the effectiveness of other social activism education programs, with the aim of identifying whether they are meeting their stated aims of developing social activism and active citizenship. In order to assist in this task, I had, before implementing *Justice Citizens*, developed a framework consisting of a number of questions that I felt would be good measures of its success. These questions could also be used to direct evaluations of other programs. I envision teachers asking themselves these questions in order to develop or improve programs of activist education. Importantly, these questions seek to evaluate the success of the program in developing social activism after the conclusion of the program; this sets this framework apart from other models that evaluate the curriculum or teaching opportunities of the program while it is in place. This fundamental difference is based upon the argument that I believe evaluations should be backward-looking; that is, if they are not examining whether participants become and remain socially active following the program, then they are failing to assess the primary

cause for their implementation. This framework, which takes the form of a number of questions, is presented below, along with some additional commentary.

1. What community partnerships were able to be fostered in the program?

One of the key findings from *Justice Citizens* was that students gained a much greater sense of their role in civil society if they had the opportunity to work amongst members of the society. That is why the program made every effort to involve non-school based organisations and community members to share their work with the participants. Students were being positioned almost as adults – which is a marked contrast to much of their other school life, where children are not given much scope for independence (Dobozy, 2004; McCowan, 2009).

2. In what ways was the program situated in the real world?

Many social justice programs make use of simulations and role playing activities to communicate the knowledge and attitudes required to become socially active. In our experience, while there is value in these artificial models, the most successful development for students occurs when they are actually engaged in real projects centred in their local community. For example, *Justice Citizens* made use of community partnerships to develop social capital. There are dangers inherent in involving the community, and I am not suggesting that schools should throw open the doors to any person who wants to come in, but I believe that these risks should be negotiated, rather than avoided, as the potential benefits are great.

3. What exit points does this program provide for students to pursue their own interests and passions at its conclusion?

Strangely, one of the more overlooked parts of social activism programs is what happens after the conclusion of the program. If the program has successfully developed social activism amongst the participants, it is important that it provides opportunities for students to continue to engage with the issues that they have identified after the conclusion of the program. In some ways, this question is linked to the previous one: if students have been working with and in the community, then it is far more likely they will continue to maintain these relationships after the program than if they have not. Of course, it should be kept in mind that *Justice Citizens* used data from only ten students: further study is required before any general principles can be drawn from its success.

4. What transferable skills does the program provide students with?

Some civics and citizenship courses focus on the development of knowledge about specific aspects of society. It makes much more sense, from an ongoing perspective, for participants in the program to develop skills as well as knowledge. The reason for this is that if students are going to remain engaged in social activism at the conclusion of the program, then they need something to offer - and this might well be the skills they have developed as part of the program. For example, as part of *Justice Citizens*, students

developed basic film-making and interviewing skills. These skills, and the confidence that accompanied their development, meant that students felt that they had something to offer their communities. There is a large number of different, readily transferable skills that can be developed through *Justice Citizens* or similar programs. For example, students will likely have the opportunity to develop problem-solving, critical thinking and leadership skills – all of which have application beyond the scope of the course.

5. What is the program's link to social activism?

A program based on developing social activism should be clear that its purpose is developing such activism. However, recent examples of such programs in Australia, especially *Discovering Democracy*, show that the gap between the rhetoric of developing active and informed citizens and the reality is wide. While documents like the *Melbourne Declaration* call, in no uncertain terms, for the development of 'knowledgeable and active citizens' (MCEETYA, 2008, p.8) - that is, activists - *Discovering Democracy* ultimately became about the history of Australian democracy, as discussed above. Social activism programs should match their goals with their implementation; thus, *Justice Citizens* was very clear about its purpose, and the activities in which students took part. A large component of its success can be attributed to the fact that *Justice Citizens* specifically engaged with organisations in the participants' own communities, which contributed to the effectiveness, as the personal connection is both present, immediate and readily identifiable. In doing so, *Justice Citizens* made use of the resources that were available in that particular community. For example, there was access to film-makers and journalists. Not every community will have these particular resources, but every community will have some resources to draw upon. It is up to the facilitator of the courses to find these resources and make use of them.

Conclusion

As politicians and policy makers continue to foreground the importance of formal education models in the development of active citizens, and the importance of those citizens to democratic government, it is important that educators ensure that the education that does take place around these themes is meaningful to the students in question. It is far too easy for such education to become a recitation of the obligations and rights of citizens, or a litany of global injustice issues, which can lead to feelings of powerlessness amongst the participants (O'Loughlin, 1997; Kennedy, 1996). Such approaches are not the most effective ways of developing ongoing, sustainable activism amongst young people. They are almost certain to fail to achieve the stated goals of the program if those goals include the development of activism. Instead, I have devised a framework for effective education for social activism, based on five questions, that can be used by educators to assess the levels of activism that the programs they are delivering are encouraging.

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