Comparing the New Zealand Curriculum and Young People’s Conceptions of ‘Ideal Citizens’
Re-examining Trust, Participation and Responsibility

Bronwyn Elisabeth Wood

Abstract
While citizenship has almost a ‘universal appeal’ (Faulks, 2000: 1), there remains much more debate about what type of citizen is ‘ideal’ for society and how citizenship education can contribute toward this end. In this paper I address the space which falls between the policies and ideals of a citizenship curriculum, and the understandings of citizenship held by the students to whom this curriculum is directed. I begin by examining the conceptions of the ‘ideal citizen’ conveyed in the official narratives of the most recent New Zealand Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2007). I argue that ‘Third Way’ and ‘knowledge economy’ policy ideas have been influential in the nature of the ‘ideal’, personally responsible, participatory and entrepreneurial citizen conveyed in this curriculum. I then compare and contrast this with conceptions of the ‘ideal’ citizen held by school-aged young people. Comparisons between curricula and youth conceptions indicate a similar ‘personally responsible’ and participatory vision of ‘ideal’ citizens. However, closer examination of youth discussions also highlight some of the tensions related to issues of trust, participation and responsibility, thus challenging many of the assumptions upon which citizenship education in New Zealand (and other countries, including Ireland) is premised.

Keywords
Citizenship education; curricula; social studies; trust; responsibility; participation; youth

Introduction
The need for an active, responsible and informed citizenry is widely recognised by many governments as a prerequisite for an effective and strong democracy. To this end, recent trends that report falling rates of participation in democratic institutions and the perceived loss of social capital (Putnam, 2000) alongside the associated ‘democratic deficit’ (Crick, 1998) have lead to the rise in educational initiatives designed to equip and create ‘better’ citizens. Citizenship programmes such as compulsory citizenship education in England (QCA, 1999), the Republic of Ireland’s Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE) programme, Northern Ireland’s ‘Local and Global Citizenship’ programme (since 2003) and the Discovering Democracy programme in Australia,
illustrate the considerable ideological and economic commitment of governments toward education for citizenship. The motivation toward citizenship education stems from a belief that this will produce ‘better’ citizens. Whether it is explicit or implicit, citizenship curricula promote a version of the ‘ideal’ citizen within whom the social, economic and political hopes of a nation lie. However,

While there is much consensus that citizenship is a desirable thing, there is much less agreement about what the status should entail, what kind of community best promotes citizenship, and whether the status is inherently exclusive. (Faulks, 2000: 2)

In this paper I address the space which falls between the policies and ideals of citizenship curriculum developers, and the understandings of citizenship held by the school-aged young people toward whom this curriculum is directed. The focus of this paper is on the recently released New Zealand Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2007) (NZC), alongside an examination of the ‘ideal’ citizen held by school-aged young people from New Zealand. These young people were not educated under this new curriculum, so I am not attempting to draw direct links between their conceptions and the new curriculum as a result of their schooling. Rather, through this comparison I aim to explore the potential alignment or mismatch of these visions to provide some insights and critique of the complex and contested space between policy and practice, between adult decision-makers and young people that lie at the heart of creating citizens in a democracy. I also intend to approach this with an explicit examination of the social and cultural context within which curricula are created. Addressing this contested space is vital if citizenship education is going to be relevant and meaningful to young people whose alienation and disengagement from political areas has been reported by many (see Furlong & Cartmel, 2007; Print, 2007; Torney-Purta, Lehmann, Oswald, & Schulz, 2001).

Contested notions of the ‘ideal’ citizen

The concept of the ‘ideal’ citizen is a contested one. Is the ‘ideal’ citizen one who is law-abiding and pays his or her taxes, or one who gets involved in local communities and donates to worthy causes, or is it one who marches on the streets to protest about a government’s decisions? The multiple positions taken in response to this question are likely to reflect the diverse ideological positions inherent in democratic society, which in turn influence policies and practices within a nation. The malleability of the concept of citizenship is perhaps part of its ‘almost universal appeal’ (Faulks, 2000: 1) – by providing a concept that is potentially instrumental to both radicals and conservatives according to how they employ it. As a concept it can provide a degree of general agreement as well as a cover for the more ambiguous aspects as it has the potential to serve the aims of both the right and the left (Brooks & Holford, 2009). Rather than a static position then, citizenship has a ‘dynamic identity’ (Faulks, 2000: 6) and can not be divorced from the context in which it is developed or fail to reflect varying political and ideological positions held by governments (Faulks, 2000; Kennedy, 2008a). In turn, citizenship education programmes and curricula are subject to political and social changes depending on the salience of particular ideologies. It follows that …
such a curriculum is never value-free or neutral: it will always reflect current conceptions of the ‘good citizens’ as the ends toward which the curriculum is directed. (Kennedy, 2008a: 486)

The extent to which citizenship education should focus on the rights of citizens vis-à-vis their responsibilities, and the capacity citizenship education has to address structural inequalities within society is also a source of tension within conceptions of the ‘ideal’ citizen in citizenship curricula (Brooks & Holford, 2009). This presents dilemmas to educators who are charged with delivering citizenship programmes as to whether they should stick with the kind of citizenship that is highly adaptable to the status quo (thus creating ‘employable and quiet’ future citizens/consumers), or whether they should encourage citizens that critically engage and challenge existing structures in society (Openshaw, 2004; Ross, 2008; Wolmuth, 2009).

Theoretical and methodological considerations

My analysis in this paper draws from a critical theoretical framework which draws attention to the legitimacy of power within society and how some groups use power to regulate the participation, inclusion and freedom of others (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000). In the first half of this paper I employ a critical analysis of curriculum through which I view the selection of the knowledge contained in curricula as ‘neither neutral nor innocent’ (Cohen et al., 2000: 33), but instead as a ‘socially contextualized process’ (Cornbleth, 1990) reflecting the inherent political and ideological tensions that are present in society. I undertake an analysis of the conception of the ‘ideal citizen’ by purposively selecting aspects of the NZC as illustrative of citizenship by direct content (of the words ‘citizen’ or ‘citizenship’) or implied by association with concepts of participation in society, engagement and/or citizenship values. Similarly, through a critical youth studies stance, I aim to contextualise young people’s experiences within social, cultural and historical factors, yet also recognise their role as competent social actors in their own right (James, Jenks, & Prout, 1998; White & Wyn, 1998; Wyn & White, 1997).

In the second half of this paper I draw on discussions with eight focus groups of Year 12/13 young people (age 16–18) (n=35) who all attend a co-ed, decile six school in a South Island city. Two Year 12 or 13 senior social studies classes were invited to participate in the study and were asked to ‘opt in’ rather than ‘opt out’ (one opted out). The gender balance in these two classes reflected a higher number of females than males (females = 26; males = 9). The timing of these interviews, two weeks before the New Zealand 2008 general election, and the age of the participants (16–18) made the findings from this group of participants especially interesting, and enabled me to capture some of the political aspirations of these young people (five of whom were allowed to vote in the National Election for the first time). Confidentiality of students was protected by their selection of a ‘code name’ (pseudonym) for the project and identifying features of their town/school have been removed.

Data collection took the form of eight café-style focus groups. The idea for this method was derived from ‘world café-style groups’ (Brown & Isaacs, 2005) and adapted for the classroom context. Students selected groups (between three and five per group) and grouped around a table, were provided with an audio recorder,
coloured pens and a set of posters. The posters included open-ended statements such as ‘a “good” citizen is …’ or ‘responsibilities/right of young people are to …’. By adapting the traditional facilitator-led focus group approach to that of a ‘café-style’, I aimed to employ a research approach which enabled ‘naturalistic’ conversation beyond the direction of an adult interviewer. So, whilst I was in the room at all times, and moving between groups working on their posters, the groups were largely self-directed in the production of these posters. My role was to encourage dialogue, clarify some points, ask for expansion on others and introduce a new poster when group discussion dried up or moved off-topic. When I did join in discussions, my questioning did encourage participants to elaborate on points in greater detail. Yet, group discussions in my absence were often very rich in data, and enabled me to capture more of their ‘everyday’ conversations that were also surprisingly political at times (for an example, the ‘I think the government are bad citizens’ discussion described below was held entirely in my absence). Groups also had an opportunity to report back to the others at the end of each session. The findings are not intended to be representative or comparative, but instead provide insights into conceptions of citizenship held by these young people.

Policy contexts and citizenship education in New Zealand

While countries including Australia, England, Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland, the United States, and many European nations now include explicit aspects of citizenship education within their official curriculum documents (see Nelson & Kerr, 2006), New Zealand has historically preferred to take a subject-based approach to citizenship through the curriculum area of social studies (Archer & Openshaw, 1992; Barr, 1998; Mutch, 2005a, 2005b; Openshaw, 2004). However, research indicates that social studies teachers rarely are explicit about citizenship in their teaching, preferring a model where citizenship attributes and values are ‘caught not taught’ (see Archer & Openshaw, 1992; McGee, 1998; Mutch, 2008; Openshaw, 2004). Aitken (2005: 96) has pointed out that the failure to make explicit the links between social studies and citizenship education has also contributed to the ‘general silence’ of citizenship education in New Zealand. The end result has been a muddled, tentative and inconsistent approach to citizenship education through social studies.

The 2007 New Zealand Curriculum marks a break with this tradition, with much more explicit references to citizenship attributes and education now appearing in the social sciences curriculum explicitly, but also as an integrated theme across curricula and extracurricular areas (Nelson & Kerr, 2006). The heightened promotion of citizenship education across the curriculum in the 2007 NZC therefore warrants further attention to the political context in which it was formulated.

‘Third Way’ policies

In the nineties, a new form of governance known as the ‘Third Way’ began to be discussed in the United States (under Bill Clinton) and the United Kingdom where it was closely linked to the rise of Tony Blair’s Labour government (Wolmuth, 2009). ‘Third Way’ proponents speak of a ‘third’ political pathway which embraces the mutual benefit of a strong society and a strong economy by arguing that strengthening the bonds of community and trust within society will lead to economic prosperity and
stability (Giddens, 2000). Ideas about a ‘Third Way’ began to emerge in New Zealand in 1999 with the election of the fifth Labour government who introduced policies (later renamed as the ‘new social democracy’) to promote the contribution that ‘social capital’ and high levels of community participation have in developing a ‘productive’ economy and society, whilst still maintaining many of the free market neoliberal ideals that Labour inherited from the National government (Kelsey, 2002).

While many of the ideals promoted by the ‘Third Way’ have not seen fruition, and much of its claims have been heavily criticized, the Curriculum Stocktake Report (Ministry of Education, 2002) which served to guide the subsequent 2007 curriculum development, ‘picked up on the notion of fostering citizenship as a means to addressing social ills’ (Mutch, 2008: 210). The Stocktake called for a greater recognition of the ‘future focused themes’ of citizenship, social cohesion, enterprise and sustainability. A second key idea that I propose has influenced the new curriculum and the nature of the active citizenship within it is that of the ‘knowledge society’.

**Knowledge society policies**

Rapid technological change and intensifying globalisation processes during the 1990s began to highlight the key role that knowledge played in an information-rich and networked society (Castells, 2000). Knowledge economy proponents argue that instead of producing items and products, the ‘new’ global economy requires ideas, innovation, creativity and critical thinking to ensure economic competitiveness (Gilbert, 2005; Kennedy, 2008b: 13) as promoted by the OECD publication *The Knowledge-based Economy* (1996). Ideas about a ‘knowledge economy’ began to surface in New Zealand in the late 1990’s, notably when the Information Technology Advisory Group submitted to the New Zealand government their landmark report, *The Knowledge Economy* (1999). This report marked a clear shift in thinking for the transformation of New Zealand from ‘a pastoral economy into a knowledge-driven economy’ (Information Technology Advisory Group, 1999: 1).

These shifts in thinking about knowledge have similarly demanded shifts in thinking about how education is delivered. The need for ‘learning how’ rather than ‘learning what’ (Kennedy 2008) is seen as pivotal within this framework and the OECD’s notion of Key Competencies (OECD, 2005) has become a crucial part of this reconceptualisation of approaches to knowledge. Educational models which promote more individualized and flexible pathways in education (rather than the ‘one size fits all’ approach of the industrial age) have also seen a rise in popularity (Gilbert, 2005). Finally, as education can no longer be seen as static or complete within a set period of time, the concept of ‘lifelong learning’ is now ‘almost a mantra’ (Kennedy, 2008b: 17) in official government and curricula documents around the world, placing the responsibility firmly on individuals to meet the changing needs of the labour market by re-educating themselves in a process of ‘individualized and recurrent continuous learning and qualification pathways’ (Chisholm, 2001: 65).

**The New Zealand Curriculum (2007)**

The New Zealand Curriculum (NZC) (Ministry of Education, 2007) was launched in late November, 2007 amidst claims that through it, students will ‘learn how to learn’ … ‘innovate and problem-solve’ … and become ‘creators of new knowledge’ (Trevett &
McKenzie-Minifie, 2007). The profile of citizenship has been both raised and integrated across the whole curriculum (Electoral Commission, 2007). The language of citizenship now cuts across many areas of the NZC whereas previously it was largely the domain of the social sciences. For example, citizenship is referred to within the *principles* which are the ‘foundations of curriculum decision making’ as one of the *future-focused issues* along with sustainability, enterprise and globalisation; it is also supported in the new section on key competencies (such as *participating and contributing*) and most specifically in the learning area of the social sciences where students ‘explore how societies work and how they themselves can participate and take action as critical, informed, and responsible citizens’ (Ministry of Education, 2007: 9, 13, 17).

The place where the concept of the ‘ideal’ young citizen is most clearly articulated is in the *vision* statement, as ‘what we want for our young people’.

Our vision is for young people:

- who will be creative, energetic, and enterprising
- who will seize the opportunities offered by new knowledge and technologies to secure a sustainable social, cultural, economic, and environmental future for our country
- who will work to create an Aotearoa New Zealand in which Māori and Pakehā recognise each other as full Treaty partners, and in which all cultures are valued for the contributions they bring
- who in their school years, will continue to develop the values, knowledge, and competencies that will enable them to live full and satisfying lives
- who will be confident, connected, actively involved, and lifelong learners. (Ministry of Education, 2007: 8)

In the second half of this paper I explore the conceptions held of ‘ideal’ citizens by social studies students as a way of delving into the complex space between policies and practices of citizenship education. In doing so, I am not advocating for a linear causality between conceptions of curricula and those held by young people just because they have passed through the education system, but rather, seeking to explore the similar and contrasting understandings between the writers of curricula and those to whom they are directed.

**Youth voices: Conceptions of ‘good’ citizens**

In this part of the paper I turn to the findings derived from eight café-style focus groups with New Zealand students. In order to classify conceptions of the ‘ideal’ citizen, I have drawn on Westheimer & Kahne’s (2004) framework for a critical analysis of the kinds of citizens society can work to produce. The first is a *personally responsible citizen* who has good character and is honest and law-abiding. The second, *participatory citizens*, actively take part in activities that contribute to their community. The third, *justice-oriented citizens* question established social structures and work against injustice in society in the ilk of critical educationalists such as Freire & Shor (1987) (see Appendix 1 for greater detail).

For the poster which asked young people to complete the sentence ‘A good citizen is …’, the most common responses could be classified as ‘personally responsible’ citizens (Table 1). The image of a personally responsible ‘good’ citizen could be summed up by a 17 year old student as ‘someone who did their part for society, had strong morals …
someone who is selfless'. Many groups referred to personal attributes of citizens, such as being ‘polite, respectful and friendly toward others’. All groups referred to obedience of laws and respect for the government. All focus groups also included conceptions of a ‘participatory citizen’ on their poster and in their discussions. These ‘good’ citizens moved beyond personal actions to participatory actions, such as ‘someone who is willing to help strangers or others in need’. Focus groups also suggested ‘good’ citizens ‘care for the environment’, ‘do their part for society’, and ‘work for the community’. Only three responses could be classified as ‘justice-oriented’, and even these responses could also be placed in the ‘participatory’ category.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personally responsible citizens</th>
<th>Participatory citizens</th>
<th>Justice oriented citizens</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shows respect (to others and government) [2]</td>
<td>Do their part for society/the community</td>
<td>Someone who stands up for the rights of themselves and others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role model [2]</td>
<td>Services to others</td>
<td>Fights for good things</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsible</td>
<td>Someone who stands up for the rights of themselves and others</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selfless</td>
<td>Cares about the environment [2]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Pays their taxes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong morals – honest, polite, friendly, considerate [2]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Someone who doesn’t litter</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Someone who accepts other races cultures and backgrounds.</td>
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Table 1: Examples of students’ conceptions of a ‘good’ citizen

The findings in Table 1 suggest that that these young people held a predominantly passive, personally responsible, and to a lesser extent, community and service-minded view of the role of citizens in society. These findings show many similarities to other studies which found young people’s conceptions of ‘good’ citizens drew heavily on a constructivist social participation model which endorse personally responsible and community-service minded conceptions of citizens, but rarely advocated for political or dissident citizens (see Alazzi, 2009; Lister, Smith, Middleton, & Cox, 2003; Taylor, Smith, & Gollop, 2008).

It is worth making a comment about methodology here, because if I had just collected the data in the posters (as reported in Table 1) in the form of an open-ended survey, for example, without also collecting the café-style informal conversations that accompanied them, it is likely that my findings would conclude that young people’s conceptions of ‘good’ citizens are rarely contested or critical. However, in my examination of the discussions that were occurring alongside the creation of their posters, I realised that my data was also showing some different trends. These revealed far more nuanced, complex and critical conceptions of citizens, and highlight some of the tensions related to issues of trust, participation and responsibility from the perspective of young people, and took place as young people discussed the creation of their posters of ‘good citizens’ and ‘rights and responsibilities of young people in society’.
Trust
Contrary to the findings of many researchers who have drawn attention to the lack of political interest and participation shown by young people (Furlong & Cartmel, 2007; Print, 2007; Putnam, 2000), the young people interviewed in this study had high levels of interest in political issues, participation and the political process. This was particularly apparent in male participants, whose comments are included frequently in the discussions noted below. Within the Year 13 students, five were to be first-time voters in the national elections in two weeks time. At the time of this research the Labour Party (under the Prime Minister Helen Clark) was in the final weeks of a nine year period of power. Many of those who were still aged 17 spoke of their disappointment at not being to vote:

Rhymenoceros: Me and [student] are one or two days too young. (17 yrs, female)
Hip Hop Potamus: I'd love to vote. So many people don't give an arse about voting. … I'm so keen. Do you think it is illegal to try and influence those that can vote? (17 yrs, female)
Bella: Well, it's not really. You can sort of influence them. You're not really forcing them. (18 yrs, female)

Other groups raised aspects of politics in passing throughout their discussions as illustrated by the following:

Demonslayer5000: Labour will probably get in. (16 yrs, male)
Miley Syrus: No they won’t. (17 yrs, female)
Demonslayer5000: They’ll get back in.
Miley Syrus: No they won’t […] I want the Green Party to get in power.
Kirk: [interjects from next table].
I want the Bill and Ben Party. You can actually vote for them. (16 yrs, male)

Demonslayer5000: It’d be a laugh if they were elected. [later] So can we actually go and register your name as a party … that'd be sweet.

However, many also showed a cynicism about the political process, such as in a discussion about not signing petitions because ‘petitions don’t do jack … they don’t listen to them’ (18 yrs old male). Others showed a distrust of politicians, such as the statement from a 17 year old girl: ‘I don’t believe that anybody who’s trying to be our government right now is worthy enough to be our government’. Expressing a similar sentiment, in the following discussion four 17/18 year old girls illustrate the cynicism they had toward politicians and the political process before any of them had ever had a chance to vote.

Skinny Malinky
LongLegs: I think the government are bad citizens. Because this whole election is supposed to be about trust and yet they’re sitting and actually bagging each other down. (18 yrs, female)
Claire: Starting with Helen Clark I must admit. She said this was going to be a clean fight and she was the first one to come out with a bad advert. (18 yrs, female)

Leaf: Did you see the one with John Key – “This is John … this is John”? (18 yrs, female)

Skinny Malinky LongLegs: Yeah. But no one has actually sat down and said this what we’re going to do to help you.

Claire: That’s because they’ve got nothing that they can do … they’ve got no good ideas.

Inky Pinky Ponky: Well, Labour does – with the student loans. (17 yrs, female)

Claire: But whether she actually acts on that is another thing. She’s been in government for how many years, and she probably won’t act on it if she’s re-elected. No offence. But it’s true.

This discussion highlights the critique that the young people subjected politicians to and their lack of trust in some of their practices.

**Participation**

The findings in Table 1 also fail to capture the more radical and participatory views of citizenship held by one focus group of two males and a female (IT Master, Labour4life and Nananana … Batman). This group made reference to a recent news event in New Zealand in an attempt to define a more active and interventionist type of responsible, participatory citizen:

**IT Master:** It’s our responsibility to find criminals (18 yrs, male)

**Labour4life:** To find criminals? (17 yrs, male)

**IT Master:** Yes. Like if someone was getting away from you, who like stabbed someone in the back like Austin Hemmings. You are responsible to like go and catch the bastard …

This group’s discussion went on to a debate lasting over thirty minutes about the need for citizens who could implement civil disobedience in society, showing a much more critical and ‘justice-oriented’ (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004) understanding of what it meant to be a ‘good’ citizen:

**Labour4life:** Can we say though, that sometimes a ‘good’ citizen has to break the law in order to … (17 years old, male)

**IT Master:** Yes, oh, absolutely, absolutely … (18 years, male)

**Labour4life:** When you get like civil disobedience, which is in a form like breaking the law … you get in trouble with the police. There are sometimes you have to do that in order to fulfil your responsibilities as a citizen. In the Springbok Tour for example, a lot of people broke the law then, but we look back and say they are heroes.
Later when I talked to the group they were trying to define the fine line between a criminal and someone who broke the law as a form of civil disobedience, such as being a protester against the Springbok Tour:

Bron: But what’s the difference between [a Springbok protester] and a criminal?

IT Master: A criminal goes out there and deliberately breaks the law. An activist does it because they have to get a point across.

Nanananana …

Batman: Or someone who stands up for the rights of themselves and others. (17 yrs, female)

Labour4life also demonstrated sophisticated knowledge of historical perspectives by arguing that perspectives of actions taken can change over time. He later summarised this debate on the difference between a criminal and civil disobedience for the class:

Labour4life: It’s how history sees it I suppose. Because you can only tell if it is justified [in hindsight]. It’s like in the American Revolution. The revolutionaries killed a lot of people. And we could say ‘No, they killed people – evil!’ But (it was like) then when we look back we say ‘oh, they were justified’.

Labour4life illustrated a complex and rich understanding of citizenship and civil disobedience. When asked if the ability to protest (and even break the law) was what we wanted from citizens in society, this whole group concurred ‘definitely’. Yet, when I examined their poster, they had written that a ‘good citizen is …’ someone who ‘pays their taxes, doesn’t litter, isn’t self involved and stands up for the rights of themselves and others’. Only this final statement was classified as ‘justice oriented’ in Table 1.

At the same time as describing many of their own participatory actions as citizens, four of the eight groups identified their status as young people in society as a significant barrier to their participation and motivation. For example, their statements included:

‘We’re not respected because of our age’ (Shaz, female, 16 yrs).

‘[O]ur status in society – since we’re younger…and we won’t get listened to much’ (Shan, female, 17 yrs).

‘I think young people find it really hard to get involved cos they don’t take us seriously that we want to get involved. Like we often want to help but we’re not treated how we should be treated’. (Female, 17 yrs).

Miley Syrus (female, 17 years) referred specifically to teenagers as a state of limbo in terms of status in society:

Young people are kind of like not taken seriously. ‘Specially when you’re a teenager. It’s like maybe if you’re 12 and that, its like ‘wow, a little 12 year old’, but now [they just think] you’re taking the piss. Me and [student] went home and asked if we can have money to give to African children and it was like ‘no way’!
This in turn affected young people’s perceptions of their own ability. As one seventeen year old girl put it: ‘I reckon a lot of our age people think that we’re too young to make a difference’. Kirk Penn (male, 16 years) surmised that the reason young people didn’t participate in society was because they are ‘thinking it’s pointless and thinking that our help won’t make a difference’.

Responsibility

Another issue raised by many of the groups was the weight of responsibility that they felt on their shoulders. For example, one group wrote that is was their responsibility ‘to be the future’. This same group had a strong sense of responsibility toward environmental and social issues. One young person took the idea even further arguing that in the absence of social action, the world could spiral into mass murder or mass genocide. He referred to social action in terms of a moral imperative:

| IT Master: | Social action is something we HAVE to do or else we’re in the crappers. Crappers is defined as we will have no world to live on. (18 yrs, male) |
| Bron: | Is it a feeling you HAVE to do it or can it be voluntary? |
| Nananana … | |
| Batman: | No, we have to. (17 yrs, female) |
| IT Master: | I believe we have to. |
| Bron: | For the sake of …? |
| IT Master: | For the sake of human life. For the sake of people’s jobs, for the sake of hunger and … poverty. It should be our responsibility to fix it. |

Bella took issue with ITMaster, disagreeing strongly with this feeling of ‘moral imperative’. She agreed that social action was needed, but that it needed to be a voluntary action.

| Bella: | Yeah, but that’s a choice. It’s like a responsibility that we CHOOSE to take on. Society can still function if you don’t. (female, 17 years) |
| IT Master: | So you’re encouraging mass murder, mass genocide, mass … |
| Bella: | No, I’m not encouraging genocide, I’m just saying it’s a responsibility that you choose to take. Not a responsibility that you HAVE to take to make society function. |
| IT Master: | But why would you NOT choose it? |
| Bella: | I’m just saying it’s a choice. |
| Bron: | Can I re-word it? What would you say a ‘good’ citizen is? |
| Bella: | Someone who does actually take these social actions and does something about it. Or at least doesn’t contribute to the problem even if they can’t do anything to help it. |
What is interesting in the above discussion is Bella’s response and rejection of this weight of responsibility being placed so firmly on individuals in society, advocating instead that this needs to be a choice and not imposed on individuals.

**Comparing young people’s conceptions of the ‘ideal’ citizen with the curriculum’s**

A comparison of the findings of my analysis of the new curriculum and the young people’s discussions about the ‘ideal’ citizen show a fair degree of similarity. Both favour a primarily ‘personally responsible’ conception of an ‘ideal’ citizen – one who ‘shows respect’ and is ‘law abiding’ (research findings) and ‘is able to relate well to others’ and is ‘motivated and reliable’ (Ministry of Education, 2007: 8). And both also support the idea of participatory citizens becoming actively involved in communities and schools as ‘participants in a range of life contexts’ (Ministry of Education, 2007: 8). The ‘ideal’ citizen described appears to endorse a type of flexible, active citizen who meets the needs of a changing (knowledge) economy by being innovative and entrepreneurial. ‘Third Way’ ideas that encourage a growing participatory citizenry appear to have a general consensus amongst the youth participants in this project and the curriculum developers of the NZC. Although youth participants offered far less discussion on ‘knowledge society’ ideas in their conceptions of ‘ideal’ citizens, I would argued that the integration of these ideas into the NZC will further the potential for the ‘employability’ agenda as a key part of the creation of ideal citizens in society.

Where the conceptions of the ‘ideal’ citizen between this group of young people and the curriculum start to part ways, is in the dilemmas raised in their discussions about many of the core features which underpin citizenship. The more critical conceptions of citizenship presented by young people draw attention to the uncontested conceptions of the ‘ideal’ citizen presented in the NZC. This small group of young people could be described in many ways as highly motivated participatory citizens, yet, their perceptions of politicians and political processes have been tainted by what they see as examples of ‘bad citizens’ (in government). Their degree of active participation is significantly affected by what they perceive as their own poor status in society, and this in turn affects their own perceptions of their ability to make a difference or enact change. Further, their discussions also problematise the concept of responsibility by debating just how great a weight of responsibility should be placed on young citizens in society. I will re-examine the concepts of active participation, trust and responsibility in light of the points raised by the young people in this study.

**Re-examining trust, participation and responsibility**

Trust lies at the heart of many practices which democracies rely on to work. The cynicism toward politicians and political processes exhibited by some of these participants makes their citizenship participation now and in the future more tenuous (see, for example, Spring, Dietz, & Grimm, 2007). Giddens (1991) notes that in circumstances of uncertainty and multiple choices, notions of trust have particular application. In his words, trust generates the ‘leap of faith’ which practical engagement and participation in society demands. In the absence of this, these young people are much less likely to participate fully in society –something which jeopardizes the shared responsibility advocated for in ‘Third Way’ and citizenship policies. The theme that
these participants raised about their low status in society and lack of respect, alongside a cynicism for many political processes and politicians has significant implications for citizenship education and the future of democracy. Many argue (see for example Catt, 2005) that if people do not learn the ‘habit’ of active participation in their youth, they may never develop that practice later in life. The conflicts and tensions related to issues of active participation, trust and responsibility underpinning conceptions of the ‘ideal’ citizen in society raised by participants in this study, challenge many of the assumptions upon which citizenship education is premised.

The concept of ‘participation’ was raised as a problematic one by young people in this study. At one end of the spectrum, some young people saw the participation of ‘ideal’ citizens in a more active and radical light than some curriculum writers or governments may be comfortable with. However, the promotion of participation in the NZC opens wide the potential for more radical interpretations. Kidman (2005) suggests that the current advocates of youth participation within curricula and policies fail to address the potential for radical politicized youth, preferring instead to promote a form of participation ‘… within carefully delineated economic and social parameters that reinforce neoliberal ideologies’ (Kidman, 2005: 96). How will adult society respond if these young people enact these conceptions in terms of more radical forms of citizen participation such as attending a strike during school hours or organising a protest? The failure of the NZC to address more radical forms of participation exposes young people, teachers and communities to political fallout if they do take action and serves to reduce young people’s role as citizens to that of ‘apprentice citizens’, excluded from a rights-holding, active and critical role in their society (Harris, 2006).

Other young people spoke of the weight of responsibility they felt to ‘be the future’ and be the ones who had to address societal challenges, else the world would be ‘in the crappers’ (ITMaster). ITMaster’s ideal of citizen responsibility for social ills echoes some of the rhetoric of ‘Third Way’ policies introduced earlier in this paper with its insistence on the recovery of community and active citizenship (Latham, 2001). Lister et al. (2003) similarly found that the young people of Leicester had a greater sense of their responsibilities than their rights. Whilst youth participation has been helpful for encouraging the inclusion of young people in decision making, there is concern that the discourse of participation, on its own, serves only to further ‘responsibilize’ children and youth, and ultimately blame them for their failure to engage (Harris, 2006: 223). ‘Third Way’ policies also open up the potential for making individuals, rather than the state, responsible for coping with the consequences of a free market economy (Fitzsimons, 2006).

These findings also raise some interesting questions about methodologies employed to research young people’s political awareness and conceptions of citizenship. The findings of Table 1 clearly do not report all that was happening in the course of poster making. Yet, it appears that much of the complexity of their discussions was reduced to a couple of words for the sake of recording simple points on the poster. It is likely that some of their discussions were not even perceived to be related to the poster construction. These findings appear to support calls to move beyond adult-centric definitions of engagement and conventional research designs when researching with young people in this area (O’Toole et al., 2003).
Conclusion

Whilst recognising the enhanced opportunities for citizenship education in the new curriculum, the findings in this paper draw attention to the competing and often conflicting philosophies that underpin these curriculum reforms and policies. I would suggest that the close links made in the new curriculum between ‘knowledge society’ ideas and active citizenship are problematic when you start to examine the kind of citizens evoked by these ideas. The ‘ideal citizen’ reported in the vision statement of the NZC (Ministry of Education, 2007: 8) ignores the immediate tensions in this ‘ideal’ citizen image. There is an inherent tension between ideas that promote innovative, enterprising entrepreneurs able to respond to the needs of the economy and ideas that promote active citizens able to critique democratic processes and practices. A citizen who supports economic sustainability may at times directly contravene practices which support environmental sustainability. Similarly, an enterprising citizen committed to seizing new technological opportunities, may find that these could work directly against the creation of shared partnership upheld in the Treaty of Waitangi. The underlying economistic, utilitarian themes present in knowledge society ideas have the potential to be taught at the expense of other citizenship issues of wellbeing and identity (Wyn, 2009). Yet, how are citizens prepared to face such complex decisions if educators fail to acknowledge the often contradictory and conflicting philosophies that underpin citizenship statements?

This raises questions about whether schools will simply become the training grounds of the corporate workplace (Giroux, 2003), fulfilling the ‘employability agenda’ which Wolmuth (2009) argues is one interpretation of the integration of ‘Third Way’ policies into citizenship education. Or will citizenship education offer opportunities to develop citizens in a democracy who can also critique existing structures in society, and display agency and reflection to address issues and ideas of concern? If it is critical, active and justice-oriented citizens that that we actually want, then opportunities in citizenship education which are afforded in curricula need to look beyond the status quo of the ‘ideal’ personally responsible, participatory citizen and consider the nature of citizens required for the future of democracy. Citizenship education is fraught with conflicting models and values about which kind of citizen a society could actually want. Exposing these issues within the classroom is an important step to providing young people with opportunities to untangle, embrace and explore the ‘maximal’ potential of citizenship (McLaughlin, 1992). Ultimately, citizenship education must be judged by the society it produces (Osler & Starkey, 2005).

Acknowledgements

I acknowledge the role that my supervisors, Dr Joanna Kidman and Dr Mark Sheehan have played in the development of this paper. The original impetus for this paper came from a Wallace Scholarship awarded by the New Zealand Electoral Commission and I express gratitude to Dr Helena Catt for her thoughts on an earlier draft. Finally, many thanks go to the two anonymous reviewers for helpful critique and ideas.
Notes

1. A version of this paper was delivered at the conference, All Change for Young People?: Mobility, Markets, Media, Models of Practice, held at the National University of Ireland, Maynooth, June 2009

2. A school’s decile refers to the socio-economic communities from which it draws its students. A Decile 1 represents a ‘low’ SES community and a Decile 10 a ‘high’ SES community.

3. In New Zealand, eighteen is the minimum age for voting in national elections.

4. Discussions took place over three consecutive days and a return visit to the school was also undertaken to discuss and clarify findings.

5. Social studies is a compulsory curriculum area in New Zealand, providing an integrated approach to the social sciences for all students from Years one to ten (ages 5–14). Mutch (2005a) contends that the Health and PE curriculum in New Zealand has also played a (lesser) role in citizenship education.

6. Citizenship education is defined within the future focused themes as ‘exploring what it means to be a citizen and to contribute to the development and well-being of society’ (Ministry of Education, 2007: 39).

7. Pākehā: Māori word to denote those who are non-Māori.

8. Where more than one group recorded a similar description is indicated by a number in brackets (e.g. [2]).

9. Referring to a Labour-sponsored advertisement defining John Key – leader of the opposition at the time (Prime Minister of New Zealand following the election referred to) as flip-flopping/ changing.

10. Austin Hemmings stopped and tried to help a woman being attacked in Downtown Auckland and ended up being stabbed to death himself on 23 September 2008.

11. The South African Rugby Union tour of New Zealand in 1981 is often referred to as the Springbok Tour. It resulted in heated protests against the apartheid regime in South Africa at the time.

12. See Beals & Wood (forthcoming) for a discussion on adult and media reactions to radical youth activists in New Zealand in 2006.

References


New Zealand Conceptions of Citizenship


Appendix 1: Kinds of Citizens

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Personally responsible citizens</th>
<th>Participatory citizens</th>
<th>Social-justice oriented citizens</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acts responsibly in their community</td>
<td></td>
<td>Active member of community organizations and/or improvement efforts</td>
<td>Critically assesses social, political and economic structures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Works and pays taxes</td>
<td></td>
<td>Organises community efforts to care for those in need, promote economic development or to clean up environment</td>
<td>Explores strategies for change that address root causes of problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Picks up litter, recycles and gives blood</td>
<td></td>
<td>Knows strategies for accomplishing collective tasks.</td>
<td>Knows about social movements and how to effect systematic change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helps those in need</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Seeks out and addresses areas of injustice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obeys laws</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sample action

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personally responsible citizens</th>
<th>Participatory citizens</th>
<th>Social-justice oriented citizens</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contributes food to a food drive</td>
<td>Helps to organize a food drive</td>
<td>Explores why people are hungry and acts to solve root causes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Core assumptions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personally responsible citizens</th>
<th>Participatory citizens</th>
<th>Social-justice oriented citizens</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To solve social problems and improve society citizens must have good character; they must be honest, responsible and law-abiding members of the community.</td>
<td>To solve social problems and improve society citizens must actively participate and take leadership positions within established systems and community structures.</td>
<td>To solve social problems and improve society citizens must question and change established systems and structures when they reproduce patterns of injustice over time.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004).
Biographical Note
Bronwyn Wood is a doctoral candidate at Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand where she is completing research in youth participation in active citizenship. Her research interests include youth sociology, youth geographies and citizenship education.

Contact Details
Bronwyn Elisabeth Wood,
Faculty of Education,
Victoria University of Wellington,
c/o Postgraduate Office,
PO Box 17–310,
Karori Campus,
Wellington 6147,
New Zealand.

Email: bronwyn.wood@vuw.ac.nz