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Year 11 students' perceptions of political institutions,  
political decision-making and political personalities:  
How do young New Zealanders participate in political  
processes?

A thesis

submitted in fulfilment

of the requirements for the degree

of

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by

**Janina Rack**

## **Abstract**

Thirty-seven percent of young, eligible New Zealanders, aged 18 - 24, did not vote in the General Election of 2014, which is a population of 126,065 people (Electoral Commission, 2014a). While New Zealand is still amongst countries with the highest voting rates, it also has the eighth steepest decline in turnout rate out of 22 advanced democracies (Vowles, 2012). These statistics suggest that current methods to involve and entice formal political participation, like voting, seem to fail. From my experience as a secondary school Social Studies teacher, a narrow definition of what constitutes political participation and an incomplete understanding of how young people perceive political institutions and decision-making processes, could be a reason for this perception of the politically disengaged young New Zealander (Arsenau, 2014; Catt, 2005; Liddle, 2013; McCulloch, 2014). This thesis analyses and presents current literature and philosophical theories around the political participation of young people, and political literacy education in the Social Sciences learning area of the New Zealand curriculum (Ministry of Education [NZC], 2007). The thesis also includes results from research I have conducted which focuses on young people aged below the voting age of 18 (Year 11), and their perceptions of political institutions, political decision making processes and political personalities. Through the use of a mixed methods approach (student questionnaires, semi-structured qualitative interviews with Social Sciences teachers, student focus group conversations), this research endeavours to describe how young New Zealanders aged 14 to 16 perceive and participate in political processes. The information gathered through these methods, is analysed, interpreted and used to provide guidance for political literacy education in the Social Sciences learning area of the New Zealand Curriculum.

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A special thanks to the New Zealand Political Studies Association and the convenors of the 2015 New Zealand Social Sciences Conference, for giving me the opportunity to present at their conferences (Rack, 2014, 2015). This was a great way to share preliminary findings of my research and meet fellow researchers in my field of research.

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Special thanks to the participants in my research, and all the inspiring young people I was blessed to work with as a practitioner and researcher. A special thanks also to the participating teachers who took time out of their busy days to discuss political literacy with me.

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# Introduction

## Researcher background

I am a Social Sciences teacher at a New Zealand high school. My background is in political sciences which I have studied as part of my teacher education at a University of Education in Germany. Whilst there, I first encountered theories on political socialisation of children and adolescents which have influenced my practice as an educator and student of political literacy ever since. I also briefly experienced teaching political sciences as a subject in German schools.<sup>1</sup> Inspiration to complete this project originates from the differences I experienced between political literacy education and political socialisation in Germany and New Zealand. In New Zealand, political literacy is taught in the school subject: Social Studies (NZC, 2007). I studied the Social Sciences learning area of the New Zealand curriculum as part of a Social Sciences Curriculum paper (Hunter, 2013) included in the Programme for the Graduate Diploma of Teaching, at the University of Waikato, New Zealand. As part of this curriculum paper, I composed an assignment on Year 10 Social inquiry and issues-based pedagogy with the title: Working paper: Decreasing voting rates - How can we engage young New Zealanders in politics and voting? This paper was an inspiration for me to create a much larger study on this topic, which has resulted in this thesis. As follows is a detailed explanation of how I arrived at my research questions. Some of my experiences in New Zealand schools, which shaped the research will be outlined. Each of these experiences relates to one of my research questions which are highlighted in italics as follows.

## Conceptualising Research questions

This research originated out of a combination of my education, the *social milieu* (Bourdieu, 1999) I was raised in, pedagogical and philosophical theories I studied, and

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<sup>1</sup> In Germany, Political science is a stand-alone subject in many counties such as Saarland, Niedersachsen, Hessen and Brandenburg or as part of a combination with Economy such as in Baden Wuerttemberg, Hamburg and Bavaria.

my experiences as a social sciences practitioner in New Zealand and German secondary schools. Each of these experiences and theories can be related to a specific research question as displayed in Figure 1: My research questions. The theories and experiences outlined below will be discussed in detail through Chapters One and Two.



**Figure 1:** My research questions

Firstly, when working through a unit on rights and responsibilities with a Year 10 Social Studies class I was surprised at some students' negative views on the work of police. I then found out that most students in the class were not aware of the three branches of New Zealand government (Legislative, Executive and Judiciary). This and similar experiences made me interested in: *How young New Zealanders perceive political institutions, political decision making processes and political personalities*. I am interested in students' political perceptions rather than their political knowledge because I am interested in providing a platform for young people's political opinions. My thinking has been influenced by theories such as: counter-socialisation (Ochoa-Becker, 2007) and moralisierung (Kant, 1803). There have been large quantitative studies on students' knowledge about politics such as the International Civics and Citizenship Study (Schulz, Ainley, Fraillon, Kerr, & Losito [ICCS], 2010) which seems to define political knowledge as a finite, pre-defined array of facts. Studies like the ICCS made me wonder how students perceive politics without judging how purposeful or useful this knowledge might be. Therefore, I aimed to gather, analyse and interpret perceptions of students without judging the merit of this knowledge and perception.

Secondly, sometimes students have told me about a social action they took to create change, or about their involvement in an organisation such as the City Youth Council. When questioning their involvement in politics, however, they sometimes mention that they are not interested, not qualified to have a political opinion, or unable to create political change. This is also very interesting because it seems to suggest a discrepancy between political engagement of young people and how they perceive their own political engagement. Therefore, I wonder: *How young people perceive themselves as political beings?* This question has been influenced by Bandura's theory of efficacy (Bandura, 1977) which has been reported as one of the main factors of why people vote (Arsenau, 2014; Bandura, 1977; Vowles, 2012). The literature suggests there are three types of political efficacy: political, internal and external. Each of these is to be seen on a continuum. For example: "I can't make a change with my vote" refers to low political efficacy and: "I can make a change" refers to high political efficacy. Someone could be said to have a low political efficacy if they thought they could not make a change with their vote. Internal efficacy refers to the belief in one's ability to understand politics. External efficacy refers to factors outside of a person such as scandals and current policies that can influence trust in the government (Bandura, 1977; Campbell, Gurin, & Miller, 1954; Catt, 2005; Scotto & Xena, 2015). Another reason this question is important to me, is the role the media plays in influencing young people about their roles as political beings. Recently, there has been a lot of media attention about young disengaged people (Liddle, 2013; RadioNZ, 2014, Robinson, 2014). This has been particularly fuelled by the low voting rates across the nation. Thirty-seven percent of young, eligible New Zealanders, aged 18–24, did not vote in the General Election of 2014, which is a population of 126,065 people (Electoral Commission, 2014a).

I therefore wonder how young people feel about themselves as political beings, as a means to give young people a voice about their own political ideas and participation. This might not be in formal ways such as voting, but through secondary pathways, such as selective consumerism. Selective consumerism (The Institute of Grocery Distribution, 2007) sometimes called ethical consumerism, is a form of political participation, aiming at sending a message to companies by deciding to buy or not to buy their products. Selective consumerism can be related to the ecological footprint of a company (buying electronic cars because they are good for the environment) or the

social footprint (buying fair trade coffee to support fair employment conditions in the coffee industry) (The Institute of Grocery Distribution, 2007).

Thirdly, during a project on social action, facilitated with a Year 10 Social Studies class, I experienced students' ways of thinking about social agency. I noticed that many students tended to choose what might be called an informal way of taking social action. Examples of what students chose were: raising money by organising sausage sizzles, raffles, setting up a donation box, or raising awareness by creating posters and Facebook pages. Only one group chose what I view as a formal path of political participation. This involved a petition and a letter to a local Member of Parliament. The following question resulted: *How do young New Zealanders perceive political participation and how do they participate in political processes?* This question is also influenced by the current changing landscape of political participation in society itself. There has been a shift from interpersonal communication to communication using social media such as Facebook and Twitter which was evident in the provision of online voter engagement tools in the 2014 General Election in New Zealand. Tools included AskAway ([nzelectionaskaway.co.nz](http://nzelectionaskaway.co.nz)), ValuesExchange ([www.values-exchange.com](http://www.values-exchange.com)) and VoteCompass ([nz.votecompass.com](http://nz.votecompass.com)). New Zealand and international literature provides a wide array of different definitions of what constitutes political participation which ranges from voting only to selective consumerism using social media (Lamprianou, 2013). Whether young people are politically engaged can only be measured by using a definition of what it means to be politically engaged. It seems appropriate to ask students what they think this means, then compare their responses with how the literature defines political engagement.

Fourthly, during discussions with students, I received mixed messages as to what students' learned about politics in the subject Social Studies. One comment from a Year 11 student made me particularly curious. After showing my student questionnaire to a group of students in order to receive some feedback, a student commented that she wished her peers would always be asked about their opinions in Social Studies. Other students I have talked to were quite unsure about what they learn in Social Studies and very few mentioned something about politics. This made me wonder: *What teachers' attitudes are towards political literacy education, and what kinds of political literacy education they value?*

Finally, teachers and student teachers I have worked with mentioned that they feel quite unsure about the Achievement Objectives of the Social Sciences learning area (NZC, 2007) to do with politics. In my view they keep the teaching around these areas rather brief. I wonder: *How the Social Sciences learning area in the New Zealand Curriculum (NZC, 2007) could be used to provide a platform to learn about political institutions and political decision-making processes, in order to empower young New Zealanders to participate in political processes?* Another cause for my interest in this question is my study of the Social Sciences in the New Zealand Curriculum. While there are many potential areas in the curriculum to support political literacy education, there is little specific evidence as to what and how to teach political literacy in the classroom. There also seems to be a one-sided view on what it means to learn about politics and how to become a good citizen. For example the New Zealand Curriculum values students, who will become participating citizens who know about the system of government in New Zealand. However, it is not mentioned that students should develop personal opinions about politics and have the ability to challenge the system of government available. Therefore, I think it is important to carry out a thorough analysis of political literacy presented in the New Zealand curriculum.

### **Qualitative versus quantitative research**

Due to the nature of this study, I decided to carry out qualitative research. This has been influenced by the research questions outlined above, as well as by studies available in the literature. The majority of current political participation research, in New Zealand (Bolstad, 2012; Electoral Commission, 2014a, 2015a; ICCS, 2010; Lang, 2010; Satherley, 2011; Vowles, 2012) and internationally (Calenda & Meijer, 2009; International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance [IDEA], 1999; MORI, 2001; Pintor & Gratschew, 2002) is quantitative and focuses on voting as the only form of political participation. There are only a few recent qualitative studies available such as (Sheerin, 2007; Taft & Gordon, 2013; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004; Wood, 2010). These studies seem to add valuable understanding of political participation from young people's points of view. I would like to present young people's perceptions without judging or evaluating what they mean.

In deciding to research political perceptions of young people, I chose a mixed methods qualitative approach. This included a questionnaire completed by three Year 11 Social Science classes in the Waikato region, a focus group conversation with selected students, and a qualitative interview with three Social Sciences teachers. I hoped the research would assist me to explain some thinking processes of young people regarding politics and their perceptions of politics. Another reason for choosing a qualitative research approach was due to my underlying philosophical assumption of offering a possibility for young people to voice their ideas, and to provide a possible platform for young people to influence change.

### **Narrowing down the field of literature**

The field of political participation is a very large and often ambiguous field of research. In order to gain a deeper understanding of political participation of young people below the voting age, I decided to map out a small field of the literature. Below are the posts that map out the size of my field of inquiry:

Firstly, this study was carried out in Waikato secondary schools and aimed at mostly using New Zealand literature. A reason for this is that politics and policy are fields that are very specific to regions. For example it is difficult to compare voting rates between Australia and New Zealand, when in Australia voting is compulsory, and non-voting can lead to punitive consequences. I will refer to some case studies from other regions in the world where this can provide some insight for the situation in New Zealand.

A second means of minimising the field of inquiry is the focus on recent literature post 2005. I decided to favour recent literature for the same reason as above, because politics is a fast changing field. For example, the New Zealand 2014 elections, were particularly different from any elections before, because they have featured a new, social media-driven campaign fuelled by revelations such as Kim Dot Com's accusations about mass surveillance operated by the Government Communications Security Bureau (GCSB) (Safi & Parkinson, 2014). New Zealand 2014 election campaigns were also influenced by *dirty politics*, a phenomenon, discussed by Nicky Hager in his book: *Dirty Politics- How attack politics is poisoning New Zealand's political environment* (Hager, 2014).

Dirty politics refers to a negative political environment which is shaped by unethical behaviour, corruption and conspiracy to get ahead of political opponents. Since this influenced and changed the political climate of New Zealand significantly, I believe literature post 2005 to be more relevant to young people's political perceptions.

A third means of narrowing the field of literature was to be a focus on established political and social theories and reviving them in order to function as pillars for political participation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Important thinking, used in the theoretical part of this study is from Immanuel Kant (Kant, 1803), Pierre Bourdieu (Bourdieu, 1999) and Albert Bandura (Bandura, 1977). This particular strand of literature was an integral part of my undergraduate programme in Germany where I reviewed and analysed many texts such as Bourdieu (1999), Kant (1803) and Bandura (1977) in German language which is my mother tongue. Therefore, some of these texts are referenced by their German titles.

Fourthly, the field will be narrowed down by focusing on young people below the voting age. I am interested in this age group because there has been less research produced on this group of young people, and because this is the group I am working with as a practitioner of social sciences education.

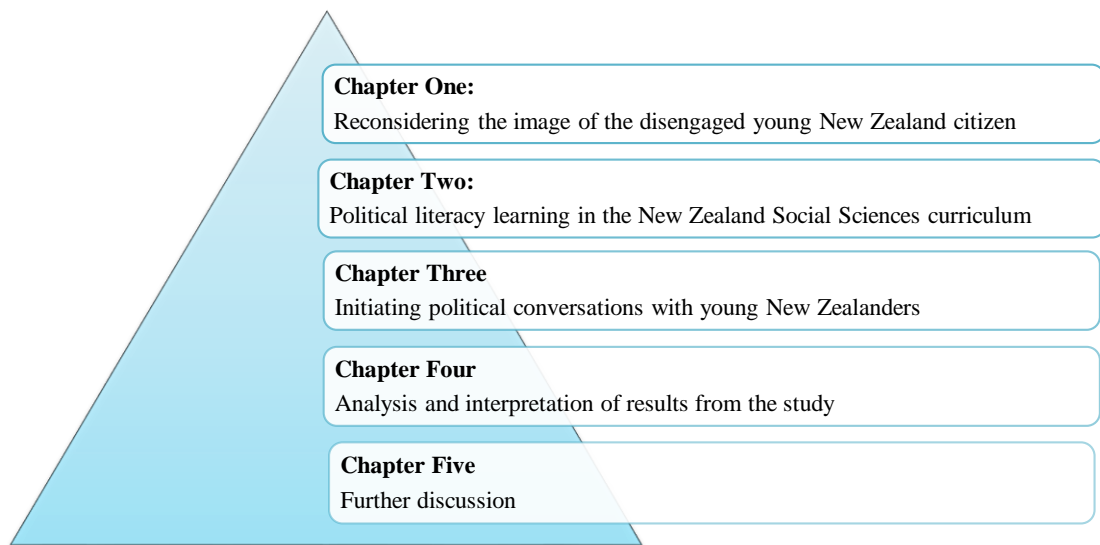
Another field post to narrow down the field of inquiry is a focus on qualitative research rather than quantitative research. I do name and outline major quantitative studies such as the ICCS which has been basis for many other studies in this area, and which has proved an important basis for much New Zealand research. However, my main focus is on more recent qualitative or mixed method research which is more beneficial for my research since I conducted qualitative mixed methods research as well.

### **The chosen way of working with literature and theory through the thesis Chapters**

I decided to interweave literature through conceptual chapters rather than presenting a literature review as a separate section. My five chapters which are presented in Figure 2: Thesis structure, are designed to add more understanding of the political lives of

young New Zealanders from the Introduction to the Conclusion. Chapter One discusses the notion of political participation of young people and how political values, knowledge and political action are acquired. It also shows a different perspective on the “disengaged young New Zealander”. Chapter Two is contextual, describing the situation of political literacy learning within the New Zealand curriculum. Chapter Three focuses on research methods and outlines my research on the political perceptions of Year 11 students. Chapter Four presents, analyses and evaluates the findings of my research and Chapter Five discusses further questions and themes resulting from my research and thesis.

Figure 2: Thesis structure, visualises the structure of my thesis. It is depicted in the form of a triangle because I believe starting at Chapter One, the more knowledge and concepts are added, the clearer our understandings of the theme of this thesis will become, which relates to the larger shape of the triangle towards Chapter Five.

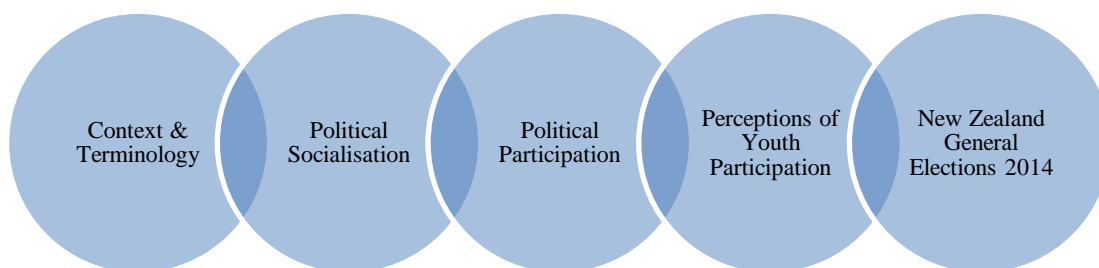


**Figure 2:** Thesis structure

## **Chapter One: Reconsidering the image of the disengaged young New Zealand citizen**

“Young people hold the key to the future because they are the ones who react to new conditions. Older people are, on the whole, too set in their ways to be responsible for social or political change, so most long-term change comes about by way of generational replacement” (Franklin, 2004, p. 216)

As the title of this Chapter indicates, I would like to reconsider the image of the apathetic or disengaged young New Zealand citizen. I believe, considering young New Zealanders as apathetic and disengaged from politics, does not paint the whole picture but omits many aspects of the political life of the young New Zealander. I argue this image can be very harmful to the political efficacy (Bandura, 1977) of young people which is the belief in one’s ability to create change. As the quote indicates, however, young people will play an important role in changing and creating their future. Therefore, researchers, educators and other stakeholders in young people’s lives, should support young people to take on roles that set positive impulses for their futures. As the previous introduction to this thesis has outlined, my research focuses on three areas of young people’s political participation: their political perceptions, their self efficacy, and their perception of political participation. In order to gain understanding of these areas, I argue that we first need to gain an understanding of concepts and terminology, how young people learn to become political (political socialisation) and how young people participate in politics. I also argue it is important to find out how young people are perceived as political participants, since this can have an influence on their self-efficacy, and therefore further political participation. I present some information on recent General Elections in New Zealand (September, 20<sup>th</sup>, 2014) to gain some understandings of how young people are engaged in politics by different stakeholders. Since youth political participation is a widely discussed topic in many parts of the world, I will present research from a wide range of contexts for each of the sections in this Chapter. I will start with international examples and then come back to New Zealand research to apply the concepts to New Zealand where my research was carried out. Figure 3: Organisation of Chapter One, as follows, shows the organisation of this Chapter:

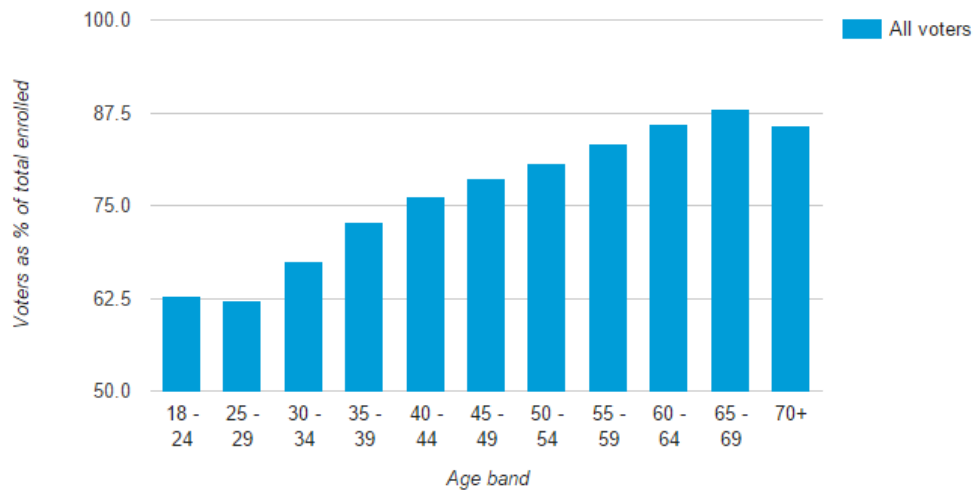


**Figure 3:** Organisation of Chapter One

This diagram shows how the different parts of this Chapter connect with each other. For example, in order to understand how young people learn to become political (political socialisation), a shared understanding of concepts and terminology is needed. Or, in order to describe the political participation of young people, understandings of how political perceptions and concepts are acquired, are needed.

### **Context and terminology**

A high level of disengagement of young people in politics has been reported worldwide. While New Zealand is still amongst the countries with the highest voting rates, it also has the eighth steepest decline in turnout rate out of 22 advanced democracies as for example reported by Vowles (2012). Thirty-seven percent of young, eligible New Zealanders, aged 18–24, did not vote in the General Election of 2014, which is a population of 126,065 people. Figure 4: General Election 2014, voter turnout by age (Electoral Commission, 2014a), shows the voter participation in the General Elections in New Zealand in 2014 and how powerful a youth vote can be if used.



**Figure 4:** General Election 2014, voter turnout by age (Electoral Commission, 2014a)

In the thesis, the term chosen to discuss how people participate in politics is *political participation*. There is no agreement in the literature as to what constitutes political participation (Lamprianou, 2013). Definitions range from narrow descriptions, sometimes referred to as conventional activities, such as voting and working for election candidates, to more inclusive descriptions, also called unconventional activities. These include unofficial strikes or the barricading of a community (Lamprianou, 2013, p. 27). A narrow description of political participation could encourage a perception of the *politically disengaged young citizen*, since this description does not include all aspects of participation (Wall, 2011). Young people seem to use different forms of democratic engagement such as social networking (Macintosh, Robson, & Whyte, 2003). Therefore, in this thesis, political participation is regarded expansively, including activities such as selective consumerism, protesting, political discussions with political leaders and petitions. An inclusive political participation term is also important to this thesis as the research focuses on participants below the voting age. Therefore, participation needs to include activities that might be legally performed by under 18 year olds, excluding voting. Political participation is also used by many New Zealand publications in this research field (Bolstad, 2012; Catt, 2005; Electoral Commission, 2014a; Lamprianou, 2013; Lang, 2010; Satherley, 2011; Vowles, 2012; Wood, 2010). The disadvantage of using a term that is widely used in the literature is that it can be ambiguous and might imply a certain meaning.

Other terms describing political participation, frequently used in political and educational research are *civic participation* or *citizenship*. The terms civic or citizen etymology suggests membership of a community. Normative agendas are often attached to these terms (De Koning, Jaffe, & Koster, 2015; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). This normative agenda includes perceptions of what characteristics are desirable for a community member. Civic participation could imply obeying laws and carrying out civic duties such as voting, or it could imply being critical towards the political system and creating political change. Westheimer & Kahne (2004) suggest for example that there are three types of citizens: personally responsible, participatory and justice oriented. These types of citizens differ significantly in their practices. Therefore using the term civic participation can be ambiguous if it is not defined clearly before using it. Normative agendas are not only attached to political concepts but also to the process of socialisation which will be outlined as follows.

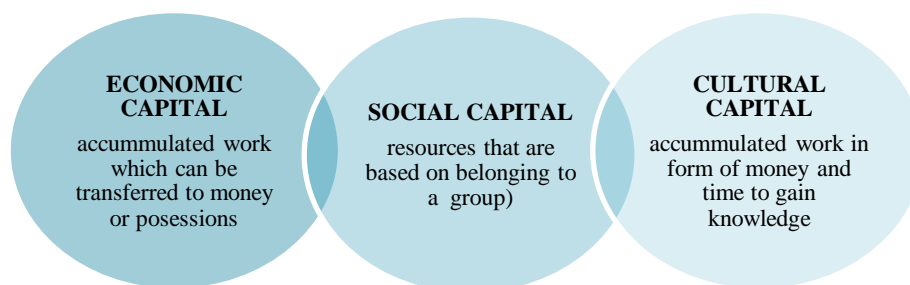
### **Political socialisation: How do young people learn to be political?**

Political socialisation research started as early as the 1950s. Herbert Hyman seems to have given the research field its name when he published his book *Political Socialization* in 1959. Since then theories from multiple disciplines have been put forward, including Political Theory (Renshon, 1977), Developmental Psychology (Peterson, 1983; Siegel, 1977), Sociology (Merelman, 1972) and Education (Abramson, 1967). However, as Schwarzer (2011) points out, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century there is still relatively little agreement on the young political citizen and how political attitudes are acquired. By presenting some theories of political socialisation and omitting others, this summary has to be regarded with caution. Therefore, I have decided to focus on issues which seem to be debated most frequently in historical and current political socialisation literature. They will be presented and analysed by highlighting the continuum of different viewpoints around each issue:

### 1) *Definition of political socialisation*

There seems to be more agreement in the literature about what constitutes political socialisation than the other three areas of focus mentioned above. According to Dudley & Gitelson (2002), many theorists of Hyman's time agreed with his definition of political socialisation as the "learning of social patterns corresponding to ... social positions as mediated through various agencies of society" (Hyman, 1959, p. 25). This definition will be used as a reference point for talking about political socialisation in this thesis as it is less normative than other definitions, by not specifying who the socialisation agencies are, when the process occurs or the content of socialisation. The social pattern, Hyman refers to in his definition could include understanding political institutions, getting to know political personalities or taking part in political decision-making processes. These three possible components of learning a social pattern help focus my research into political perspectives of Year 11 students, and I will introduce this focus later. In this chapter I will refer to the learning of *social patterns*, in order to keep a broad and non-normative focus.

The environment and external factors have an important influence on political socialisation. Pierre Bourdieu calls this influence *social milieu* and *habitus formation* (Bourdieu, 1999). Bourdieu argues that there are clear boundaries as to what socialisation agents can achieve with their intentions to influence socialisation objects. He states that people develop in a social milieu which is the environment one grows up within and learns appropriate ways of behaving and participating. The social milieu is defined by possession of the three types of capital: social capital, cultural capital and economic capital, which are visualised in Figure 5: The three forms of capital (Bourdieu, 1986) as follows.



**Figure 5:** The three forms of capital (Bourdieu, 1986)

Depending on possession of the three types of capital, a person develops a behaviour called “habitus” which can be defined as: “socialised subjectivity” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 127). This implies a process that goes unnoticed and unintended. The different social milieus can be compared to different groups in society characterised by socioeconomic background. Social milieus also become important when we look at political participation. For example, some international and also New Zealand studies indicate a positive correlation between education and political participation (Electoral Commission, 2015a; Campbell, 2006; Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD], 2011). While my own research does not focus on this particular correlation, it is important to keep in mind that the environment or milieu a young person grows up in can have substantial influence on their political learning. The next subsection will analyse three different phases of one’s life when political socialisation might be most influential.

In contrast to a sole influence of the environment to shape political learning, Bandura offers a different model, highlighting the agentic ability of an individual who is getting socialised. Bandura (2001) suggests there has been a paradigm shift in theorising of behaviour and learning of behaviour. He argues the shift started at a linear *input-output model* where it was believed individuals react directly to stimuli in the environment. This model shifted to a *computational model* which involved more advanced processing. Bandura highlights the importance of *agentic* actions in the learning process (Bandura, 2001, p. 2-4). The models put forward as follows suggest different perceptions of the individual, some models and theories regard the individual as agentic while others regard the individual as a product of environmental influences. In my research, introduced in Chapter Three, the agentic role of individuals in the political learning process is an important aspect since I am interested in participants’ perceptions of political processes rather than external factors that shape their ideas.

## (2) *Phases of political socialisation*

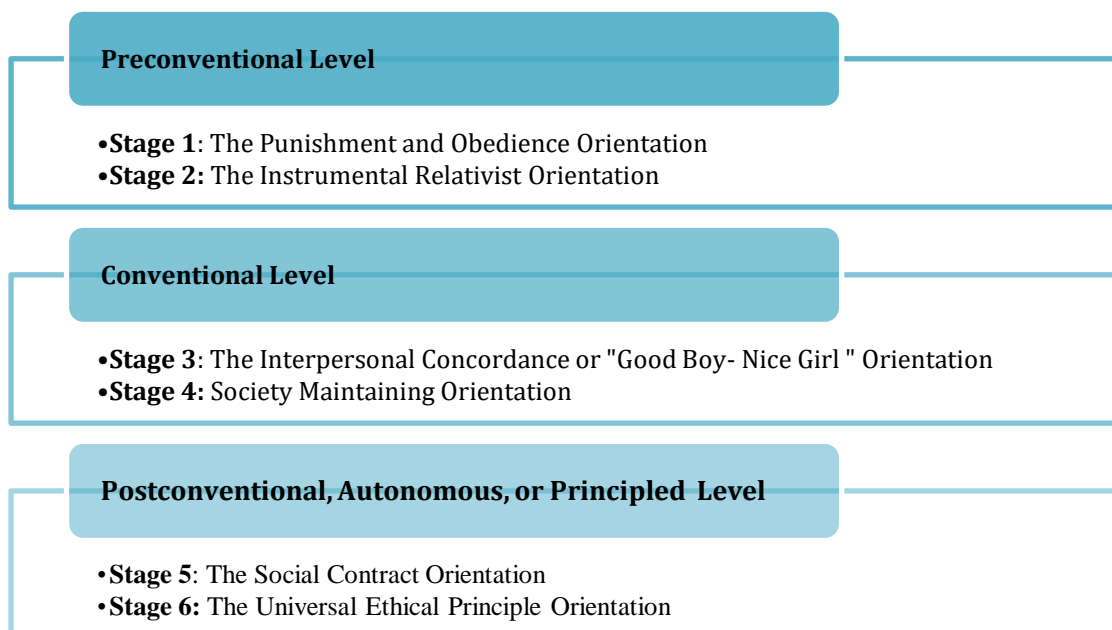
From the onset of political socialisation research there have been debates about the timing of when social patterns are learned. The debates can be divided into three models as mentioned by Rattinger (2009): Primacy, Intermediate and Recency Model.

The *Primacy model* includes theorists such as Easton & Hess (1962) who argued that the experiences made as a child are immediately related to actions taken as an adult:

“The range of alternative behaviors open to the adult is also intimately related to his experiences as a child and that the kind of political reality the adult perceives and his attitudes about it are restricted by what he has learned during the early years” (p.229).

This not only suggests the forming of opportunities during childhood, but also the restriction of opportunities childhood can create for an adult. The researchers believe that an adult can transform and change political behaviour at a later stage, but that these changes can be slowed down by what has been learned as a child. In a research conducted, Easton and Hess’ (1962) research concluded that attachment to the political community and regime start at an early age (before and during primary school), and that political content, learned in later years (high school), seems to be viewed and reinforced through the attachment formed during early years. The researchers also argued that by the time a child enters high school (14 years), only little change can be made to their political orientations (p. 236). While this research was conducted over 50 years ago, it is still cited in the literature today and therefore influences future research projects, and our perception of political socialisation. As social conditions children live in have changed during the last 50 years (E.g. advance of internet, increase in migration, changing values), it is important to add a more recent study on early political socialisation. An interesting empirical study has been conducted by Van Deth, Abendschön and Vollmar (2011). In this study, 700 children were interviewed in two waves: Wave One at the start of the first primary school year and Wave Two at the end of the first primary school year. Children were asked questions to find out about their political orientations. Researchers were interested in: political knowledge (to represent cognitive aspects), issues awareness, and normative aspects. Van Deth et al. concluded that young participants in their study already showed distinct political orientation in their first year of primary school. Furthermore, they observed differences in children’s political orientation across all categories and that these differences did not disappear in the second wave. Another important observation was that children from ethnic minorities and lower socio economic backgrounds had a lower developed political orientation, and did not develop as much during the year as other participants.

The *Intermediate model* refers to the belief that political socialisation focuses on the time of being a teenager. The intermediate model can be related to Kohlberg's *Stages of moral development* (Kohlberg, 1981) which places significant importance on moral development during youth. Kohlberg arrived at his moral development stages through the study of 75 American boys from early adolescence onwards. Caution has to be applied to using the stages of moral development since the sample for Kohlberg's study only included boys and was conducted more than 50 years ago. Nevertheless, the stages allow an insight into young people's moral development and provide a starting point for some recent studies in education and moral development (Boom, Wouters, & Keller, 2007; Dawson, 2002). The participants in Kohlberg's study were presented with moral dilemmas. The stages, displayed in Figure 6: Kohlberg's stages of moral development (Kohlberg, 1981), as follows, were derived from the participants' responses at different ages.



**Figure 6:** Kohlberg's six stages of moral development (*Kohlberg, 1981*)

Kohlberg argued that people usually are only at one stage of moral development at a time and move through the stages in the same order (from one to six). On Stage One, participants' moral decisions were focussed on being obedient to rules, and a fear of punishment. On Stage Two, participants' moral decisions are based on norms of society, which are valued regardless of fear from punishment. On Stage Three moral

decisions made by the participants were free from expectations of groups or society and effort was made to define moral values for oneself (Kohlberg, 1981). These stages are related to political learning as they provide insights into why people participate in political acts. For example if a person is on Stage One, they would simply participate because they fear punishment. On Stage Six however, a person would participate in politics because they regard it as the right thing to do.

This is supported by Kant's *Theory of moral development* (Kant, 1803). Kant argues humans are not inherently good but need to be raised to be good citizens. His theory, suggests three different stages of education: Disciplining, cultivating and civilising, moralising (Kant, 1803). Kant's overall aim of education is that the learner is convinced of the wrongness of something because s/he has found it wrong through a process of their own inquiry and thinking, instead of being told it is wrong by the educator. In his book on the nature of Education, Kant called this highest level of education, "Moralisierung" (Kant, 1803). I argue this applies to political learning since the last stage of moralising might be regarded as the ultimate goal for political participation, since it is an intrinsic motivation rather than forced upon by socialisation agents.

The *Recency model* is related to the belief political socialisation is a lifelong learning process. This field of research has developed as a result of the "disappearance of childhood" in political sciences research (Cook, 1985, p. 1080). Until today it has not received as much attention as the Primacy and Intermediacy models. A reason for this, could be the fact that in most countries around the world, youth voter turnout is lower than any other age group, which can spark research interest in political socialisation of youth rather than other age groups. According to a 1999 IDEA study on youth voter turnout, the average turnout rate across different age groups in 15 nations was 88.6% whereas only 80% of 18-29 year olds participated in elections (Ballington, 2002).

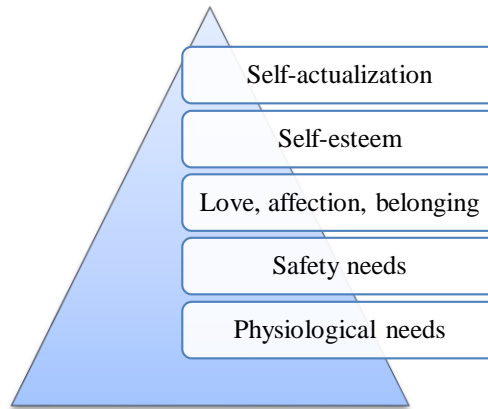
Besides the three phases of political socialisation summarised above (Primacy, Intermediacy and Recency), there are three further models that might explain when political socialisation happens. The three models are called: Lifecycle effects, cohort effects and current event effects and are summarised in Table 1: Three effects on phases of socialisation, summarised and amended from (Rattinger, 2009; Roller, Brettschneider, & Van Deth, 2006), as follows. These models are particularly relevant

to adult political learning and can add some insight which seems to be missing in the literature.

Life cycle effects	Cohort effects	Current events effects
Refer to the experiences people face during a certain time of their life.	Refer to the experiences a certain cohort or generation share.	Refer to experiences shared across generations and life cycles.
<b>For example</b> during childhood and most of youth, young people might not be employed and therefore are not faced with paying tax or finding employment. Because of this, interest in these areas might not be prevalent and therefore an opinion or deep values may not be formed about these issues.	<b>For example</b> “Generation Rent” (Eaqub & Eaqub, 2015) share the experience of not being able to afford their own home and therefore may form different values towards government or current policies.	<b>They are</b> important events that influence everybody such as the current “Syria refugee crisis” (Banerjee, 2015).

**Table 1:** Three effects on phases of socialisation, summarised and amended from (Rattinger, 2009; Roller, Brettschneider, & Van Deth, 2006).

A further important theory in Political Socialisation is called the *Silent Revolution* (Inglehart, 1971). Ronald Inglehart, who shaped the concept of a silent revolution, argues that apart from life cycle, cohort and current events effects, there has been a transformation of the society from materialist towards self-expression. According to Inglehart (1971), a materialist society places importance on economic and physical security while self-expressionist societies place importance on self-expression, belonging and free choice. He argues that the post-war generation does not have to worry about survival, economic security and physical security and therefore developed other needs such as self-expression. This can be related to Maslow’s (1943) theory of human motivation which is displayed in Figure 7: Maslow's Theory of Motivation (Maslow, 1943).



**Figure 7:** Maslow's Theory of Motivation (Maslow, 1943)

Maslow (1943) argued that humans fulfil their needs in a certain order, starting with physiological needs. He believes when a strong unfulfilled physiological need exists, another need may not emerge until that physiological need is fulfilled. Since in most economically developed nations, such as Europe which Inglehart (1971) studied, physiological and safety needs should be fulfilled and therefore other needs are important such as Love, affection, belonging, self-esteem and self-actualization. Inglehart (1971) argues that due to this shift in needs, new political parties and issues become important to a population and therefore, the political climate may change. While Inglehart's (1971) and Maslow's (1943) theories were written more than 30 years ago, I argue they are still important for our understanding of political socialisation. The change from material to self-expression is ongoing and influences our political climate (Inglehart, 2006). This change may include formation of new political parties and new forms of political participation.

Which model researchers or policy makers believe in is important, because it guides recommendations for policies of political literacy education. For example if one believes in the intermediary model, they are more likely to invest in a program that supports political literacy development of young people.

### *(3) Socialisation agents: Who socialises*

A second area of debate in political socialisation research is concerned with the agents of political socialisation. The main agents I will present are: family, peers, school, and media which seem to be the most influential agents for young people's political learning (Rattinger, 2009). Theories around socialisation agents are influenced by Bandura's social learning theories which argue that behaviour is influenced by the environment and by other people by acting as models for behaviour (Bandura, 1977). Based on this, behaviour that is modelled and rewarded by socialisation agents will be repeated. Another important distinction has to be made between passive and active socialisation objects. Passive socialisation objects are regarded as taking in everything that they are taught or modelled. Active socialisation agents in comparison are considered to have an active role in the process, also influencing the socialisation subject (Rattinger, 2009).

*Family*, and in particular parents, seems to be the most effective socialisation agent for young people because parents typically spend the most time out of all socialisation agents with their children. Literature points out that children from families where politics is discussed at home are more likely to engage in politics themselves (Schmid, 2012). Participants in my research were more likely to state family to discuss political issues with than other socialisation agents such as peers.

*Peers* are also important socialisation agents for today's youth. The amount of time young people spend together nowadays has increased through social media which makes peers omnipresent to each other's lives as Quintelier (2015) points out. However, political topics are not always present in young people's conversations. This was also evident in my research where some participants mentioned that their peers were not interested nor mature enough to discuss politics with them.

Another important socialisation agent of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is the *media*. Statistics indicate that young people are frequent users of online social media and that online social media opens up opportunities for accessing political information and adopting participatory attitudes (Moeller, De Vreese, Esser & Kunz, 2014; Towner, 2013). Research outcomes, however, differ in the significance that is placed on the effectiveness of online social media on political participation. A New Zealand study by Master's student

Diesing (2013) argues that online social media does not increase engagement for un-political youth. Diesing used a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods to understand the influence of online social media on young people's political participation. The study indicates that the participants perceive social media as social rather than political, and that it does not positively affect young people who are not interested in politics before they access social media. The study also found that traditional media published online, remains the main source of political information for young people and should, therefore, be used more effectively in order to engage young New Zealanders in politics. According to Alexa.com (Alexa, 2014) social media websites like Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and Wordpress are in the top 18 most visited sites in New Zealand. As Busby and Bellamy (2011) report, political parties and representatives are currently making extensive use of these resources to engage citizens. Many members of the New Zealand Parliament are regularly connected to citizens through Twitter, Facebook or other social media networks (Busby & Bellamy, 2011). These institutions, therefore, might gain some power as socialisation agents for young people.

*School* is another important socialisation agent for young people's political learning. Schools are special in the way that society has placed particular values and expectations upon them which specifies how they are meant to socialise young people politically (Quintelier, 2015). Schools have these obvious agendas of how they are meant to socialise, specified in the national and school curriculum and also a hidden way of socialisation though procedures and rules they establish. The following quote highlights this issue:

Every morning as they enter Walden Middle School, students line up in front of our assistant principal. Holding a metal-detecting wand in his right hand, he sweeps it in front and back of each child before he allows them to proceed down to the cafeteria. A number of the sixth graders are tiny- barely four-and-a-half feet tall- and are still obsessed by trading cards and bathroom jokes. What do they think about as they're screened for weapons each day? What do my eight graders- many still on the cusp of puberty themselves- think? In the three academic years I teach at Walden, from 1996 to 1999, it never occurs to me to ask them (Levinson, 2012, p. 167)

For example students in Walden Middle school apart from the political content agreed in the national and school curriculum, also learn about power relationships and trust.

They learn that teachers and other school leaders have the right to distrust them and search them for harmful objects and therefore put themselves in a more powerful position than the students. This particular example comes from America which is very security oriented due to many cases of contemporary school massacres, which is not comparable to New Zealand schools. However, I argue there are a few less observable examples from New Zealand schools. One could be the fact that teachers in many New Zealand secondary schools have to enforce school uniform which could imply to students a power imbalance, since they are the ones prescribing what students should be wearing. When discussing socialisation agents, it is also crucial to look at socialisation content which gives a normative dimension to political socialisation by prescribing the content of what is being learnt.

#### *(4) Socialisation content*

Socialisation content refers to the matter of political learning. This may include political knowledge, values and skills. Many current studies (Bolstad, 2012; Hipkins, 2012; ICCS, 2010; Lang, 2010; Satherley, 2011) about political socialisation and political participation research the political knowledge of young people which may include understanding the concept of democracy, decision-making processes such as voting, or knowing political personalities. Since this knowledge can be defined and quantified, some studies use evaluation methods such as proficiency scales in the ICCS study (ICCS, 2010, p. 16). Political knowledge in some contexts seems to be given universal and comprehensive attributes which leaves little opportunity for differing knowledge or social change initiated by young people.

In the literature, this is for example discussed by Ochoa-Becker's (2007) concept of *socialisation vs. counter-socialisation* which refers to whether we want to limit ourselves to transmitting norms and rules of our society without questioning (socialisation) or whether we want to challenge them to open up the chance for change and especially improvement where possible (counter-socialisation). Another concept in the literature refers to this, Detjen's (2007) concept of *positivist* versus *genetic* approach to political socialisation. He argues that knowledge such as the political system of a democracy can be presented in a *genetic* approach which means showing

the birth of the system and under which conditions it developed into today's form. This can help young people to understand that the political system is a product of society and as such has the possibility to be changed. A *positivist* approach instead presents systems as static and unchangeable, and knowledge as ready to be absorbed rather than questioned and criticised (Detjen, 2007). These different types of knowledge are important because they can influence how a young person perceives political systems and their ability to participate within them which can strengthen or weaken the three forms of political efficacy discusses above (Bandura, 1977).

Another important aspect of political socialisation content is what type of citizen is envisaged to be educated. I will mention an important classification by Westheimer and Kahne (2004), and will then apply it to the New Zealand context, using the vision statement from the New Zealand Curriculum (NZC, 2007). Westheimer and Kahne suggest three types of citizens which are based on the earlier version by Walter Parker (1996): personally-responsible citizen, the participatory citizen and the justice-oriented citizen (Westheimer and Kahne, 2004). The *personally-responsible* citizen, is driven by a sense of duty, obeys laws and fulfils civic duties such as volunteering and paying taxes. The *participatory* citizen is a step further by taking on leadership roles within a community to improve society. The last type, *justice-oriented* citizen, looks beyond situations to discover why injustice is happening and finds ways to solve social problems. Figure 8: Sample actions of Westheimer and Kahne's three types of citizens (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004, p. 240), as follows, shows sample actions of the different types of citizens to show the differences between them. I have chosen the Venn diagram because I argue that all types of citizens are connected and share characteristics, but may have extra qualities the other types do not share.

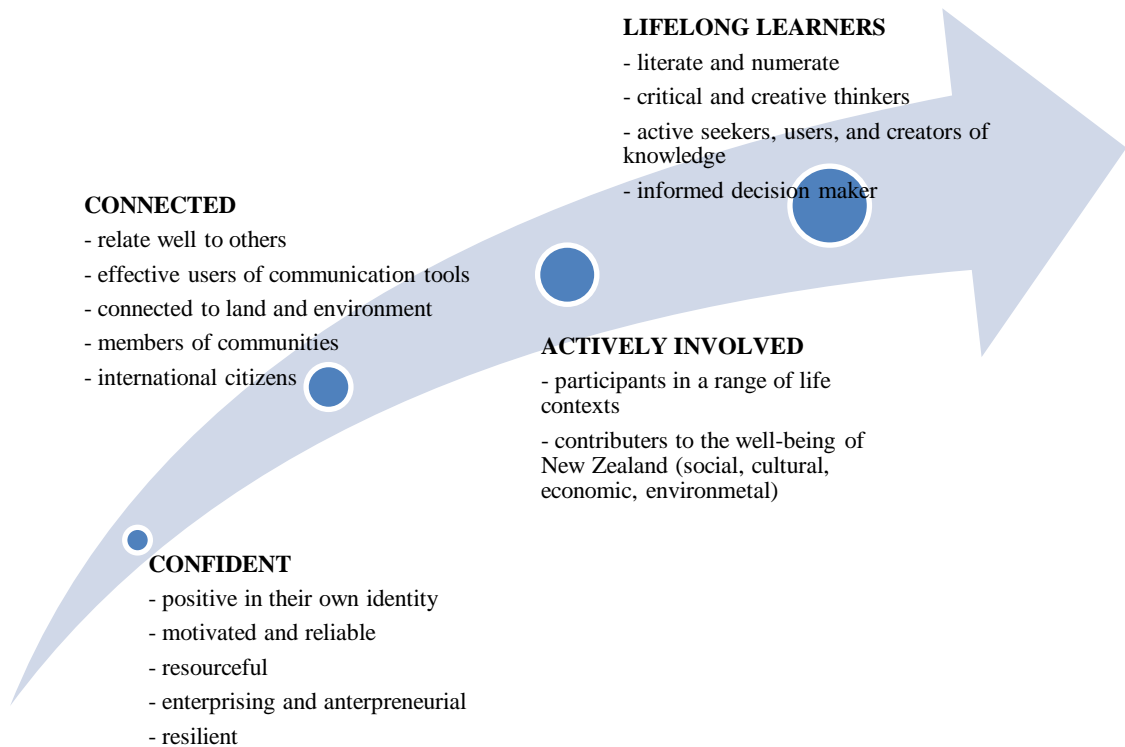


**Figure 8:** Sample actions of Westheimer and Kahne's three types of citizens (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004, p. 240)

This exploration of the good citizen is helpful because it can affect the potential of young people to participate in society in a way that does not just alleviate but solve political issues at the core. Jody Plummer from the New Zealand Electoral commission has used the three types of citizens in her political literacy education programme, and argues that all three types of citizenship can be useful when educating young people to become citizens (Plummer, 2015). The International Civics and Citizenship Study (ICCS, 2010) has also applied Westheimer and Kahne's (2004) model of three types of citizens.

*The New Zealand Curriculum* is a good reference for how young citizens in New Zealand are perceived and envisaged to be. This is important since my research was carried out in two New Zealand secondary schools. The *New Zealand Curriculum* seeks "confident, connected, actively involved, lifelong learners" (NZC, 2007, p. 8), which is further specified in Figure 9: Vision for young people in the New Zealand Curriculum (NZC, 2007, p. 8), as follows. I argue the goal of this vision is to achieve: "lifelong learners" (NZC, 2007, p. 8) which is achieved by the sub-skills: confidence, connection and active involvement. These skills as well could be seen as building up upon each other. For example when one is confident, he or she is more likely to make connections and when connections are made, one can participate. This is why I have chosen an upward arrow which widens when the goal of lifelong learning is achieved. The

widening of the arrow could also refer to the widening of someone's world when more connections are made and new concepts are learned.



**Figure 9:** Vision for young people in the New Zealand Curriculum (NZC, 2007, p. 8)

This vision for young people seems to be mostly free of normative considerations and therefore allows young people to believe in different types of political systems. For example, as long as they are “members of communities” or “critical and creative citizens” (NZC, 2007, p. 8), the goal of the New Zealand Curriculum is achieved. It does not suggest students have to become *justice-oriented citizens* or *personally responsible citizens*. It neither suggests what kind of political knowledge they should have or that they have to support our current political system of democracy, which seems to open up opportunities for young people to create political change.

Some concluding thoughts on political socialisation, are that young people are constantly subject to political socialisation agents and socialisation content. This has been increased through permanent internet access in many parts of the world. As the literature points out (Dudley & Gitelson, 2002; Schwarzer, 2011) we still do not have a comprehensive understanding of how political socialisation processes work or which

socialisation agents are most influential. However, I argue that educators and other socialisation agents have a responsibility to encourage young people to become politically literate about our society and to enable them to participate in politics and bring about change if necessary. This could include carefully selecting socialisation contexts that encourage young people to increase political efficacy, such as through a genetic teaching approach (Detjen, 2007). It can also include scrutinising policies such as the national curriculum, or institutions like schools to ascertain hidden agendas.

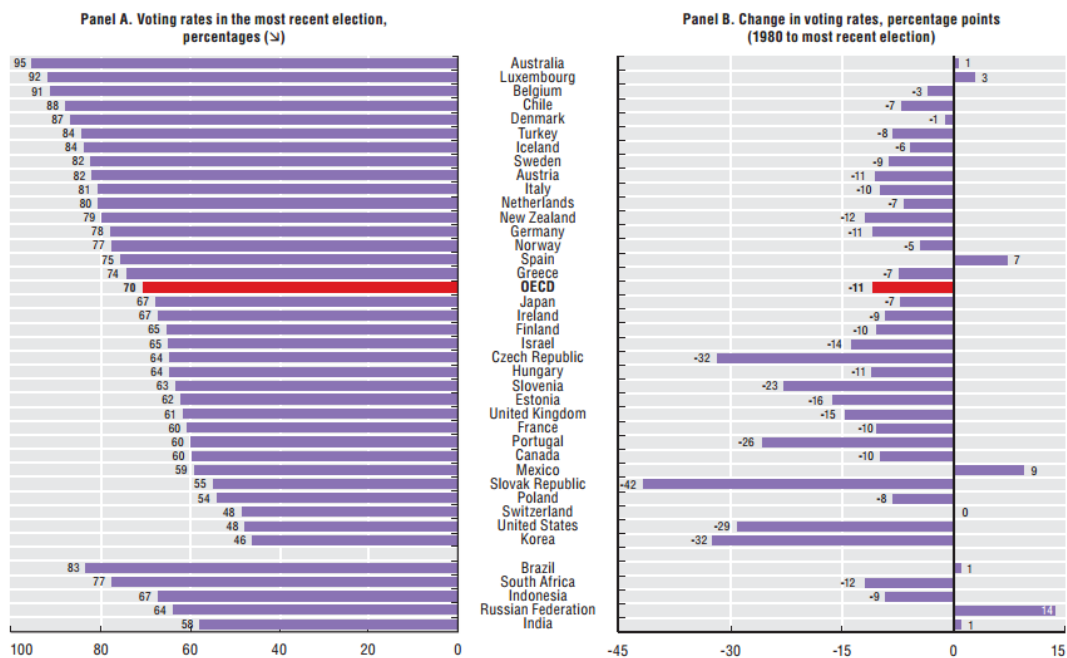
### **Political participation of young people globally and New Zealand (past, present, future)**

As described in the previous section, the learning of political content and attitudes is a complex process which is influenced by multiple socialisation phases, socialisation agents and socialisation contents. The literature still does not agree upon how exactly the process of political socialisation works (Dudley & Gitelson, 2002). Similar issues apply to the concept of political participation which is measured through a variety of different factors, including voting statistics (Pintor & Gratschew, 2002, Vowles, 2012), quantitative political knowledge questionnaires (ICCS, 2010), secondary analysis of questionnaire data (Bolstad, 2012; Lang, 2010; Quintelier, 2015; Satherley, 2011) and qualitative interviews and focus groups (Sheerin, 2007; Wood, 2010). I will now introduce some international and New Zealand trends in political participation of youth (18-29) through voting. Secondly I will discuss the political participation of youth (13-17) internationally and in New Zealand, apart from voting.

#### *(1) International and New Zealand trends in youth (18-29) voting participation*

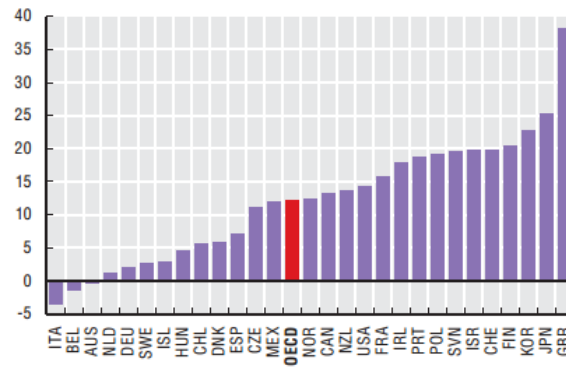
The most comprehensive and recent international comparisons of voter turnout include the *2011 OECD Society at a Glance study* (OECD, 2011) and the *2002 IDEA* (Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance) Voter Turnout since 1945 study (Pintor & Gratschew, 2002). Both studies argue that voter turnout has declined across most participating countries. The OECD study reports that only four countries, Mexico, Spain, Luxembourg and Australia have avoided a decline (OECD, 2011, p. 96). Figure

10: Comparison of voter participation change in national elections of selected OECD countries (OECD, 2011, p. 97), as follows, shows a comparison of voter turnout rates in national elections of selected OECD countries. The OECD average of voter turnout in national elections before 2009 lies at 70% with a negative change in turnout of -11% since 1980. New Zealand's voter turnout is slightly higher than the 2011 OECD average at 78%. However, there has been a slightly higher decrease than the OECD average in voter turnout change by -12% (OECD, 2011).



**Figure 10:** Comparison of voter participation change in national elections of selected OECD countries (OECD, 2011, p. 97)

Another area of interest from the OECD report is a comparison of international data on differences in voting rates between people who are 55 years and older and those 16-35 years. The OECD difference lies at 12%. New Zealand's differences is slightly higher than the OECD difference at 14% (OECD, 2011) as shown in Figure 11: Percentage point difference in voting rates between those 55+ years old and those 16-35 years old (OECD, 2011, p. 97), as follows. In all but three participating countries in the 2011 OECD study, older people are more likely to vote than young people. This indicates low youth political participation, measured here in voting. This seems to be an issue across different nations and also affecting New Zealand.



**Figure 11:** Percentage point difference in voting rates between those 55+ years old and those 16-35 years old (OECD, 2011, p. 97)

The IDEA study is very comprehensive and analyses many different aspects of voter turnout in a large sample of countries. A study of youth voter participation from 1999 is particularly interesting to consider (IDEA, 1999). The main findings of IDEA’s study into youth voting are as follows. Firstly, youth voter turnout of 18-29 year olds across nations (80%) seems to be lower than the average voting turnout rate (88.6%) (Ballington, 2002). Secondly, in countries with a generally higher voter turnout, the difference between youth votes and other age groups votes is smaller. Thirdly, in countries with compulsory voting, youth voter participation is significantly higher. Fourthly, low youth voting rates seem to be an occurrence of both established and emerging democracies. Finally, the study suggests that not only age is responsible for differences in voter turnout, but also socio-economic differences (lower socio-economic background makes people less likely to engage in elections), education (lower education leads to lower engagement in voting) or ethnic minorities (ethnic minorities are generally less likely to engage in voting) (IDEA, 1999). What both studies seem to highlight, is that youth are generally less engaged in formal political participation processes, here measured in voting, and that this issue seems to affect multiple nations across hemispheres.

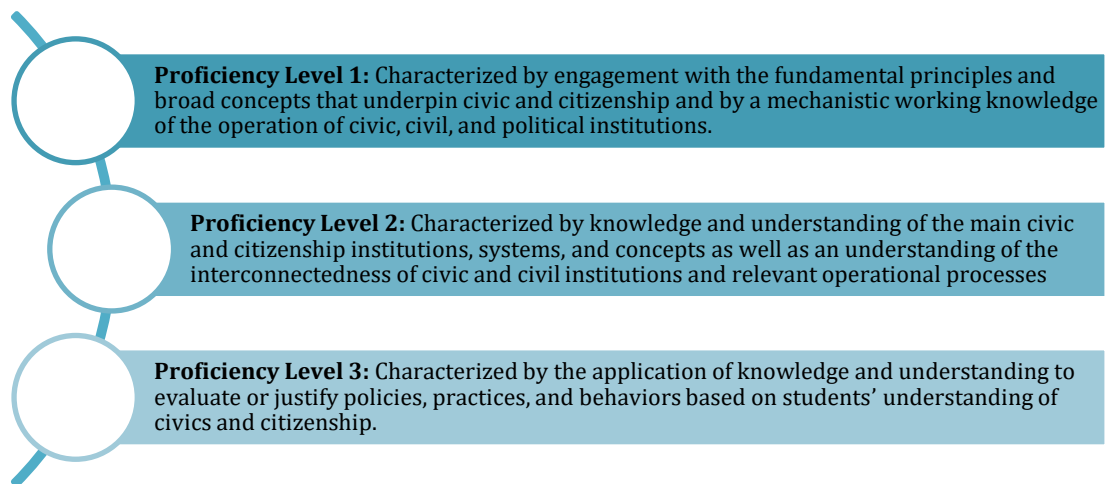
Another valuable resource to understand voter disengagement are *New Zealand voter satisfaction studies* which are carried out with each General Election. The study for the 2014 election found the reasons for non-voting were self-stated barriers (34%) such as other commitments or being away on Election days, lack of interest (27%), not knowing who to vote for (11%) and not knowing how or where to vote (3%) (Electoral Commission, 2015a). Unfortunately these results are not differentiated into age, so it

does not add an explanation towards the specific motivation of youth to disengage from voting. New Zealand's Electoral Commission is dedicated to finding out why youth disengage from voting, and have therefore held a conference: Value our Vote (Electoral Commission, 2014b). Reasons for youth voter disengagement were analysed and different strategies to engage young voters were presented, considered and discussed.

My research is inspired by some open questions concerning political disengagement of youth discussed at the conference. I would also argue that considering youth voter disengagement starts with looking at how young people are introduced to formal political processes before they turn 18. This is particularly important when considering that people who vote for the first time when they are allowed to vote are more likely to vote again. Informal political participation of youth is discussed as follows.

## *(2) Political participation of youth (13-17) apart from voting*

The most recent and comprehensive research on youth political participation are the *International Civic and Citizenship Education studies* (ICCS, 2010) which were carried out in 1971, 1999 and 2009. I will refer to the 2009 study as this is the most recent. The focus group of this study was 14 year olds (140.000 students in total) in 38 participating countries. Fifteen of these countries had already participated in the 1999 study which allowed for comparison over time. New Zealand participated in the 2009 ICCS study only, so no comparative data is available. The objective of the study was to find out about young people's (14 years) knowledge, conceptual understanding, dispositions and attitudes towards civics and citizenship. The information was collected in an 80 item test which included questions on knowledge (one third) as well as reasoning and analysis (two thirds) (ICCS, 2010, p. 16). Answers were evaluated using a proficiency scale as shown in Figure 12: Proficiency Levels ICCS Study 2009 (ICCS, 2010), as follows.



**Figure 12:** Proficiency Levels ICCS Study 2009 (ICCS, 2010)

Students were then matched with the according proficiency level which turned out as follows: Below Level 1 (16%), Level 1 (26%), Level 2 (31%), Level 3 (28%). Students' proficiency levels were also compared with background variables which lead the ICCS to state the following correlations:

Firstly, girls scored higher on civic knowledge than boys (average 22 scale points difference). Secondly, participants with non-recent immigration backgrounds scored higher than participants with recent immigration backgrounds (average 37 scale points difference). Thirdly, participants whose parents had higher-status occupations and more books at home scored higher. Fourthly, participants' responses were also influenced by their parents' beliefs and orientations (ICCS, 2010, p. 17). Unfortunately, since this research was conducted using quantitative methods such as knowledge tests, the motivations behind the participants' answers are unclear. Many of the above results are similar to my own research findings which I will come back to in my Chapter Four findings. Through the use of focus group conversations I was able to find out more about the background of the participants' political perceptions.

Valuable insights into New Zealand students' political knowledge, understanding and political participation are provided by secondary analyses of the ICCS data as: Kate Lang's (Lang, 2010) *civic knowledge*, Rosemary Hipkins' (Hipkins, 2012) *political participation* and Paul Satherley's (Satherley, 2011) *democracy and freedom*. Lang argues that based on the findings of the New Zealand ICCS data, New Zealand students

are “generally well prepared for their roles as citizens in the 21<sup>st</sup> century” (Lang, 2010, p. 3), scoring on 517 points on average in the proficiency tests, compared to an ICCS average of 500 points. Lang (2010) also argues there is a comparably larger gap in civic knowledge between high performing and low performing students which can also be seen in other international studies New Zealand has participated such as the 2006 PIRLS study (Chamberlain, 2008, p. 16). In accordance with the international findings, in New Zealand girls scored lower than boys in civic knowledge (difference of 31 points). Also, New Zealand participants from European or Asian descent scored higher than participants from Maori or Pasifika descent. As stated in the international results of ICCS, New Zealand participants also scored higher in civic knowledge when their parents were educated more, when they have more books at home, when they speak English (the language used in the test) at home and with non-recent immigrant backgrounds (Lang, 2010). Satherly (2011) comments that “a large majority of Year 9 students viewed New Zealand and its key institutions and symbols positively, including having pride in and respect for New Zealand, its political system and its flag” (p. 3). Some important findings from the New Zealand ICCS data regarding democratic values and freedom are: About two thirds of participants agreed with the personal importance of the Treaty of Waitangi, this varied between different ethnic groups: Maori (85% agreed) and Pakeha/ European (only 60% agreed). In accordance with international results, the media and political parties were the least trusted New Zealand institutions. Most participants also agreed with basic democratic rights and values which increased with greater civic knowledge (Satherley, 2011). Hipkins (2012) argues that overall, “citizenship values were strongly held by Year 9 students” (p. 3). There was substantial agreement from New Zealand participants on the image of a good adult citizen, shown in Figure 13: Characteristics of the good citizen according to New Zealand participants in the 2009 ICCS study (Hipkins, 2012, p. 3), as follows.



**Figure 13:** Characteristics of the good citizen according to New Zealand participants in 2009 ICCS study (Hipkins, 2012, p. 3)

Furthermore, participants were more likely to engage in informal forms of political engagement than in formal ways (joining a political party). Participants who scored higher in civic knowledge were more likely to agree to the following two attributes of a good citizen: working hard and always obeying the law. Further findings were that more New Zealand participants were interested in environmental issues than political issues. More participants were estimated to have action-taking competencies in activities in the classroom, than in activities beyond the classroom. Satherley also notes that “Just over half of Year 9 students had at least modest confidence in their own understanding of political issues, but there are lower levels of confidence that their own views are actually worth hearing” (Satherley, 2011, p. 3). This has been evident as well during the focus group conversations I conducted as part of my research and seems to be related to low levels of internal efficacy. Further results of importance were that more participants indicated they would take part in elections, but significantly less participants indicated they would participate in other participatory democratic activities (helping in an election campaign). Participants also stated they were more likely to participate in social citizenship activities than in activities political in nature. This resonates with evidence I gathered from a social-action taking assessment conducted with Year 10 students which is discussed in Chapter Two.

As stated above, more detailed information on the background of participants' knowledge and attitudes is not provided based on the quantitative nature of the research. However, the findings from all three secondary analyses of the ICCS study generally correlate with my research findings. Since I conducted a qualitative study including focus group conversations, some of the scarce background information might be enhanced by my findings as presented in Chapter Four.

I will now introduce some recent studies that address the deficit of quantitative studies as well. The first study, by Jessica Taft and Hava Gordon (2013) is from America but connects to New Zealand through a recent event in New Plymouth, New Zealand. Their study focuses on perceptions of youth activists on youth councils. The authors interviewed politically active teens who did not participate in youth councils. Young people in the study, according to Taft and Gordon, perceived youth councils as being used by adults to tame youth dissent with politics, without actually representing a youth voice. This relates to an incident in the New Plymouth Youth Council earlier this year reported in the Taranaki Times (Utiger, 2015). The incident started with New Plymouth Mayor Andrew Judd establishing a youth working group to increase youth participation in the council. This group later on was slammed for misconduct and ill behaviour, and suspended from participation. Comment from participants of this youth working group (such as Michael Riley) however, indicate mistreatment of the young group members including lack of: resources, guidance, training, code of conduct and a contract. This relates to Taft and Gordon's (2013) findings regarding a lack of ownership, and young people's voice in political institutions.

Wood conducted a study on young people's perspectives on citizenship, away from "adult-defined measures of participation" (Wood, 2010, p. 103) as part of her doctoral thesis. Wood used visual and verbal methodologies and information about the culture and experiences of young people to gain an understanding of their perceptions and participatory activities. The findings of Wood's research were multiple experiences of citizenship, and manifold diverse ways of forming political opinions. An important aspect of young people's participation, according to Wood, is to see experiences tied to the community youth are involved in. This relates to the habitus formation theory of Pierre Bourdieu (1999), who suggests that the environment people grow up in, has an immense influence on their cultural (and political) perceptions and ways of behaving

and acting, referred to as habitus as discussed in a previous section on political socialisation. Wood suggests, similar findings have been reported by other qualitative studies, such as an Australian study by Harris and Wyn (2009), who commented on their findings in the following way: “Their personal experiences of these issues allowed the young people to identify a raft of strategies that they felt competent to articulate and enact [...] the type of issues which young people feel they have agency over” (Harris & Wyn, 2009, p. 339).

Observations from this section of the Chapter are youth political participation is an issue of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and includes many countries around the world. We still do not understand the range of political activities young people use to participate and the reasons behind a decrease in youth participation (Schwarzer, 2011). The literature also uses vastly different definitions of political participation (Lamprianou, 2013) which causes different perceptions of our young political agents. This issue will be discussed further below.

### **Stakeholders and their agendas on young people’s political participation**

This last section of Chapter One looks at different stakeholders and their agendas for young people’s political participation. It also looks at the provision of the general election for young people’s political engagement.

#### *(1) Stakeholders and their agenda for youth participation*

Stakeholders are the parties interested in the political participation or disengagement of young people. I will focus on New Zealand stakeholders in this section. The first stakeholder I will introduce is the New Zealand Electoral Commission that has expressed interest in the political participation of youth in several ways such as through the ‘Value my Vote’ conference in Wellington in March 2014 (Electoral Commission, 2014b). This conference was organised by the New Zealand Electoral Commission in order to connect and collaborate on the issue of youth voting decrease. The goal of the Electoral Commission is to involve as many people from the population in voting as

possible. Since it is a government organisation, the Electoral Commission is limited to context neutral research and the promotion of voting without supporting particular parties or policies. This agency not only focuses on voting but also supports political literacy education in schools through for example Unit Plans (Electoral Commission, 2015b) and “Kids voting” (Electoral Commission, 2014c). Kids voting is a programme promoted throughout all New Zealand schools in close proximity to elections whereby young people become familiar with the voting process. This aims at the early engagement of young people in politics.

Other important stakeholder groups are Social Sciences Subject Associations such as the organisers of this year’s *Social Sciences Conference* in Nelson (New Zealand Social Sciences Conference [SocCon], 2015). This year’s conference included several headline speakers and presentations on the issue of youth political participation including Shamubel Eaqub: ‘Generation Rent. Economics, a Powerful Voice for a Generation’, Robert Penden (Chief Electoral Officer): Talk on ‘Overseas experiences to increase youth participation’, Bronwyn Wood: ‘What Kind of Citizen? Empowering a Generation for a Changing World’, Regina Scheyvens: ‘Participatory Citizenship: Preparing Students for a More Sustainable Future’ (SocCon, 2015). This also highlights the involvement of researchers from different research fields in the issue of youth political participation. Presenters came from the following fields: Politics, Economics, Government agencies, Education and Environmental studies.

The New Zealand Media is another stakeholder in youth political participation. The news coverage of young people’s political participation has been quite one sided in the sense of presenting young people as being disengaged and apathetic from politics. A reason could be that many reporters tend to use less inclusive terminology that only includes voting. Often it is not made clear in articles what definition is being used for political participation. An example here is an article in the New Zealand Herald ‘Election apathy shows need for civics at school’ (Liddle, 2013). The article suggests that youth disengagement “shows in the number not voting” (Liddle, 2013) which is the only reference point for how engaged young people are. An article on stuff.co.nz (Robinson, 2014) and an interview on RadioNZ (RadioNZ, 2014), also use voting as their only reference for youth disengagement. Therefore, I argue the image of the disengaged young New Zealander has been constructed by the media and manifested

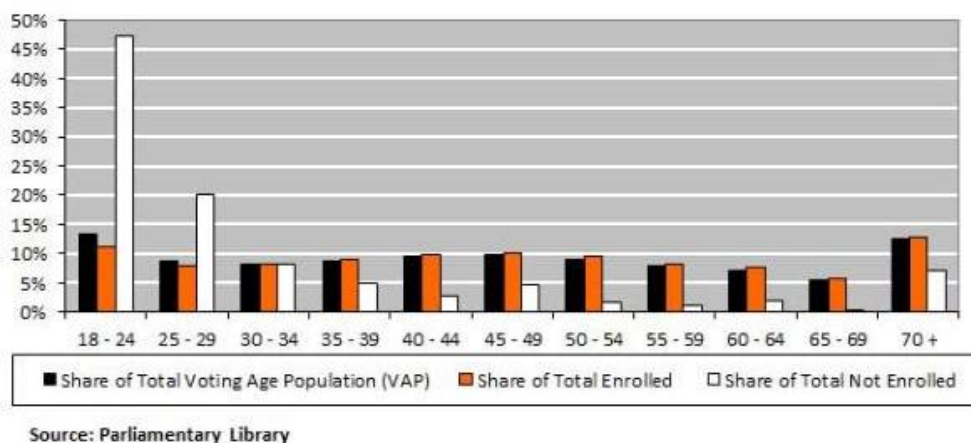
in public discourse, based on the premise that youth voter participation has decreased. This is problematic because there is much more to the political life of young New Zealanders than voting only. I have found this through my experience as an education practitioner in New Zealand secondary schools, from my research on Year 11 student's political participation, and from current literature and research studies (Wood, 2010; Taft & Gordon, 2013).

Another crucial stakeholder of young people's political participation involve political parties and political representatives. In my experience as a practitioner, I noticed the disconnect young people feel between themselves and politicians. This was also visible in my research project on Year 11 students' political participation which I introduce later in the thesis. During an election event I organised at a Waikato co-educational secondary school, many young people (in this case Year 12 and 13 students) mentioned how they disliked the fighting between party representatives. Statements were made, E.g. "I didn't like too much rambling", "I didn't like how some parties stood up and talked about stuff that's not even relevant", "I didn't like the MPs being...argumentative", "I didn't like too much tension", "I didn't like the constant bickering", "I didn't like how some acted unprofessional", "They were supposed to encourage kids to vote but instead they just argued". This disconnect is also mentioned in the literature such as by O'Toole, Marsh & Jones (2003) who conducted a qualitative study of young people in Britain to find out about young people's political perceptions, experiences and concerns. They argue their participants were in fact not apathetic but rather felt they were not valued or listened to in the political process by political authorities (O'Toole et al., 2003, p. 359). During the 2014 General Elections, some political parties in co-operation with other institutions, developed modern strategies to engage young people in politics, this included young people below the voting age as discussed in the next section.

## *(2) New Zealand General Elections and engaging youth in politics*

The 2014 General Election in New Zealand was interesting in reference to encouraging young people and other voters to participate in politics. In addition the political landscape was different from other elections in the sense of media attention, caused by

scandals such as ‘dirty politics’ (Hager, 2014) or Kim Dotcom’s (Safi & Parkinson, 2014) revelations regarding spying on New Zealanders. Encouraged by the low enrolment rates of young people (18-24) in the 2011 New Zealand General Elections which can be seen in Figure 14: Age group share of voting age population, enrolment, non-enrolment 2011 (New Zealand Parliament, 2011), many groups decided to develop strategies to engage young people. Forty-seven percent of 18-24 year olds were not enrolled to vote in the 2011 General Election (New Zealand Parliament, 2011).



**Figure 14:** Age group share of voting age population, enrolment, non-enrolment 2011 (New Zealand Parliament, 2011)

I now introduce four campaigns/ tools developed to engage young people above the voting age in participating in the 2014 General Elections.

The first group is *RockEnrol* (RockEnrol, 2014) which is an organisation, based on the American version: *Rock The Vote* (Rock the Vote, 2015). Their goal was to engage young people into voting through a youth-led, collaborative campaign. RockEnrol encouraged young people around New Zealand to attend and organise events and parties which can only be attended through a pledge to vote in the General Election. The events also aim at making voting fun and accessible for young people. There have been some reports on the fact that RockEnrol organisers are not as objective as they pretend, and that some of the organisers have left-wing backgrounds (Beveridge, 2014). In either case RockEnrol were responsible for enrolling hundreds of New Zealanders in the 2014 General Elections, and bringing politics closer to young people’s lives.

The second group is *Vote Compass* (VoteCompass, 2014) which is a tool used during the 2014 General Election, administered through Television New Zealand. This tool has been used in several elections around the world in Australia, Canada and the U.S. It helps young people to navigate through the different parties and their policies. This can help increase young people's internal efficacy (Bandura, 1977), the belief in one's ability to be knowledgeable about politics, which can increase the possibility of participating in politics. This tool is not only useful for people above the voting age but also for people below the voting age which I focussed on in my research.

*Action station* (Action Station, 2014) is another group that developed during the 2014 General Elections to engage people of all ages in politics. Action Station is informing their members of any current policies and asks for member feedback on them, and whether they would like to participate in a campaign. In the past Action Station has run campaigns on refugees, oil drilling and the TPPA. I argue that young people's engagement with Action Station can also increase young people's internal efficacy, because they learn about policies in an easy and quick manner on a regular basis through e-mail updates. In addition it could increase their political efficacy, which is believing in one's ability to create change, by having a chance to be part of political actions that create change such as refugee support actions.

*Votekiwi* (ValuesExchange, 2015) is another tool created during the 2014 election but carried on after. This tool specifically aims at young people below the voting age. It has been created by Professor David Seedhouse from the University of Waikato and is used throughout New Zealand schools. The goal of this tool is to engage young people in political conversations away from 'dirty politics'. Members have the opportunity to post political and social issues on the website and comment on each other's posts. This starts up political conversations and can therefore help young people to feel knowledgeable about politics and therefore increase engagement. The tool can be purchased by New Zealand schools at the moment and be used with their classes.

There has been no academic research on the success of these different tools used in the 2014 General Election. However, my research and other literature indicates young people have particularly low levels across all types of efficacy (Bandura, 1977). The

tools mentioned above could potentially support students in increasing their efficacy which could increase their engagement in politics.

This chapter has introduced the context and terminology of political participation research. Literature reviewed suggests that there is no agreement on the terminology used in political participation research. This required a comprehensive description of terms used in this thesis, as provided in Part One of this chapter. Secondly, political socialisation theories and models were introduced. Whilst there are many studies from different disciplines, there is little agreement about how or when political learning happens. It is however, important to understand theories and models on political socialisation, since these influence how we perceive and educate young people to become politically literate. Lastly, I have introduced literature and statistics on how young people participate in politics globally, and in New Zealand. Particularly in this last part, I reconsidered the image of the disengaged young New Zealand citizen. It became evident that this image is multilayered and influenced by voting statistics rather than academic research into other forms of political participation apart from voting. It became apparent that the political environment is changing ('dirty politics', Syria crisis) and as a result new forms of political participation may emerge. My research, introduced in Chapter Three focuses on Year 11 students' political perceptions in a New Zealand context. Before this research is introduced, an understanding of political literacy education in a New Zealand context is discussed in Chapter Two.

## **Chapter Two: Political literacy learning in the New Zealand Social Sciences Curriculum**

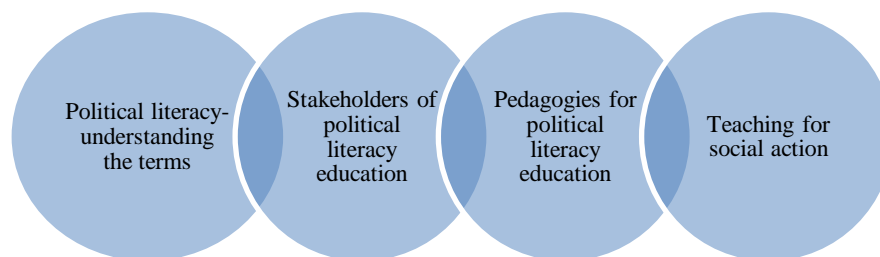
“[E]ducation should not be seen as a space of preparation, but should be conceived as a space where individuals can act, where they can bring their beginnings into the world, and be a subject. The educational question is no longer that of how to engender or ‘produce’ democratic individuals. The key educational question is how individuals can *be* subjects” (Biesta, 2006, pp. 137-138) emphasis in original

The previous chapter discussed the notion of the political participation of young people and how political values, knowledge and action are acquired. It also showed a different perspective than the ‘disengaged young New Zealander’, highlighting the importance of providing an environment for young people to increase their political efficacy. The above quote introduces my perspective of the role education should play in the political learning of young people. As Biesta (2006) suggests, I would like to see the individual developing his or her own perceptions and values as a result of engaging with multiple sources, rather than being a predetermined product of education stakeholders. My perspective on education has been influenced by reviewing theories such as Kant’s (1803) theory of education, Ochoa-Becker’s (2007) concept of counter-socialisation and Detjen’s (2007) genetic teaching approach. This chapter, will introduce features of the political literacy education of young New Zealanders aged 14 to 17 (Years 8 to 11 school years). The schooling context is the New Zealand Curriculum’s (Ministry of Education [NZC], 2007) Social Sciences learning area. Whilst reference is made to regions and countries other than New Zealand, the focus of this Chapter is on New Zealand. This is because my research was carried out in New Zealand, and therefore relies on the context of the New Zealand education system. The context of Social Studies in the New Zealand curriculum has to be established. This is important because the Social Science learning area has the main responsibility for teaching political literacy.

## The context of Social Studies in the New Zealand Curriculum

Social Studies is part of the Social Sciences learning area in the New Zealand Curriculum (NZC, 2007). The NZC states Social Sciences are “about how societies work and how people can participate as critical, active, informed, and responsible citizens” (p. 30). This statement indicates that educating young people to become citizens is at the heart of the Social Sciences learning area and therefore an important part of political literacy education.

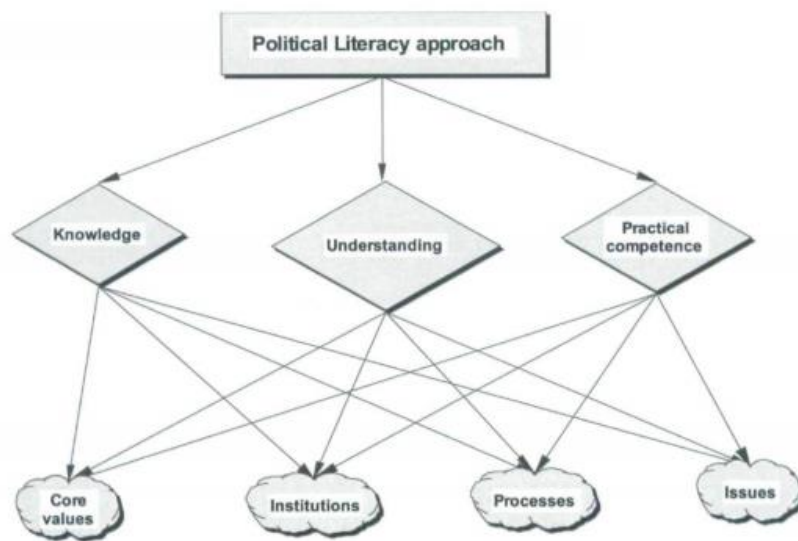
This Chapter begins with the context and terminology important for political literacy learning. Secondly, important stakeholders of political literacy education are introduced. This includes the New Zealand Curriculum (NZC, 2007), the Social Sciences learning area in the New Zealand Curriculum (NZC, 2007) and the role of schools and educators. Thirdly, pedagogies for political literacy education are discussed. This is important because content and skills selected and taught are part of the hidden curriculum of a school. Lastly, teaching for social action is introduced. This is a context widely discussed in New Zealand literature, and is particularly interesting for my research about Year 11 students’ political perceptions. Figure 15: An overview of Chapter Two contexts, as follows, shows the chapters structure of this chapter. I have used a venn diagram because the contexts are related to each other, and provide useful background information.



**Figure 15:** An overview of Chapter Two contexts

## Political literacy- understanding the terms

I choose to use the term *political literacy* to describe young people's political learning and meaning making. According to Ron Anderson, political literacy covers an important aspect of a systems' legitimacy: "A properly functioning democracy demands a minimum degree of knowledge and appreciation, and this is what 'political literacy' offers" (Anderson, 2008). He further argues that political literacy is divided into three parts as can be seen in Figure 16: The model of political literacy (Anderson, 2008, p. 13).



**Figure 16:** The model of political literacy (Anderson, 2008, p. 13)

Anderson's model is useful, because political literacy cannot be observed or measured directly (Cassel & Lo, 1997). The model also provides depth to political literacy through the three different elements: knowledge, understanding and practical competence. It shows that political literacy is more than knowledge only, and that everything someone learns is connected to knowledge, understanding and being able to apply it (practical competence). This suggests that political knowledge alone would not necessarily lead to political participation but that this knowledge needs to be understood and a person needs to learn how to apply it. The application of political knowledge is an important area in my research, whereby, some participants asked to be taught better. When discussing political literacy education, the three subcategories will be considered.

Another definition of political literacy is provided by Hugh Collins. His definition takes Anderson's model of political literacy further and is useful for my thesis. Collins argues, at "... a deeper level, political literacy is presented as the capacity for critical reflection upon political institutions and processes, especially in terms of the values engaged by these institutions and processes" (Collins, 1992, Free Institutions and Political Literacy section, 14). Collins's definition adds a critical component to the concept of political literacy. According to Collins, it is not enough to know, understand and act within political institutions and processes, but to be able to reflect critically upon them. In the Chapter's section (2) Social Sciences learning area in the New Zealand Curriculum, I examine whether The New Zealand curriculum allows for critical reflection upon political institutions and processes.

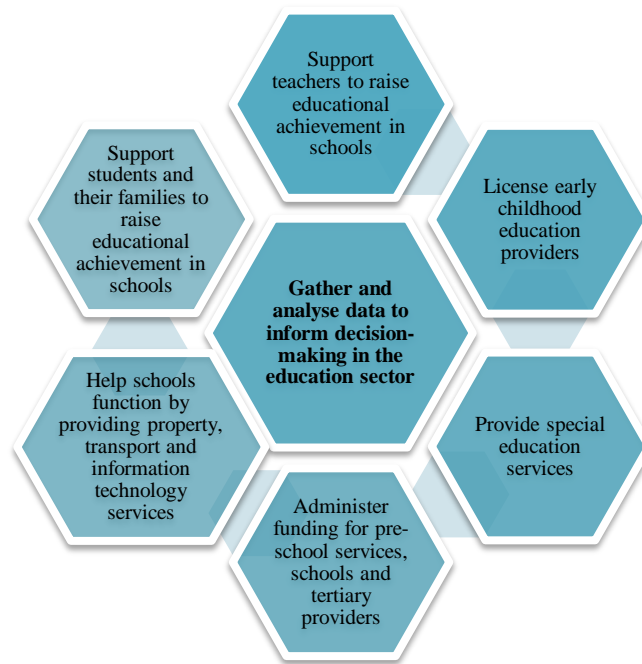
The concept of political literacy is used in only a few articles and books I have accessed (Anderson, 2008; Bochel, 2009; Collins, 1992; Crick [Crick report], 1998; Douglas, 2002; Gilbert, 2006), and is not used as often as the terms *citizenship* or *civic education* (Bolstad, 2012; Hipkins, 2012; Kerr, 2000; Lang, 2010; Mutch, 2005; Satherley, 2011; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004; Wood, 2010). It is interesting to note that most of the reviewed New Zealand literature uses the terms citizenship or civic education, whereas literature that uses the concept of political literacy appears to come from Britain. This could be connected to the release of an important British policy document: *Education for citizenship and the teaching of democracy in schools* (Crick Report, 1998), which proposed the use of the concept political literacy. This report appears to have had a great influence on British literature on political literacy, and is cited in publications I have reviewed (Bochel, 2009; Collins, 1997; Douglas 2002). *Citizenship* or *civic education* can be defined as "...the preparation of young people for their roles and responsibilities as citizens and, in particular, the role of education (through schooling, teaching and learning) in that preparatory process" (Kerr, 2000, p. 2). Since the terms, *citizenship* or *civic education* are used frequently in the literature I reviewed, and used for a long time, they are prone to implicit meanings. For example *citizenship* has multiple meanings such as described by Westheimer and Kahne (2004). Ron Anderson goes even further, arguing political literacy is "... more neutral, less propagandistic and less triumphant..." (Anderson, 2008, p. 14) than the terms citizenship or civic education.

## **Stakeholders of political literacy education**

There are many stakeholders in young people's political literacy education. As mentioned above, political literacy education is an important tool used to legitimize a democracy. Jean-Jacques Rousseau stated 250 years ago: "The strongest is never strong enough unless he turns might into right and obedience into duty" (Rousseau, 1913, Chapter Three). This seems to be the essence of why political literacy is so important to stakeholders. It is not only used to inform and educate citizens of the future, but to teach them what is right, and how to be a dutiful citizen in order to legitimise the democratic system. Stakeholders that have particular influence on the young New Zealand citizen are the Ministry of Education and the NZC; the Social Sciences learning area of the NZC; and school teachers. The New Zealand Ministry of Education is responsible for writing and releasing guidelines for the education of young people. The NZC embeds all these values and guidelines, and is used by educators and school leaders as a guide, and therefore shapes their actions. Secondly, the Social Sciences learning area of the NZC. The main responsibility to educate young citizens is given to the Social Sciences learning area in the NZC. Social Studies is a core subject compulsory to State schools in New Zealand.

### *(1) The New Zealand Ministry of Education and the New Zealand Curriculum*

The New Zealand Ministry of Education (MOE) is responsible for developing policies for New Zealand's pre-schools and schooling sectors. At the time of writing this thesis, the Minister for Education is the Honourable Hekia Parata who represents the National Party. One aspect of the MOE's vision regarding political literacy education is for every New Zealander to be "an active participant and citizen in creating a strong civil society" (Ministry of Education [MOE], 2015a). The responsibilities of the MOE can be viewed in Figure 17: Responsibilities of the Ministry of Education (MOE, 2015a).

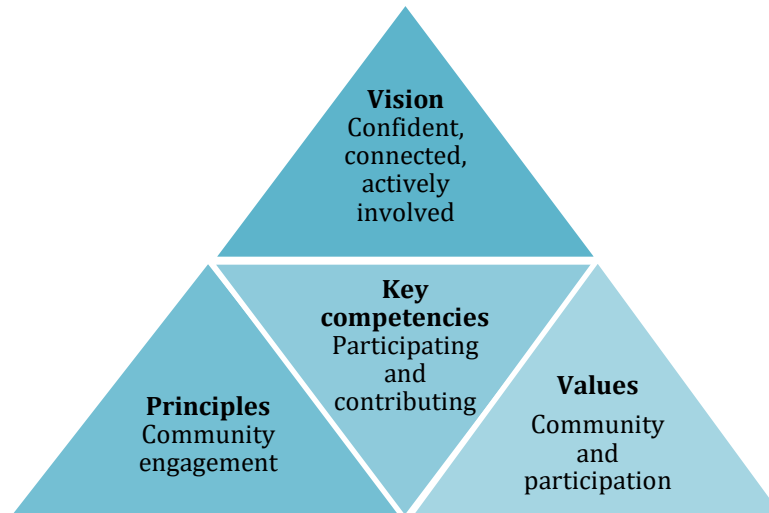


**Figure 17:** Responsibilities of the Ministry of Education (MOE, 2015a)

I argue that the most important element of the MOE’s responsibilities, is the decision making about and the development of policies as indicated in the centre of Figure 18. At the time of conceiving this thesis, there were no explicit MOE explicit policies regarding political literacy education. This is surprising due to the abundant attention that low political participation of young people receives in the media (Liddle, 2013; RadionZ, 2014; Robinson, 2014), in public discourse (Electoral Commission, 2014b; SocCon, 2015) and academic discourse (Ballington, 2002; Electoral Commission, 2014a; Vowles, 2012). I will now describe aspects of the *New Zealand Curriculum* (NZC, 2007) which is the policy developed and distributed by the MOE for the schooling curriculum across thirteen years of learning.

New Zealand’s most recent national curriculum was released in 2007. The NZC encourages political participation in many ways, sometimes very subtly through encouraging the general skills a citizen needs, or more directly as in the Social Sciences learning area. Figure 18: Political literacy education in the New Zealand Curriculum (NZC, 2007, p.8-13), shows the more subtle ways the curriculum encourages political participation. For example the *Vision* statement seeks “confident, connected and actively involved lifelong learners” (p. 8). The *Values* encouraged in the New Zealand Curriculum include “community and participation” (p. 10). The Vision is placed on top

of the triangle because educating young people to become “confident, connected and actively involved learners” (NZC, p. 8) is an aspirational outcome of teaching and learning in the national curriculum.



**Figure 18:** Political literacy education in the New Zealand Curriculum (adapted from the NZC, 2007, p. 8-13)

While the main responsibility of teaching political literacy lies with the Social Sciences in the New Zealand Curriculum, by following the guidelines of the curriculum, every subject teacher will contribute to the political literacy of their students. For example, by encouraging students to “participate and contribute” (NZC, 2007, p. 13) in any subject of the curriculum, teachers encourage their students to learn to become a “responsible citizen” (NZC, 2007, p. 30). Also, by teaching students to make meaning of ideas or information, that is a strand of the English learning area of the New Zealand Curriculum (NZC, 2007, p. 18), teachers contribute to their students’ literacy which can support political literacy.

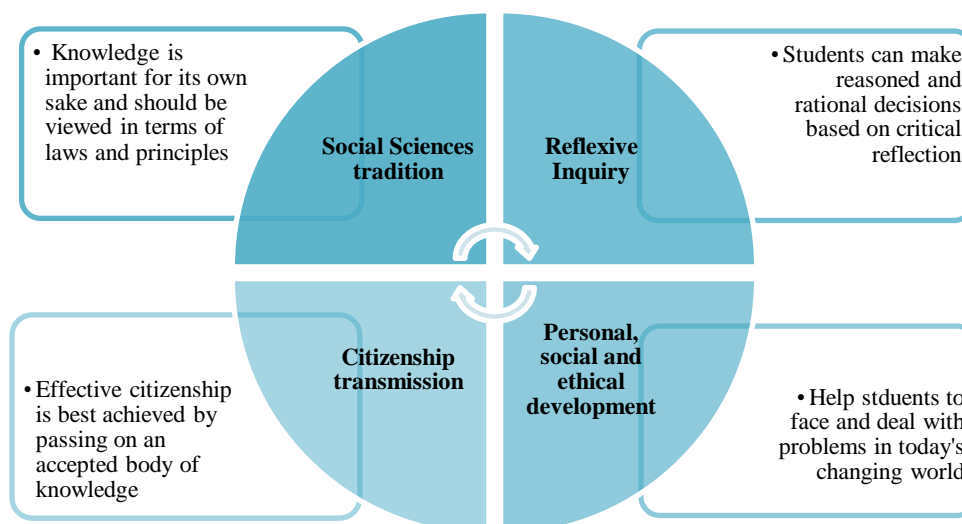
## *(2) The Social Sciences learning area in the New Zealand Curriculum*

The Years 11-13 senior social sciences include multiple subjects from the social sciences and humanities such as History, Geography, Social Studies, Economics, Psychology, Sociology and Legal Studies (NZC, 2007, p. 30). Only four of these senior subjects (History, Geography, Economics and Social Studies) are defined further in the

New Zealand Curriculum (NZC, 2007, fold out chart). In junior classes (Years 1-10) social sciences are taught as Social Studies. I subsequently focus on Social Studies as my research focus.

The Social Sciences learning area encourages young people to learn “... about how societies work and how people can participate as critical, active, informed and, responsible citizens” (NZC, 2007, p. 30). At first glance, this statement seems to suggest that Social Studies is about political literacy education. It meets the criteria set by Anderson (2008) in his political literacy model (see p.50) as it includes knowledge, understanding and practical competence. It also includes the word *critical* which Collins (1992) argues is an essential characteristic of being politically literate. However, when analysing elements of the Social Sciences learning area in closer detail, it appears that this critical element is not nurtured throughout the NZC. In addition, the term *responsible citizen* is not defined which suggests a normative agenda to the reader. When reading *responsible citizen*, the reader might associate particular characteristics with this term which could be one of the three types of citizens Westheimer and Kahne (2004) described (refer to Chapter One, p. 31).

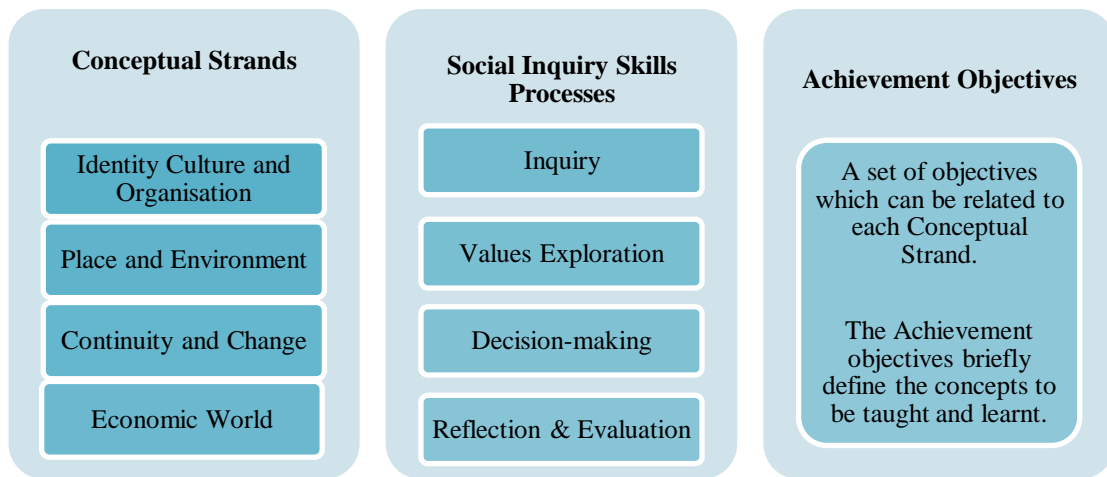
In their position paper: *Social Studies in the New Zealand school curriculum*, Barr, Graham, Hunter, Keown and McGee (1997) stated that there are four fundamental traditions of Social Studies: Citizenship transmission, social science tradition, reflective inquiry and, personal social and ethical development. Figure 19: The four fundamental traditions of Social Studies (Barr et al. 1997), shows the meaning Barr et al. (1997) attributed to these fundamental traditions:



**Figure 19:** The four fundamental traditions of Social Studies (Barr et al., 1997, p. 2-3)

In my view, all of these traditions can be seen in the NZC Social Sciences learning area. For example Reflexive Inquiry is included in the *Social Sciences Inquiry Skills Processes*, which will be explained in detail below. It is important to examine the NZC policy regarding underlying traditions as they can influence young people’s political efficacy. For example if knowledge is taught as an accepted body of knowledge, rather than a social construct that is open to change, young people might be less likely to actively participate in politics to create change. However, I argue all four traditions could be important aspects of young people’s political literacy, and therefore justify their place in the Social Sciences learning area of the New Zealand Curriculum.

The Social Sciences learning area is structured into elements of Conceptual Strands, Social Inquiry Skills Processes, and Achievement Objectives. Each of these elements carries some significance for political literacy education. Figure 20: Structure of the Social Sciences learning area of the New Zealand curriculum (NZC, 2007, p. 30), introduces the three elements and their purpose.



**Figure 20:** Structure of the Social Sciences learning area of the New Zealand curriculum (NZC, 2007, p. 30)

Conceptual Strands are concepts grouped together based on their disciplinary and shared meaning. A concept is defined by Barr et al. (1997) as “an abstraction, which pulls together a number of facts. Concepts group particular facts together and help organise and make sense of them, by revealing patterns of similarity and difference” (p. 7). In my view Conceptual Strands are important for acquiring political literacy. For example, the Strand *Identity, Culture and Organisation* (NZC, 2007, p. 30) requires students to “learn about society and communities and how they function” (NZC, 2007, p. 30). Understanding how communities work is an important step in being able to participate in communities as a citizen, which is part of being politically literate. The *Economic World Strand* (NZC, 2007, p. 30) teaches students about “their role in the economy and [...] how economic decisions affect individuals and communities” (NZC, 2007, p. 30). This is also important for political literacy, since many issues of today’s society develop from economic activity including inequality, unequal resources (Eaqub & Eaqub, 2015) and environmental issues. Being aware of issues affecting young people, is part of the political literacy approach as Anderson’s (2008) model of political literacy suggests (see p.50). In his model, *issues* are placed at the bottom as an example of something to be known and understood, and as something that offers an opportunity for getting involved (practical competence) in order to become politically literate.

Unfortunately, the NZC conceptual strands do not include explicit reference to the concept of *power relationships*. In order to be truly politically literate one needs to be

critical towards processes and institutions as Collin's definition suggests: "... political literacy is presented as the capacity for critical reflection upon political institutions and processes, especially in terms of the values engaged by these institutions and processes" (Collins, 1997, Free Institutions and Political Literacy Section, 14). In particular, the *Economic World Strand* might be relooked at to encourage critical investigation by students. For example students could investigate whether resources are distributed fairly in the world, and whether governments should play a role in the distribution of resources. This however is not encouraged in the strand:

The Economic World - Students learn about the ways in which people participate in economic activities and about the consumption, production, and distribution of goods and services. They develop an understanding of their role in the economy and of how economic decisions affect individuals and communities (NZC, 2007, p. 30)

Due to the neutrality of this strand description, it is only specialist Social Studies teachers who read this description critically, who might teach economic concepts with a critical lens. In my experience as a social sciences educator, many teachers are placed in the Social Sciences learning area without formal training in the subject. Teachers came from teaching areas such as Horticulture, Wood or Careers which seem to be unrelated to social sciences. For these teachers, the Social Sciences learning area is important guide for programme delivery. Since the conceptual strands, are formulated in neutral language, teachers might not be able to critically investigate them and therefore not teach about important issues such as power relationships affecting people's access to resources.

There also seems to be a lack of political concepts in the NZC Social Sciences learning area. For example, the conceptual strand *Social Organisation* (Ministry of Education, 1997, p. 8) was combined with the strand *Culture and Heritage* (Ministry of Education, 1997, p. 8) into *Identity, Culture and Organisation* (NZC, 2007, p. 30). Due to this strand's multiple concepts, teachers can stick to cultural concepts rather than political concepts. As a result, the word *political* is mentioned only once in the whole Social Sciences learning area (NZC, 2007, p. 30). I find it curious that there is no reference to the concept of *democracy* which characterises and is inherent to the New Zealand political system.

Achievement Objectives [AOs] are a set of expected outcomes for learning. Barr et al. (1997) argue that teacher planning usually begins with aims and achievement objectives (p. 7). This implies the importance of a well written set of achievement objectives in the curriculum. The NZC Social Sciences learning area has achievement objectives at each curriculum level (NZC, 2007, fold-out chart). Concepts from the four Conceptual Strands (NZC, 2007, p.30) are linked to each of the AOs. I focus on Social Studies AOs across Curriculum Levels 4 to 6 (students aged 13-17 years) since these levels are most relevant to my research. Table 2: Achievement Objectives Social Studies curriculum level 4 to 6 (NZC, 2007, Fold-out chart), shows the AOs over Levels 4 to 6 that relate most closely to political literacy.

Level 4	Level 5	Level 6
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand how the ways in which leadership of groups is acquired and exercised have consequences for communities and societies.</li> <li>• Understand how formal and informal groups make decisions that impact on communities</li> <li>• Understand how people participate individually and collectively in response to community challenges.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand how systems of government in New Zealand operate and affect people’s lives, and how they compare with another system.</li> <li>• Understand how people define and seek human rights.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand how individuals, groups, and institutions work to promote social justice and human rights.</li> <li>• Understand how cultures adapt and change and that this has consequences for society.</li> </ul>

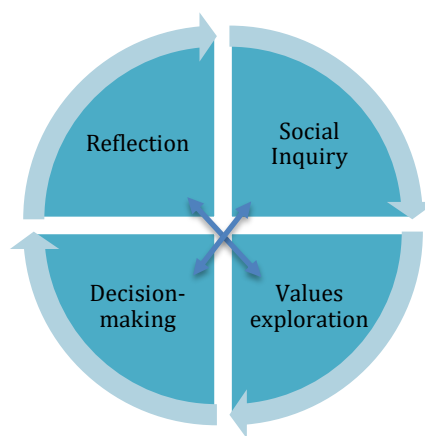
**Table 2:** Achievement Objectives Social Studies curriculum levels 4 to 6 (NZC, 2007, Fold-out chart)

As evident in the figure above most political concepts, such as leadership, informal and formal groups, community, society, decision-making, individual and collective participation and community challenge, are included at curriculum Level 4. At Level 5 however, there is only one AO that is closely related to political literacy: “Understand how systems of government in New Zealand operate and affect people’s lives and how they compare with another system” (NZC, 2007, fold-out chart). This AO contains process descriptors such as *operate* and *affect* which signals students should understand the concept of *government* as a cultural institution, made by people and affecting people rather than a static institution. This is also encouraged by the indicator *compare* which

refers to other belief systems in comparison to a democracy. Surprisingly the AO does not contain the aspect of how people influence the government in return, which seems to encourage a low “political efficacy” (Bandura, 1977). This presents a power imbalance from the government to the people rather than the reverse. As mentioned previously in relation to conceptual strands, it is surprising that the term *democracy* is not mentioned, since New Zealand’s political system is a constitutional democracy. The second AO at Level 5, is interesting because of its neutral wording. I view this as problematic, particularly in the light of Europe’s current refugee crisis and worldwide human rights violations. It is surprising how this objective does not include terms such as human rights violations, power imbalance, inequality or democracy. The AOs selected for Level 6 are the only AOs available for Year 11 Senior Social Studies. Both AOs lack political vocabulary. It is interesting how the AO: Understand how individuals, groups, and institutions work to promote social justice and human rights, implies an investigation into non-governmental agencies (individuals, groups and institutions) and their involvement in human rights movements, rather than political bodies such as Iwi, tribal, government and parliament. This seems to encourage a “personally responsible” or “participatory citizen” rather than a “justice oriented citizen” (Westheimer and Kahne, 2004, see Chapter One, p.31). Only at Level 8 of the Senior Social Sciences, political ideas are included such as roles, rights and responsibilities, policy changes, ideologies, society (NZC, 2007, fold-out chart).

Generally, it is debated whether AOs are beneficial for teaching and learning. Carpenter (2003) argued New Zealand’s approach in structuring documents is not very innovative and is still based upon Tyler’s (1949) *Objective model*, which has been criticised by researchers. Kliebard (1970) for example questioned the source of achievement objectives. I have mentioned this in the previous section, when discussing conceptual strands in the NZC Social Sciences learning area. Choosing to teach students about an economic world strand (NZC, 2007, p. 30) rather than a political world strand seems to suggest bias applied to the curriculum by the current government. Marsh (1992) criticised Tyler’s (1949) objectives model as it seemed to ignore unintended learning, since only achievement objectives seem to be assessment worthy. In the NZC Social Sciences learning area, this criticism may be balanced out by the social inquiry skills processes (NZC, 2007, p. 30), since they allow assessment of different skills.

The *Social Inquiry Skills Processes* [SISPs] are methods for learning in the Social Sciences learning area. For teachers the SISPs suggest how content can be presented and learned by students. As the Figure 21: Social Inquiry Skills Processes (NZC, 2007, p.30), suggests, there are four different processes: Inquiry, values exploration, decision-making, and reflection and evaluation. I view the SISPs can be viewed as an endless circle, starting at any point. For example someone might be reflecting on a social situation, and then needs to conduct social inquiry in order to find new evidence to understand the situation fully. Each of the SISPs seems to rely upon another, for example in order to make a decision in a social situation, one needs to be aware of the values of different stakeholders (values exploration). I believe that all four processes are important in becoming politically literate and in being a critical and reflective citizen. This relates to Collin’s (1997) definition of political literacy: “... political literacy is presented as the capacity for critical reflection upon political institutions and processes, especially in terms of the values engaged by these institutions and processes” (Collins, 1997, Free Institutions and Political Literacy Section, 14), since the SISPs give the learner the capacity to reflect upon political processes and institutions.



**Figure 21:** Social Inquiry Skills Processes (NZC, 2007, p.30)

SISPs when applied skillfully, make up for the lack of political terminology in conceptual strands and AOs. In order for this to be achieved, it is important to educate teachers about the integration of SISPs into their teaching programme.

Overall, the NZC Social Sciences learning area, makes it difficult for educators to deliver a comprehensive political literacy education. This is because it omits important ideas such as power relationships which might not be picked up by teachers. If students

do not understand these concepts, limited political literacy will result. Therefore, it is interesting to consider Social Sciences teachers and implementation of the Social Sciences learning area of the New Zealand secondary schools.

### *(3) Schools and educators*

The Social Sciences learning area in the New Zealand Curriculum is open for interpretation in many ways. For example an Achievement Objective from Level 4 of the Social Sciences learning area states: “Understand how the ways in which leadership of groups is acquired and exercised have consequences for communities and societies” (NZC, 2007, fold-out chart). It is the teacher’s and/or Head of Department’s job to decide the context to teach about the concepts embedded in the objective. Questions could be asked: What type of leadership should be discussed? What community or society can be selected? Teachers might select contexts that range from: ‘World War II, How Hitler’s party rose to power and exercised power over Nazi Germany’, to ‘New Zealand- How are parties and representatives elected in New Zealand and who is involved in decision-making?’ While this room for interpretation opens up the possibility for “connection, alignment, community and interest” (Aitken & Sinnema [BES], 2008) as important indicators for student learning, it also opens up confusion. Beginning teachers, or teachers who experience curriculum changes might struggle to find suitable contexts and as a result, students might not be able to acquire good conceptual understandings. This section therefore will briefly look at evidence of how New Zealand Social Studies educators teach political literacy using the New Zealand Curriculum. The evidence is drawn from the *Effective pedagogy in social sciences/tikanga a iwi: Best evidence synthesis iteration [BES]* (Aitken & Sinnema, 2008) and New Zealand publications of the International Civics and Citizenship Education Study (Bolstad, 2012; Hipkins, 2012; Satherley, 2011; Schulz, Ainley, Fraillon, Kerr, & Losito, 2010). At the end of this section, I will introduce experiences from a school election event I conducted with Year 12 and 13 students prior to the 2014 New Zealand election.

Rachel Bolstad (2012) summarises the *Role of School and Community in supporting Civic and Citizenship Education in New Zealand schools* in her report of the New

Zealand results of the ICCS. Of particular interest for this thesis, are the results of a questionnaire conducted with Year 9 teachers in selected schools in New Zealand. The focus was on the perception and delivery of political literacy education programmes (Bolstad, 2012, p. 8). Some results important to the context of this thesis are examined.

A first area of interest is the perception of teachers towards the main aim of civic education. Table 3: New Zealand teachers' views of the main aim of civic and citizenship education in comparison to the ICCS average (Bolstad, 2012, p. 12), shows the two most named aims and two of the least named aims by New Zealand teachers in comparison to the ICCS average.

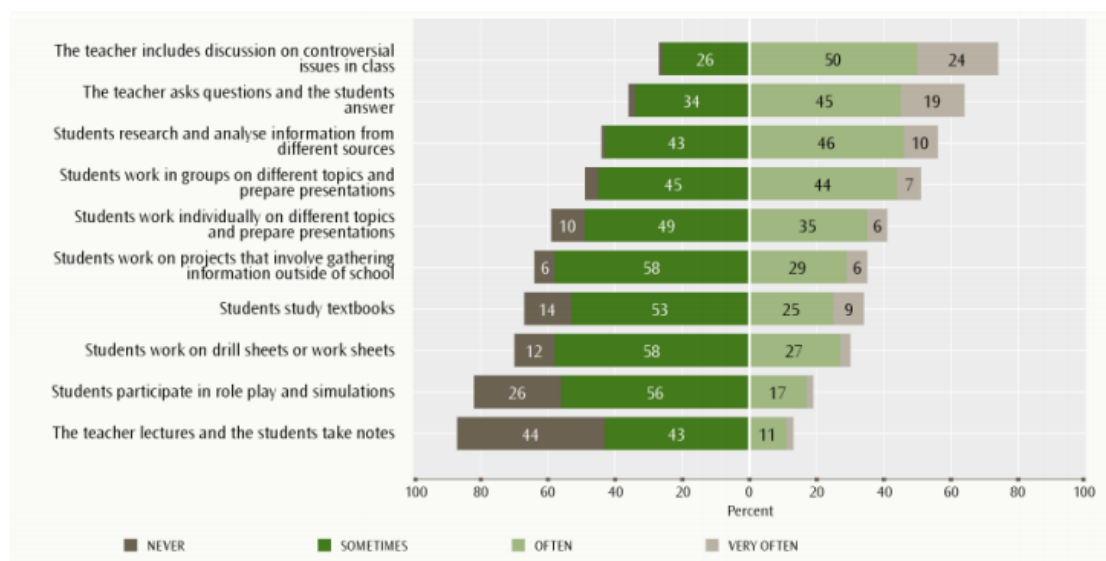
<b>Aim</b>	<b>NZ teachers (%)</b>	<b>ICCS average (%)</b>
Promoting students' critical and independent thinking	74	52
Promoting respect for and safeguard of the environment	50	41
Promoting the capacity to defend one's own point of view	12	10
Preparing students for future political participation	4	7

**Table 3:** New Zealand teachers' views of the main aim of civic and citizenship education in comparison to the ICCS average (Bolstad, 2012, p. 12)

While New Zealand teachers seem to agree with teachers from other countries on the importance of different aims for civic and citizenship education, it is interesting to note that “Preparing students for future political participation” is only mentioned by four percent of teachers. This could be a factor in low internal efficacy (Bandura, 1977) which is a low belief in one's ability to understand politics. If young people are never taught how to participate in politics which might be a result of teachers considering this aim less important, young people are less likely to show a high internal efficacy which can increase political participation. In my research, a low internal efficacy was indicated as well and some participants argued they were not prepared well, for political participation (see Chapter Four). However, many participating New Zealand teachers

(74%) seem to value critical and independent thinking which according to Collins (1992) is an important aspect of being politically literate.

A second area of interest are the types of teaching strategies used to provide political literacy education. New Zealand results of the ICCS study in 2009 suggests that New Zealand Social Sciences teachers use a range of strategies to teach political literacy. Different strategies and the amount of their occurrence is summarised in Figure 22: Activities used during Year 9 Social Studies lessons by participating Social Studies teachers in the ICCS study 2009 (Bolstad, 2012, p. 28), as follows.



**Figure 22:** Activities used during Year 9 Social Studies lessons by participating Social Studies teachers (Bolstad, 2012, p. 28)

The figure indicates that widely used methods are discussions on controversial issues, teacher asks questions and students answer and students research information. Less commonly used methods include lectures, role plays, worksheets and projects. It is interesting that the two activities that were used most often were directed by the teacher rather than the students which could lead students to experience a power imbalance which can add to create low political efficacy (Bandura, 1977). A low political efficacy is when one believes their voice is not important. However, since the ICCS study was conducted as a questionnaire it is not obvious how these class discussions were conducted and whether they allowed students to lead discussions and feel valued. As discussed next, the BES (2008) indicates that the use of community issues and taking

direct action is beneficial for political literacy teaching (Aitken & Sinnema, 2008, p. 187-188). This type of activity seems to be omitted from the questionnaire which is interesting to note.

A final area of interest from the New Zealand results of the ICCS study are the types of political activities students participate in. This is important since research indicates the earlier young people get involved in political activities, the more likely they will participate as an adult (Arsenau, 2014). Table 4: Activities Year 9 students participated in during one year (according to their teachers) (Bolstad, 2012, p. 18), are shown as follows:

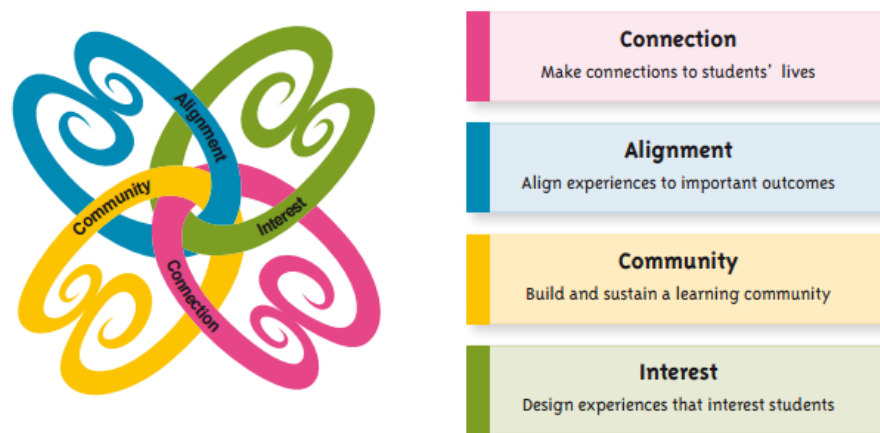
Activity	Percentage of teachers
Participating in sports events	68
Cultural activities (eg, theatre, music, cinema)	49
Campaigns to raise people's awareness, such as World Environment Day, World Smokefree Day	40
Activities related to the environment, geared to the local area	36
Activities related to underprivileged people or groups	32
Multicultural and intercultural activities within the local community	29
Human rights projects	20
Activities related to improving facilities for the local community (eg, public gardens, libraries, health centres, recreation centres, community hall)	17

**Table 4:** Activities Year 9 students have participated in during one year according to their teachers (Bolstad, 2012, p. 18)

When referring to the Table (4), it is interesting to note that significantly more students participated in charity related events, such as human rights projects rather than activities which could be “justice oriented” (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). This was also evident in a social action inquiry I conducted with a Year 10 class (introduced in the last section of this chapter: Teaching for social action, p. 75). However, I note that due to the quantitative nature of the research presented by Bolstad, it is difficult to decide what types of actions each of the activities include. For example the human rights project could involve donating money which would not be political as such but rather a charity

activity. If the human rights actions involved changing the social reality for a group of people involving formal and informal political processes such as protesting or a petition, it would be called social justice action. Evidence from the New Zealand results of the ICCS study overall seem to indicate that there is a range of activities used by teachers, but many activities seem to be teacher led. It also indicates that preparing young people for future political participation was not a focus for the participating New Zealand teachers. Some evidence from Aitken and Sinnema’s (2008) *Best Evidence Synthesis [BES]* is drawn on, to understand what effective teaching of political literacy might include.

The BES (2008) is a summary of research and evidence around effective social sciences education within the Social Sciences learning area of the New Zealand curriculum. The BES is based upon the four principles: *connection, alignment, community* and *interest*, outlined in Figure 23: The four elements of effective pedagogy (BES, 2008, p. 2). It draws on a wide body of research and years, including countries in different hemispheres and ranging in curriculum levels. I selected research connected to political literacy teaching.



**Figure 23:** The four element of effective pedagogy (BES, 2008, p. 2)

One important message the BES conveys, is the use of community related issues in Social Studies education. This relates to all three principles of the BES, as using local issues increases connection to student’s’ lives, aligns students’’ experiences, makes connections to the community and buys into students’ interests (BES, 2008). The BES

daws on research such as Schultz (2007) or Davis and Pratt (2005) to describe how teachers successfully managed to address community issues with their students (BES, 2008, p. 187-188). Community issues also lend themselves well to practice Social Inquiry Skills Processes [SISP] such as decision-making (NZC, 2007, p.30).

Another relevant strategy introduced by the BES is the use of simulation games (BES, 2008, p. 215). There seems to be a lack of research on the effects of simulation games but they seem to be of some use to acquire Social Studies concepts and skills. From my own experience, for example, the PS4 game *Tropico* (Thomas, 2015), could teach students about political concepts. The game starts on an uninhabited island which the player is asked to colonise. The player is the leader or government of the island. When colonising the island, the player has to carry out several activities: producing, buying and selling resources, constructing an infrastructure, modernising the infrastructure and releasing policies such as taxes. At the same time the player has to make sure to keep the population stable, prevent poverty and most importantly keep the inhabitants of the island happy. If the population is not happy because there are not enough schools for the population or not enough jobs, some militant groups will rise up against the government and may be able to overthrow the government which ends the game. This game therefore, can be useful to understand political processes, the purpose of laws and policies and the balance or imbalance of power. It would be interesting to carry out a study on the effects of a simulation game such as *Tropico* on the political literacy of participants. A study on a simulation game trialled with tertiary students on international terrorism, the future of Iraq and globalisation, has been conducted by Shellman and Turan (2006). The researchers report a gain in knowledge, and critical as well as analytical skills through the simulation game (BES, 2006, p. 215). In addition, they report that the game was an enjoyable experience. I believe this can also increase better retention of skills and concepts acquired.

Presenting students with real experiences that focus on political engagement is also a successful strategy put forward by the BES (BES, 2008, p. 190). Research such as Elder, Seligson & Hofrenning (2006) and Beaumont, Colby, Ehrlich & Torney-Purta (2006) report success from using strategies such as inviting guest speakers, attending political campaign events and community placements (BES, 2008, p. 190-192). One result from exposing participants to real life political experiences was that their interest

increased, as reported by Beaumont et al. (2006). Another positive outcome was that participants were more likely to follow the news which was reported by Elder et al. (2006). A participant in Elder et al. study remarked for example: “My political experience allowed abstract issues to become more tangible and following politics on a day-to-day basis more relevant” (p. 205). This was a result I also found during an election event I organised at a Waikato secondary school before the General Election of 2014. It is introduced as follows. It has to be noted however, that real-life experiences can only be beneficial, if the learner understands the purpose of the activities and if they are able to reflect and debrief (Allemann and Brophy, 1994).

#### *(4) Case study evidence: Real life experience during a school election event*

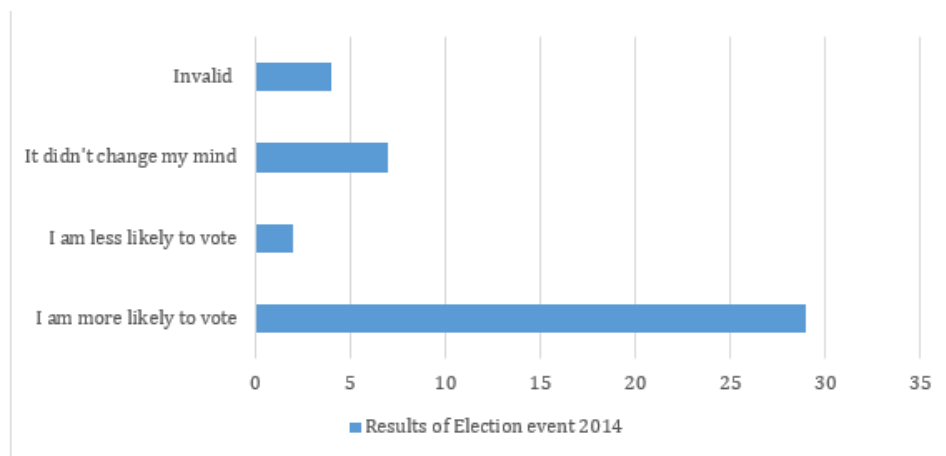
Case study evidence from an *Election event at a Waikato Secondary School*. I invited local Members of Parliament or party representatives to attend the event and speak to our Year 13 students in order to encourage them to vote. These results cannot be seen as representative, but I argue they provide some insight into thinking processes of young people. About 80 students took part in the election event. Most were Year 13 students and some were Year 12. Fifty-two students participated in a subsequent questionnaire that sought their views of the event. About 40 students participated in a pre-survey of the event where they were asked to write down questions they would like to ask the participating politicians. Below are some of the questions students came up with:

1. “Why does the answers all, have to be down to one person’s say? Why can’t we all work together to make decisions?”
2. “Why are there hardly any Maori prime ministers for this country?”
3. “Why can’t you always keep your promises?”
4. “What policies are you bringing in to benefit the younger generation?”
5. “We don’t agree that your parents’ income means that you can’t get a student allowance. What are you going to do about this injustice?”

Questions one and two suggest some misunderstandings about political decision making processes which can lead to disengagement in voting and political participation. Question three shows a negative attitude towards politicians and highlights the fact that

a student might mistrust decisions being made about policies. This again can affect engagement within official political processes such as voting. Questions four and five seem to show the interest young people have in policies that affect their future directly.

The post-event survey included questions on what students thought of the event and whether it helped them to vote. A majority of the participants (29 out of 42) said this event made them more likely to vote as shown in Figure 24: Results from a high school election event 2014.



**Figure 24:** Results from a high school election event 2014

From the open questions, two interesting themes emerged. Firstly, many participants commented on the fact that this event was the first opportunity for them to experience a live debate, meet politicians or learn about different parties (32 out of 42). Secondly, a couple of students commented on how they disliked the fighting between the parties. Statements like the following were made: I didn't like: "too much rambling", "how some parties stood up and talked about stuff that's not even relevant", "The MPs being...argumentative", "too much tension", "the constant bickering", "how some acted unprofessional", "they were supposed to encourage kids to vote but instead they just argued" (in total 7 out of 42).

While this is not a representative study, it shows that young people benefit from some support to navigate different party policies and election procedures before they vote for the first time. This experience also shows how this personal interaction with politicians can increase the likelihood of voting amongst young people. Finally, this experience

suggests that young people really want to know what each party is about, rather than hearing too many arguments amongst parties which we frequently experience on Parliament TV, through media, and election events.

The New Zealand Curriculum and the Social Sciences learning area in the New Zealand curriculum offer many opportunities for political literacy education. Sometimes, these opportunities are hidden and have to be carefully selected by reflecting on and connecting to the Vision statement, Principles, Key Competencies, the Conceptual Strands, Achievement Objectives and Social Sciences Skills Processes (NZC, 2007). It is also useful to refer to research such as the Best Evidence Synthesis to understand characteristics of effective teaching in the Social Sciences learning area. Not only the content and skills suggested by the NZC and Social Sciences learning area have an influence on the political literacy education of young people, but also on teachers' delivery of content and skills. The next section introduces a range of pedagogies used to teach political literacy within the New Zealand curriculum.

### **Pedagogies for political literacy education**

Pedagogies include methods and practice of teaching. Using a certain pedagogy can be a hidden way of conveying power-relationships. For example, teacher-led pedagogies as used by many participating teachers in the New Zealand ICCS study (Bolstad, 2012, p. 64), can model a power imbalance of teachers towards students, and therefore affect students' internal efficacy (Bandura, 1977). Pedagogies introduced in this section are pedagogies aligned with the NZC such as constructivism (Scheurman, 1998) and social inquiry. I will also introduce pedagogies relevant for political literacy education including counter-socialisation (Ochoa-Becker, 2007), moralisierung (Kant, 1803) and the genetic approach (Detjen, 2007).

Pedagogy related to the New Zealand curriculum and important for political literacy teaching is *constructivism*. According to Scheurman (1998), constructivism is a “set of related theories that deal with the nature of knowledge. The common denominator linking these theories is a belief that knowledge is created by people and influenced by their values and culture” (p. 6). The learner is perceived as actively constructing

knowledge rather than passively receiving knowledge (McKay & Gibson, 2004, p. 65).

This is a pedagogy favoured by the NZC which states:

Students learn as they engage in shared activities and conversations with other people, including family members and people in the wider community. Teachers encourage this process by cultivating the class as a learning community. In such a community, everyone, including the teacher is a learner, learning conversations and learning partnerships are encouraged; and challenge, support and feedback are always available (NZC, 2007, p. 34)

This pedagogy is important for political literacy teaching for many reasons. Firstly, the student constructing their knowledge actively can aid in increasing political efficacy (Bandura, 1977), the belief in one's ability to be knowledgeable about politics. If a student realises s/he can construct their own knowledge, this can influence the belief in being able to learn about political issues, and participate based on this acquired knowledge. Secondly, at the heart of constructivism is the belief that knowledge is created by people and influenced by their values and bias. If students understand this, they already understand an important aspect of political systems and processes which are also socially and culturally constructed and influenced by values and bias of people who are participants. This can also make the political system appear constructed by people and therefore, open to change by people. This is important because students learn they can influence and even change the political system which increases their internal efficacy (Bandura, 1977). Thirdly, constructivism relates to a shared learning environment which is important to experience in order to gain political literacy skills. Politics is about power and people. The involvement in decision-making and negotiation in a community of learners can be beneficial for involvement in a political community or situation. McKay & Gibson (2004) argue that the potential of using constructivism in Social Studies is not discussed and written about as widely as in other subject areas. However, Hope (1996) argues that applying constructivism to Social Studies classrooms could be beneficial to understand political concepts as it could enable students to "engage with citizenship concepts from their own viewpoint" (as cited in McKay & Gibson, 2004, p. 67). In the context of the Social Sciences learning area of the New Zealand curriculum, constructivism fits in with the Social Inquiry Skills Processes. The process of *values exploration* (NZC, 2007, p. 30) in particular, seems to encourage a constructivist pedagogy.

Counter socialisation (Ochoa-Becker, 2007) is another important pedagogy for political literacy education. It is related to Detjen's (2007) genetic approach, since it aims at presenting the political system with a possibility for change. Ochoa-Becker explains:

*Socialisation* is an inescapable dimension of citizenship education and is the means by which young citizens initially learn the traditions of their society. However, in a democracy, *counter-socialisation* emphasizes creative and independent thinking as well as social criticism that is based on reason and evidence (Ochoa Becker, 2007, p. 66-67)

As Ochoa-Becker's (2007) quote suggests, both socialisation and counter-socialisation are important processes to educate young people to become participants of a democracy. Ochoa-Becker's (2007) concept of counter-socialisation is crucial for political literacy education because it encourages critical thinking which is important to be able to analyse political processes and institutions and form an independent opinion about them. Ochoa-Becker particularly encourages the critical investigation of challenges to local communities as well as the world. This concept of counter-socialisation seems to be encouraged by the NZC in some places but not in others. For example the curriculum encourages: "to look to the future by exploring such significant future-focussed issues as sustainability, citizenship, enterprise and globalisation" (NZC, 2007, p. 9) or "... participate as critical, active, informed, and responsible citizens..." (NZC, 2007, p. 30). These statements seem to encourage counter-socialization by including concepts such as *critical* and *future focus*. However, there is a lack of these concepts in the Social Sciences learning area and AOs for Social Studies which do not encourage the changing and critical investigation of present and future focussed issues such as inequality or globalisation.

Kant's (1803) theory of education is also beneficial to understand useful pedagogies for political literacy education. His overall notion of education, is to educate students to think for themselves and free themselves from authorities that think for them (Kant, 1803). Kant (1803) argued that there are four steps in education: disciplining, cultivation, civilisation and moralisation. Moralisation is the most important step for political literacy education since this is the step when a student is convinced of the wrongness of something because s/he has found it wrong through a process of his or her own inquiry and thinking, instead of being told it is wrong by the educator. Applied

to a political literacy approach, this would mean students discover the merits of participating in a democracy and learn to appreciate it in an act of inquiry, initiated by students as much as possible.

Social Inquiry is another important pedagogical approach for both the Social Sciences learning area in the NZC as well as political literacy education. Particularly with the advance of information technologies, the nature of knowledge is changing. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, knowledge is freely available and accessible to most people in the world. It is more important than ever to be able to locate, evaluate, apply and reflect on knowledge. However, literature (Wood, 2013) suggests inquiry-based learning in the New Zealand Curriculum is “interpreted and implemented in multiple ways” (Wood, 2013, p. 21). In response to empirical data from a New Zealand secondary-school-wide social inquiry focussing on their local community (Wood, 2013, p. 21), Wood argues that the most frequent use of social inquiry was related to finding information rather than values and social action aspects (Wood, 2013, p. 25). This was also evident in my personal experience as a social sciences educator. Another finding from my experience was that students did not identify or learn the skills of social inquiry which meant many students did not advance their learning even after conducting several social inquiries across different subjects within a year.

The *Genetic approach* is a pedagogical theory supported by Detjen (2007). According to this approach, political systems are introduced at their birth rather than as a static institution. This approach encourages the learner to think of political systems as modifiable by people which can increase people’s potential to participate in politics. As a teaching approach this could include teaching about how a political system became necessary and how it developed. This could also include Utopia activities, for learners to imagine a political system on an unchartered land, and the infrastructure and policies it might include.

All pedagogical approaches mentioned in this section can have a beneficial influence on political literacy education since they encourage, different sets of skills needed for citizens, including: critical reflection, inquiry skills, decision-making and negotiating. Using these pedagogies can also increase political and internal efficacy. In turn, having

a high political and internal efficacy can support young people's ability to take social action.

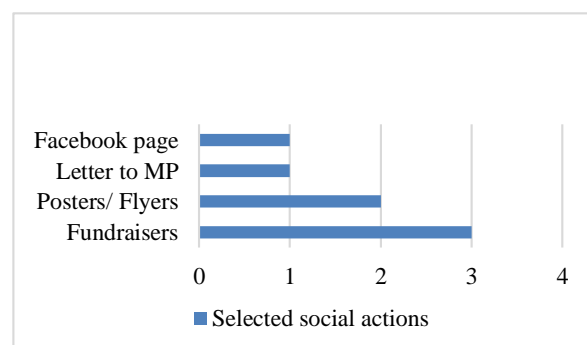
### **Teaching for social action**

'Teach for Social Action' (Kerr, 2015) was the title of a workshop at the Social Sciences Conference in Nelson (SocCon, 2015). I chose to use this workshop title as the title for this section of my thesis, since it suggests a current approach to teaching politics in Social Studies. Anna Kerr's workshop was not the only workshop with a focus on teaching for social action, other workshops were called 'Action-oriented Human Rights Education in the Classroom and Beyond' (Pierard, 2015); 'Using Resources for and about Social Justice in Social Studies: A Social Inquiry Approach for Inspiring Social Action' (Perreau, 2015); 'Scaffolding Students to Undertake "Personal Social Action" in Social Studies' (Wood, Atkins, Taylor, Grey, Perkins, Wallis, Wilson & Greenland, 2015). These workshop titles are interesting because they focus on the product of political literacy education, which is to be an active participant in local and national political decisions. Two important themes from the conference workshops I visited and from my experiences as an education practitioner are described.

Firstly, social action taking is not always a straight forward process that can be planned and executed easily. Wood, Atkins, Taylor, Grey, Perkins, Wallis & Greenland, (2015) and Wood et al. (2015), argue the following three domains are included in taking social action: The cognitive domain (knowledge and understandings), the practical domain (social inquiry) and the affective domain/ dispositions (social agency and empathy). It is crucial to let students direct the process of social action taking. This includes allowing them to choose their own context and means of social action. With student choice, a second area of interest comes into play: What constitutes social action? This relates to the three types of citizens conceived by Westheimer & Kahne (2004). As a participatory or responsible citizen for example participating in or organising a food drive is considered taking social action. For a justice-oriented citizen however, social action includes changing social realities by for example writing a petition to the government on the living situation of poor people, and the need to organise a food drive. While it is crucial to give students a choice in the social action they want to take, I argue it is also

important to make the difference clear to students between improving the day-to day situation of a group of people (for example organising a food drive) and changing the whole or part of the situation (for example influencing the government to create change in poverty). Some researchers (Wood, 2015; Scheyvens, 2015) also argue to encourage a move from the food drive to other more politically oriented social actions I also argue if young people are exposed to political types of social actions rather than what could be called social types of social action, this will shape how they might participate later. This was one of the results of a social inquiry project I conducted with a Year 10 Social Studies class in 2015.

In 2015, I carried out a social action inquiry assessment with my Year 10 Social Studies class. The assessment was based on a human rights violation. Students had to research and find a way to improve the injustice experienced by this group. Students completed the assessment as part of the Level 5 AO “Understand how people define and seek human rights” (NZC, 2007, Fold-Out Chart). It could also be connected to the Level 6 (Senior Social Sciences) AO: “Understand how individuals, groups, and institutions work to promote social justice and human rights” (Fold-Out Chart). The National Certificate of Educational Achievement [NCEA] Internal Achievement Standard, “AS91042 (1.4) Report on personal involvement in a social justice and human rights action” (New Zealand Qualifications Authority, 2014), was used to assess students. Students showed interest in the following topics: Homelessness in New Zealand, Child poverty in New Zealand, Slavery in Mauritania, Refugees in New Zealand and Poverty in Nepal. When planning their social action events, it was interesting to find what students came up with. Selected social actions are displayed in Figure 25: Selected social actions by Year 10 students.



**Figure 25:** Selected social actions by Year 10 students

I argue the social actions can be divided into formal and informal ways of political participation. Informal would be to change someone's or a group's situation through raising money or raising awareness through non-formal political processes. This could include: Facebook page, fundraisers and posters. The second way could be called formal political participation by a means of influencing political leaders in a formal way. An example would be writing a petition (letter to the government). This separation of formal and informal participation is supported by some researchers such as Lamprianou (2013). In my class, only one group chose a formal process, and 6 groups chose informal processes.

I think this is significant because informal political participation often goes unnoticed by the media, and public opinion, which is why young people might be regarded as less politically involved. Also, because from an early age, these young people, seemed to prefer or potentially only knew, informal processes of political participation. This could mean they were less likely to formally participate in politics later on through a process like voting. Some comments students made about what they learned from this experience are summarised as follows.

1. "... so next time for any activity I do or anything that involves standing up for an action that needs to be made I will know how to make it happen and in what way"
2. "I have ... learnt that anything is possible if you just keep trying and that even a little bit can be enough"
3. "You have to hook the people, students and teachers to help complete this action"
4. "From doing this project I have learned that I can make a difference by helping and fundraising for charity"
5. "I have learnt that you can do something to change the world even if it is bit by bit"
6. "I'm going to be a doctor and help countries like this when I'm older. I'm hoping I can do a similar task next year for my studies"

Students learnt more about the tools to affect change in the world. This is evident from statements such as (1-3), describing aspects of making a change such as persistence (2) or increasing interest (3). Other comments show that some students experienced some success during this inquiry assessment which showed them they can achieve something and create change (1 and 2). I learned that students who organised a fundraiser event described more success in comparison to students who completed a letter to an MP for example. I am wondering whether the reason for this might be a feeling of instant reward (being able to donate the money to a charity and getting a nice thank you letter

back, whereas students sending a letter to an MP may not receive a reply, therefore might feel they have not achieved their goal). Finally, some students expressed joy about the experience and would like to repeat it (6). Enjoying an experience may make it more likely to repeat in the future.

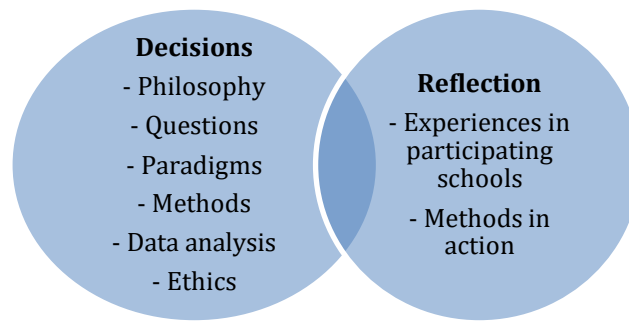
This Chapter has introduced the terminology used in political literacy teaching and learning. Literature I reviewed, made evident that the term political literacy is not used frequently in New Zealand Curriculum literature and that there seems to be no clear understanding of what it comprises. Therefore, the first section of this Chapter defined how I understand and use the term political literacy throughout this thesis. Secondly, I introduced the context of political literacy education within the New Zealand curriculum. While there seem to be many opportunities in the New Zealand curriculum to teach political literacy, many important concepts are not mentioned directly such as democracy, power and politics. This places the responsibility on teachers to establish the purpose, and deliver a purposeful political literacy education. The third part of the Chapter, summarised useful pedagogies for teaching political literacy such as constructivism, co-construction, genetic approach, social inquiry and counter-socialisation. Lastly, teaching for social action was introduced as an important context at a recent New Zealand Social Sciences Conference (SocCon, 2015). Also important have been my experiences as an education practitioner. It is evident that teaching as social action can be a tool to introduce action taking to young people, and to increase efficacy since young people get the chance to make a difference for a group of people. Chapters One and Two introduced current literature and terminology on political participation and political literacy teaching in New Zealand. They also make evident the reasons for conducting this research. Chapter Three: Initiating political conversations with young New Zealanders, introduces the methodology and ethical considerations for my research.

## Chapter Three: Initiating political conversations with young New Zealanders

“Invincibility lies in the defence, the possibility of victory in the attack”  
Sun Tzu, translated by Griffith (Sun-Tzu & Griffith, 1964)

Chapter Two discussed perceptions, conceptions, and provision of political literacy education within the context of the New Zealand Curriculum and New Zealand secondary schools. It showed that there is some unexplored potential of the Social Sciences learning area in the New Zealand Curriculum, for political literacy education. This includes the integration of political terminology, explicit Achievement Objectives, and a clearer understanding of what constitutes social inquiry. I think the Sun Tzu quote is appropriate to note when discussing young New Zealander’s involvement in politics. From reviewing literature in Chapters One and Two, and from reviewing the results of my research on Year 11 students’ political perceptions, I have the impression there is great potential to increase the political involvement of young New Zealanders. I argue it is time for young New Zealanders to move away from a position where they have to *defend* their political perceptions and means of participation, towards demanding a place in the political system. In my view, Sun Tzu’s quote reflects this need for making a strong statement, using the voices of young people. The research introduced in this chapter represents only a small proportion of young people in New Zealand below the voting age, but nevertheless presents interesting insights into their perceptions and capacity for political participation.

The Chapter introduces the methods used for collecting data, the research questions and how I decided to use them, how I collected the data, the methods used for analysing data and the ethical considerations of this research. It is set up in the two tiers of: decisions and reflection. Figure 26: Overview of Chapter Three contexts, shows how this chapter is organised.



**Figure 26:** Overview of Chapter Three contexts

## **Decisions**

Before I conducted my research on Year 11 students' political perceptions, I made several key decisions, such as what I wanted to find out, how data would be collected, and the context of my research. This section sets out how the research was developed and anticipated. The next section (Reflection) sets out how the research was conducted. This section is divided into four parts. Firstly, I will present the philosophical assumptions that underpin my research in order to acknowledge researcher bias and the aim of this research. The philosophical assumptions were grounds for forming my research questions which are introduced secondly. Thirdly, I will introduce the paradigms important to my research methods, and which influenced the three research methods I decided to use: A student questionnaire, student focus group conversations and qualitative teacher interviews. This section is organised according to a chapter from Peter Newby's (2013) book on research methods in education. I find this organisation of decisions into philosophy, paradigms and research methods useful as it provides a solid foundation for the reader to understand my research orientation, and considerations to arrive at the methods, questions and data.

### *(1) Philosophy of Education*

The decisions I made regarding research questions and research methods were based on my philosophy of education, which is the way I view and value information and which influences the way I selected literature, and chose to conduct my research.

Newby (2013) suggests there are five main philosophical strands one can belong to or reject: *Scientism* and *Positivism*; *Humanism*, *Phenomenology* and *Existentialism*; *Critical theory*; and *Postmodernism*. He also argues these strands are not mutually exclusive so one's thinking might align with two or more philosophical strands (Newby, 2013, p. 33). The philosophical strands which influence my view of education are: *Humanism*, *Phenomenology*, *Critical theory* and *Postmodernism*. I want to briefly introduce these four philosophical ideas in order to provide understanding about the background and bias of my decisions on research questions and research methods, as well as analysis of my results.

The first theory that influences my research is *Humanism*. Humanists believe that "truth is a social construction" (Newby, 2013, p. 35) and that there are different truths for different people. So in a humanist tradition, in order to find truth, one must engage in conversations with people. From an early stage of my research conception, I knew I needed to engage in conversations with young people to find out about their political perceptions. This was the basis for my choice of research methods such as interviews and focus group conversations. My research questions are designed in a humanist way as well, since they explore people's perceptions, rather than statistics or experiments. Likewise, when analysing results, I am interested in describing perceptions or personal truths of the participants.

A second philosophical assumption I support and which is visible in my research is *Phenomenology* which is part of a humanistic tradition. Phenomenology is interested in "how we experience the world rather than ideas and concepts about how the world really is" (Newby, 2013, p. 36). The context I chose to research focusses on how a group of Year 11 students, experience political processes. I am not interested in what young people know or their statistical participation in politics, but rather how they experience political processes. This again influenced me to choose research methods that enable a conversation. Focus groups particularly interest me because they enable young people to lead conversations, and through this give insights into their experiences and contextual interests. This assists to achieve a more authentic view of my participants' experiences.

A third philosophical strand underpinning my research is *Critical theory* which “seek(s) not only to explain but to change” (Newby, 2013, p. 36) a situation. Critical theorists understand that they are not neutral and “they come to research influenced by concern” (Newby, 2013, p. 40). In line with critical theory, I designed my research out of a concern, that young New Zealanders are perceived as politically apathetic (Arsenau, 2014; Catt, 2005; Liddle, 2013; McCulloch, 2014). I also designed the research questions with an intention to support pedagogic change. I wanted to do this by sharing perceptions of political processes of a group of young New Zealanders, to increase understanding about their experiences.

Lastly, my research was influenced by *Postmodernism* which is the idea that the “world is full of contradictions” (Newby, 2013, p. 41) and that “understanding requires context” (Newby, 2013, p. 41). In line with this tradition, I chose to gain a better insight into contextual factors of political experiences by conducting focus group conversations. These conversations gave me the opportunity to ask for clarification and further information to support understanding of student questionnaire responses. Postmodernist philosophy is also important for the interpretation of my collected data. I developed several themes, aiming at showing the complexity of the experiences, rather than verifying or falsifying one hypothesis. The research questions should be considered as a product of the philosophical assumptions presented here, and my experiences as a social sciences educator.

## (2) *Research questions*

The research introduced in this thesis is based around five research questions arrived at from my experience as a social sciences educator, and the literature I engaged with. The process of designing the research questions was introduced in detail in the Introduction (see p. 9). The main focus of my research questions is young people’s political perceptions, rather than political knowledge that is subject to frequent investigation in New Zealand research (Bolstad, 2012; Hipkins, 2012; Lang, 2010; Satherley, 2012) and research from other regions (ICCS, 2010; IDEA, 1999). I anticipate therefore, that my research questions assist in finding out important information about young people’s political perceptions, which in turn may enrich quantitative data.

## Research Questions

- How do young<sup>2</sup> New Zealanders perceive political institutions, political decision making processes and political personalities (political perceptions)?
- How do young people perceive themselves as political beings (self-efficacy)?
- How do young New Zealanders perceive political participation and how do they participate in political processes (political participation)?
- What are teachers' attitudes towards political literacy education, and what kinds of political literacy education do they value?
- How could the Social Sciences learning area in the *New Zealand Curriculum* (NZC, 2007) be used to provide a platform to learn about political institutions and political decision-making processes, in order to empower young New Zealanders to participate in political processes?

In order to answer these research questions, I had to select appropriate research methods. Research methods fall out of overarching thoughts about research which can be called paradigms and are presented in the next part.

### (3) *Paradigms*

According to Newby (2013), paradigms are “the way we look at or conduct our research” (Newby, 2013, p. 44). Paradigms can be considered as the underpinning assumptions behind a range of research methodologies. I find a differentiation between research methodologies and paradigms useful as it enables the researcher to reflect upon the general conduct of their research rather than jumping straight into selecting a research method. It also connects philosophical underpinnings with chosen research methods. Newby (2013) also argues that disciplines often share the same research paradigms which supports alignment and acceptance within a discipline. I considered literature and research in my discipline, and how different studies already added knowledge to the subject. I then decided I wanted to increase understanding of perceptions, since there already exists a fairly good database with quantitative data on young people's political knowledge in New Zealand (Bolstad, 2012; Hipkins, 2012;

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<sup>2</sup> Aged 14-16 in year 11 of the New Zealand school curriculum

Lang, 2010; Satherley, 2012). When researching perceptions, a qualitative research paradigm is useful, since it deals with multiple truths that are connected to people, rather than a phenomenon in the ‘real world’ (Newby, 2013). This qualitative research paradigm also aligns well with a few qualitative studies conducted in my field of research in New Zealand and overseas - such as Sheerin, 2007; Taft & Gordon, 2013; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004; Wood, 2010. Table 5: Comparison of qualitative and quantitative research paradigms (Newby, 2013, p.45), shows typical characteristics of a quantitative and qualitative research paradigm which is helpful to choose appropriate research methodologies.

	Quantitative	Qualitative
<b>Truth</b>	Single.	Multiple.
<b>Approach</b>	Deductive.	Inductive.
<b>Researcher</b>	Neutral.	Can be committed.
<b>Methods</b>	Formal procedures.	Structured procedures plus insight.
<b>Data</b>	Number.	Any information.

**Table 5:** Comparison of qualitative and quantitative research paradigms (Newby, 2013, p.45)

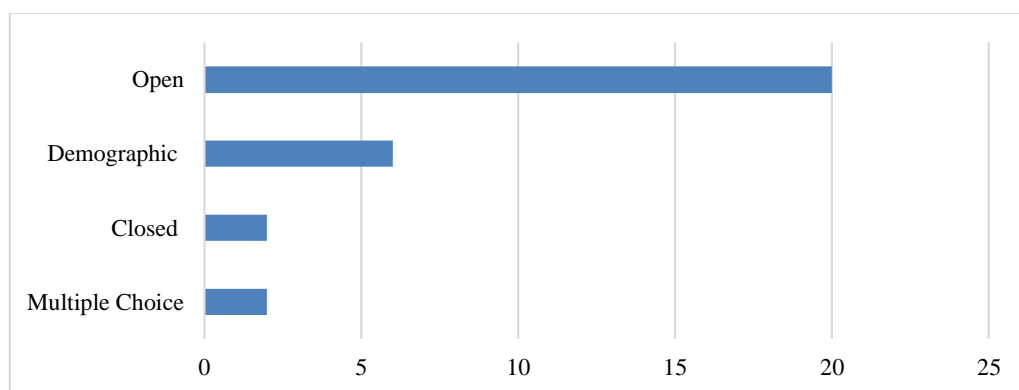
As the table suggests, research methods within a qualitative paradigm usually allow multiple truths, use an inductive approach, the researcher is not necessarily neutral, the methods can be structured but allow insight, and the data can be of any form, not necessarily numerical only. These characteristics were useful when I decided on my research methods as introduced below.

*(4) Research methods*

The paradigm underpinning my research methods is qualitative and the philosophical theories related to my research are humanism, phenomenology, critical theory and postmodernism. My selected research methods therefore shared one or more characteristics of these theoretical underpinnings. I decided to use a mixed methods qualitative research approach (American Psychological Association Task Force on

Evidence-Based Practice, 2006; Anderson, 2015; Wiggins, 2011) with three main methods: A student questionnaire, a student focus group conversation, and a semi-structured teacher interview. Using different research methods is sometimes called triangulation, and can help to make the results more reliable. The triangulation does not only apply to my research methods, but also to the tools I used to analyse my research. Each research method is introduced in detail as follows.

The first method I selected is a *student questionnaire* conducted using SurveyMonkey (SurveyMonkey, 2016) which is an online survey tool. A questionnaire can produce qualitative or quantitative data depending on the types of questions selected. As I worked in a qualitative paradigm and was interested in perceptions, I used mainly open ended questions. Figure 27: Occurrence of different question types in my student questionnaire, shows different types of questions used, and how often I used each type. In total I designed 30 questions to be answered.



**Figure 27:** Occurrence of different question types in my student questionnaire

Demographic questions were used to understand background variables such as age, ethnicity and community. Open questions required one or more sentences, describing perceptions, experiences and opinions. Closed questions needed to be answered with one word or minimum a sentence. As Figure 32 suggests, most of my questions were open ended, requiring participants to elaborate on their perceptions. The student questionnaire can be viewed in Table 8: Student questionnaire (coded questions to align with research questions), p.104. In total, 48 participants completed the questionnaire in two schools. Following a trialling of the questionnaire with my own Social Sciences class, I arranged visits to Year 11 Social Sciences classes in each of two schools. The

visits happened during Senior Social Sciences classes (two Geography and one History class). The visits took under one hour each, and required each student to have access to the online SurveyMonkey tool.

The student questionnaire was administered as follows. I briefly introduced the research project and myself to the class. This was followed by a brief introduction to the content of the questionnaire. This happened in the form of a short pre-teaching activity, as some terms in the questionnaire had proved complex and difficult to relate to for students in the pre-research trialling. This pre-teaching activity included students as part of a whole class brainstorm, and the development of a simple concept map on the white board. This concept map stayed on the board during the questionnaire for student reference. I then explained how to access the questionnaire online and how to submit it. Refer to Appendix 1: Pre-questionnaire brainstorm (p.178), for an outline of the pre-questionnaire brainstorm. A group of students was selected from the questionnaire responses to participate in focus group conversations. These conversations aimed at supporting my understanding of participants' political perceptions and political participation, as well as factors that influenced these perceptions and participation. The focus group method will be explained below.

*Student focus groups* assisted me to gain a better understanding of students' perceptions and attitudes towards political issues. The focus groups also aimed at filling gaps from the student questionnaires. I invited no more than 8 students per school, to participate in the focus group. I facilitated group conversations, through raising a set of issues and questions to discuss with participants. The issues and questions raised during the conversation came were taken from the student questionnaire (Table 8: Student questionnaire (coded questions to align with research questions), p. 104). The focus group conversation began with an introduction to the purpose and conduct of the conversation. I then placed a tape recorder in the middle of a long table to record the conversation. The ethical considerations behind the tape-recording are described in the next section (Ethical considerations). While I facilitated the focus group conversation with some general questions and comments, the participants had the chance to share their ideas and lead conversations into different directions. The conversations lasted between 20 and 25 minutes each.

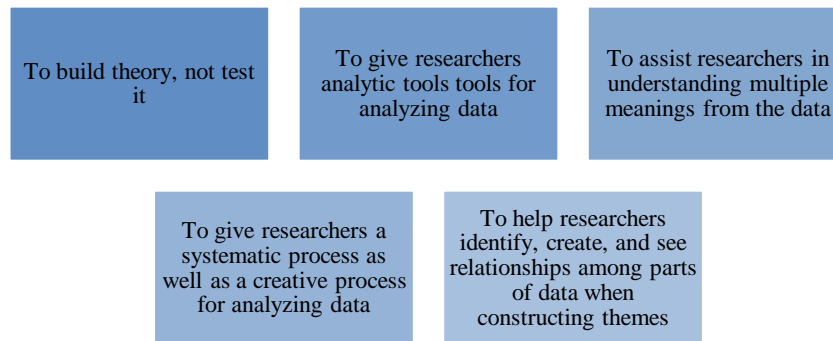
I also conducted two semi-structured *teacher interviews* with a Social Sciences teacher from each of my participating schools. The semi-structured interviews were conducted as professional conversations (see Appendix 2: Guidelines semi-structured teacher interview, p. 179). The goal of these conversations was to gain understandings of teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards political literacy education in Years 9-11 social sciences. The teacher interviews were scheduled after the questionnaires had been conducted and analysed, so I could talk to students about their responses. While I facilitated the conversations, the aim was to understand which areas of political literacy education teachers find interesting and which areas they think need improvements.

#### (5) *Methods for data analysis*

Qualitative data analysis is a complex process which requires rigor, a systematic approach and transparency (Newby, 2013, p. 456). In the literature I reviewed, there is no agreement on a single method for qualitative data analysis (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011; Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2008; Newby, 2013), but suggests the selection of a method *fit to the purpose* of the research (Cohen et al. 2011, p. 537). Since I am interested in perceptions of participants, I decided to select methods of analysis that assist me to create themes from my data. One such method is called constant comparison analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) and is introduced as follows. Newby (2013) also argues the importance of reliable data analysis, particularly if qualitative studies are to be used for policy planning. One way to achieve reliability, is to apply different methods of analysis which is called triangulation (Newby, 2013, p. 123). Therefore, I used three different methods for my data analysis: Constant comparison analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), microinterlocutor analysis (Onwuegbuzie, Dickinson, Leech & Zoran, 2007) and classical content analysis (Bauer, 2000).

The main method I used to interpret data, is *constant comparison analysis* (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The aim of this method, is to develop theories or themes. It can be used with any text or narrative data. Leech and Onwuegbuzie (2008) put forward five characteristics of the constant comparison analysis method, which are displayed in

Figure 28: Characteristics of constant comparison analysis (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2008, p. 594; Strauss & Corbin, 1998).



**Figure 28:** Characteristics of constant comparison analysis (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2008, p. 594; Strauss & Corbin, 1998)

All characteristics of the constant comparison analysis suit my methods of collecting data and philosophy of education. As discussed earlier in this chapter, my educational philosophy is shaped by humanism, phenomenology, critical theory and postmodernism (refer to p. 79-81). Constant comparison analysis is, for example, related to critical theory in the following way. Researchers conducting research in a critical theory stance are not only interested in explaining experiences but in changing social realities. The constant comparison analysis method accepts this, by offering a creative process for analysing data, allowing the researcher to code and group data based on the evidence from text and speech. Constant comparison analysis is also suited to my research questions, since I am interested in perceptions. Whilst I did not have a theory to test. I wanted to find out about perceptions so I can comment on developing themes. As shown in

Figure 28, a characteristic of constant comparison analysis is “to build theory, not to test it” (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2008, p. 594; Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

The application of constant comparison analysis in this thesis is detailed as follows. As suggested by Strauss and Corbin (1998) there are three processes when using constant comparison analysis: Open coding, axial coding and selective coding. The first process, open coding, refers to attaching codes to data. I used this process in two different ways. Firstly, I coded the questions of the questionnaire and focus group

conversation comments in order to relate them to my research questions. An example of the first type of open coding, used for the student questionnaire, is displayed in Table 6: Example of coded questionnaire data and Table 7: Legend to explain codes used for questionnaire data displayed in Table 6.

Q 11	You have just read about how decisions are made in New Zealand. Do you think this is a good or bad way of making decisions? Explain why.			
Q 12	Why do you think only people over the age of 18 are allowed to vote for their leaders?			
Q 13	Even though you are under 18, would you like to vote? Explain why or why not.			

**Table 6:** Example of coded questionnaire data

	Background information about participants
	<u>Research Question 1:</u> How do young New Zealanders perceive political institutions, political decision making processes and political personalities (political perceptions)?
	<u>Research Question 2:</u> How do young people perceive themselves as political beings (self-efficacy)?
	<u>Research Question 3:</u> How do young New Zealanders perceive political participation and how do they participate in political processes (political participation)?
	<u>Research Question 4:</u> How could the Social Sciences learning area in the New Zealand Curriculum (NZC, 2007) be used to provide a platform to learn about political institutions and political decision-making processes, in order to empower young New Zealanders to participate in political processes?

**Table 7:** Legend to explain codes used for questionnaire data displayed in table 6

Table 6 shows four questions, retrieved from my student questionnaire. Each question is coded according to the research question it belongs to. For example, Question 11 asks the participants to comment on their perception of New Zealand’s decision-making system. This question, therefore, can be grouped to the second research question displayed in Table 7. Some questions might be more complex and can therefore provide information about two different research questions which is why they received two different codes. The second process of the constant comparison analysis, axial coding is the grouping of similar codes. I repeated this process twice. Firstly, I grouped comments made in the questionnaire and focus group conversation, that answered the same research question as shown in Table 6 and Table 7. Secondly, within the research question groups, I grouped together similar responses. The third process, called selective coding, refers to creating a theory out of data. This process was done after

process two. I looked at the data groups and decided on the concepts and information the data portrayed. I transferred these ideas into a theme. The themes are described in Chapter Four.

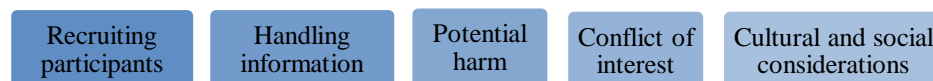
The second strategy I used to analyse data, is called microinterlocutor analysis (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2007). This method of analysis focuses on non-verbal communication. While non-verbal communication was not the focus of my research, it may be used to check reliability of data. Results from applying interlocutor analysis may support the themes I arrived at with the constant comparison analysis, or may be used to critique them. Microinterlocutor analysis was used to analyse focus group data such as: Who speaks?, who does not participate in the conversation?, when do participants interrupt each other?, silence after questions, or comments and agreement on issues raised. For example, when silence follows a question, this may indicate that participants did not understand the question, did not feel comfortable to answer, were not interested, or did not know anything about the question. While microinterlocutor analysis cannot explain the silence for example, it does indicate that something was different with a particular question which opened up the possibility for discussion. In order to apply this analysis method, detailed transcripts of the focus group conversations were completed. I made notes of laughing, silence, interruptions, and incomplete sentences.

The third analysis method I used is called classical content analysis (Bauer, 2000). This method checks the frequency of codes used in text. This method was applied in multiple and different ways. Firstly, I checked which questions produced the longest answers in the student questionnaire. Similar to the interlocutor analysis this can have multiple reasons, which cannot be pin-pointed. However, when a question produced long answers across the questionnaire, it could indicate an interest or that participants feel comfortable with this question. Secondly, I checked which topics were discussed most frequently in focus group conversations. The focus groups were facilitated by myself as the researcher, but were often led by students who moved the conversations in different directions. By looking at the themes discussed most frequently, I discovered interests or disinterests. This may also help refine questions for a potential further study in this area. Classical content analysis is also useful to determine the significance of themes, that were formed using constant comparison analysis. It is important to

comment on how many coded items are part of a group, in order to show how significant a theme is. Apart from the analysis methods mentioned above, I actively reflected upon participants' responses in order to find out other possible influences on answers (Newby, 2013). Other influences could include the question or how it was posed, current topics discussed in the media, current events occurring in participants' communities or recent contexts taught in school. For example, many participants mentioned the change of the New Zealand flag as an issue that concerns them. This might not have come up if the questionnaire was facilitated at a different time.

#### (6) *Ethical consideration*

Ethical considerations are important before conducting research in order to ensure participants' wellbeing and protection of their identity. The ethical considerations I made before starting to collect data can be structured into the parts shown in Figure 29: Overview of my ethical considerations, and will be introduced in this section. They were summarised in my Application for ethical approval which was approved on the 8<sup>th</sup> of April 2015.



**Figure 29:** Overview of my ethical considerations

One of the first step in my research was to *recruit participants*. In my research, this included year 11 students and Social Sciences teachers. Since my research deals with young people, and I recruited the participants in schools, I also had to contact the schools' Board of Trustees (BoTs), school principals and parents.

My first step was to invite Principals and BoTs, to participate in the research. As a teacher at one of the two participating schools, I had professional and personal relationships with staff and senior leadership. Therefore, I contacted the Principal personally to seek the possibility of conducting my research in the school. I also knew the Head of the Faculty of Social Sciences of my second participating school, and

therefore contacted her to invite her to the research. I approached the Principal of this school at the same time. Both, the Head of Faculty and Principal received a letter, outlining my research intentions, the anticipated outcomes and the involvement I sought from students and teachers (see Appendix 3: Letter to invite Principals to my research, p.180). The proposed third participating school, was contacted through the Head of Faculty and the Principal, because I did not have a specific contact. This school did not participate in my research which I will discuss in the next section of this chapter (Reflection). The Principals, in their role as the school leaders, assumed responsibility for sharing information regarding this research with the Board of Trustees Chairperson.

After the Principals agreed to support my research involvement in their schools, my second step was to invite the teachers through the Social Sciences Head of Faculty to participate (see Appendix 4: Participant information sheet, p.181). The Heads of Faculties were contacted instead of social science teachers, to ensure a teacher was selected free from my personal bias, as I know teachers at the two participating schools. After a social science teacher agreed to involvement in the research, I arranged a first meeting to pass on specific information about my research, and the teachers' involvement.

During an initial meeting with the participating teachers, a social sciences class was selected in each school, to participate in the questionnaire. Following school policies, participating students were invited to participate in the research using a combination of a letter and pamphlet (see Appendix 5: Student participant information pamphlet, p. 183). The pamphlet includes a consent form with perforated lines to be removed and collected by the researcher. Further information, and the opportunity to sign a consent statement was provided before the questionnaire took place.

A further important decision was how to 'handle the data' I collected, as outlined. I decided that only my supervisor and I would have access to participants' confidential information. In order to protect individuals, participants and schools would be referred to with random numbers and letters in any published or presented work. During semi-structured interviews with teachers, I referred to students' statements by deleting names and any other clues that might reveal identities such as reference to schools attended. After the semi-structured interviews and focus group conversations, all the information

including tape recordings were secured on my computer and deleted from the recorder to protect confidential information. The only computer that participant information is stored on, is my personal laptop which is password protected. The non-identifying data such as transcripts from interviews and focus group conversations will be securely stored in a lock protected cabinet for at least five years, allowing for academic examination and peer review. Only my supervisor, Dr. Philippa Hunter, and I have access to these documents. Another important step is to feed back the findings of the research to participants. I will arrange an informal meeting with each participating teacher after completion of my thesis to share my findings. Teachers will receive an electronic link to the thesis, and I anticipate having an informal discussion with teachers about my findings and implications for teaching political literacy in the Social Sciences Curriculum. I will encourage teachers to share research results with participating students.

*Informed consent* was another important ethical decision I made prior to collecting data. Informed consent includes informing participants about anonymity and confidentiality, their right to decline and withdraw and their right to receive information. I needed consent for three different activities: The student questionnaire, the semi-structured teacher interview, and the student focus group conversation. For each of these activities I outlined the intentions, outcomes and scope of the research the participants would be engaged in. I outlined that any information given could not be traced back to individuals but would be analysed and presented within the thesis and further publications, as well as used in presentations on conferences. I also outlined that my supervisor, Dr Philippa Hunter, would have access to the tape recordings as well as notes taken during conversations, interviews and the questionnaire data. I chose clear language in student consent and information sheets; to make sure students understood what they were agreeing to. This involved explaining the consent to students before the questionnaire and answering upcoming questions truthfully. In addition, I provided adequate activities for those students who did not want to be involved in the research, to make sure they had an opportunity to refuse participation easily, but were still engaged in learning. The consent statement for the semi-structured interview and focus group conversation also included a section that indicates the use of tape recorders. The teachers' consent was recorded on individual information sheets, and signed by participants. The student consent forms were included in the student information

pamphlets, with the option to tear off the form, using perforated lines (see Appendix 5: Student participant information pamphlet, p. 183 and Appendix 6: Teacher consent form, p. 184).

Confidentiality and anonymity is another area of giving informed consent to consider. If publishing aspects of my research, I will use statements the participants made, but will not refer to their names. I will instead code and number students. I asked students to enter their name when completing the questionnaire on SurveyMonkey in order to know which students I would invite to a focus group conversation. Students were selected based on the statements they made in the questionnaire, in order to receive a broad range of different points of views for the focus group conversation. Only my supervisor and I have access to the completed questionnaire that shows students' names and the comments they made. During the semi-structured interviews with teachers, I only shared statements made by students by concealing responses to protect students' anonymity. I shared the list of students to be invited to the student focus group conversation with the teacher, to enable him/her to arrange a meeting between these students and me. In addition, the two schools were not named in my thesis but described in terms of their socioeconomic background and ethnic composition, and labelled as School A and School B.

A crucial aspect of the informed consent process is to inform participants of their right to withdraw from the study at any time. As my study included secondary students, I attempted to use easily accessible language to communicate their rights. Students received an outline of their rights in writing addressed to them and their caregivers prior to the research. This allowed time for discussion of these rights with caregivers. Prior to the questionnaire and focus group conversations I allowed time for questions about students' rights in my study and explanation of the consent forms in detail.

Another area of ethical concern is *potential harm* to participants which I did not anticipate during my study. The questionnaire was administered individually on computers, and students did not receive feedback on their statements, as the questions are designed to paint a picture of the political perceptions of students, rather than judging or scoring knowledge. Classroom teachers were encouraged to talk about responses with their students. Student focus group conversations were organized in

groups to reduce anxiety for individuals and were conducted as conversations without pre-structured questions. The teacher interviews were conducted as a collegial conversation rather than a formal interview, which hopefully reduced anxiety and any embarrassment for teachers. The fact that I am a teacher did reduce anxiety for the semi-structured teacher interviews.

As Year 11 students (aged 14-16) were involved in the research, I needed to be aware of my potentially powerful position in relation to students. This is part of considering *conflict of interests*. Three steps were taken towards balancing this power imbalance. Firstly, students and parents received letters prior to the study, which opened up the possibility for students to discuss with their parents/ caregivers whether they want to take part in the study. Secondly, the classroom teachers were present during the introduction to the questionnaire, the pre-teaching brainstorm activity, throughout the questionnaire process, and whilst signing the consent forms. The relationship students have with their teachers may have encouraged them to feel safe in refusing their participation in the survey. Thirdly, the information students received and the opportunity to sign a consent statement or refuse to take part in the questionnaire.

Another area of conflict of interest is that one of the schools I conducted my research in, was my current workplace. As I might be biased in selecting teachers at this school to be part of my study, I asked the Head of Social Sciences to suggest participating teachers. The semi-structured interview was unlikely to affect the established relationships with teachers in my school, as the interview was a professional conversation. It was anticipated that a collegial approach would minimise discomfort. In addition, I excluded my own Social Science class from the research to avoid bias.

The second participating school is a school I have been involved with as a beginning teacher, as part of my Graduate Diploma in Teaching in 2013. I worked in the Social Science Faculty and know the teachers who work there. I enjoyed very positive relationships, which might have been affected by the interviews I conducted with teachers. The steps I took to avoid this, was to request the Social Sciences Head of Faculty to choose the participating teachers to avoid bias, and to conduct the interviews as a conversation to avoid discomfort. Overall, being a Social Studies teacher myself was favourable to the ethical appropriateness of the research methods, as I am aware of

the need for professional behaviour around colleagues, students and within the school environment.

*Cultural and social considerations* are another area of ethical concern. A potential area of inappropriateness would be to represent responses of participants in a judgemental way. The construct behind my research, however, is not to judge political perceptions of participants, but rather describe them and find out which factors contribute to political participation and which factors hinder participation. The questions of my survey were as clear as possible to allow students with differing literacy abilities to access them. I also trialled my questions with differing students in my own Social Studies class to gain feedback about the appropriateness of sentences and terms. I also included questions that allowed a Māori perspective on politics, using appropriate terms and concepts accessible to Māori students. This was important because due to student populations of the participating schools, there was potentially a large proportion of Māori students involved in the research. I ensured questions in my questionnaire and during the conversations were of neutral gender to avoid gender bias. The male-female ratio in each participating class was influenced by students' subject choice, and class selection by the Heads of Faculties. Overall, I made sure to get a range of students differing in social and cultural groups to participate in the research. This was achieved by selecting schools with different deciles<sup>3</sup> in the Waikato region, which contributed to a diverse sample of students. I am also well immersed in school environments, and was involved in two of the schools prior to the research: One school is my workplace and the other school was my allocated practicum school during my Graduate Diploma of Teaching in 2013.

This section has outlined how I anticipated my research, and the questions that have shaped my research. The next section is a reflection on the participating schools and how I recruited them as well as how my research methods worked in action.

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<sup>3</sup> Decile rating is calculated from the socio economic background of families sending their children to a particular school. Socio-economic background includes occupation, income and education of parents and caregivers in a school community. Deciles range from 1 to 10 (the higher the decile, the lower the proportion of students from a low socioeconomic community). Resources are allocated to schools based on the decile rating (Ministry of Education, 2015b).

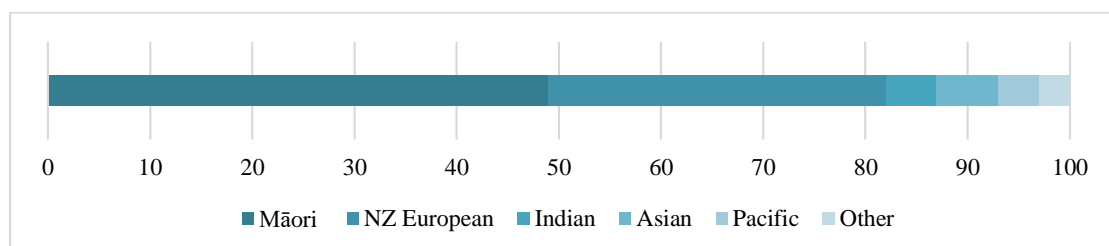
## Reflection

Most parts of my research were experienced as anticipated in my proposal, and as described in the previous section. However, there were some aspects of the research that took unexpected turns or required adaptation.

### *(1) Research process in participating schools*

The first major adaptation I had to make was the sample size of my research. I had anticipated to select participants from three different schools. I selected schools with deciles 4, 7 and 10 in order to hopefully gain participants from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds, communities and abilities. As I had contacts in two of the schools, recruiting teachers and students was a quick process. The third school (decile 7) however, turned out to be uninterested and did not respond to several inquiries. Since time was an issue I decided to select two classes from the school I am working in. This also saved time in organising meetings and gaining consent from the Principal and BoT as well as booking computer rooms. I ended up with 48 responses from student questionnaires, 20 participants in focus group conversations and two interviewed teacher participants. A description of the two participating schools follows. The schools are named as A and B in order to guarantee confidentiality.

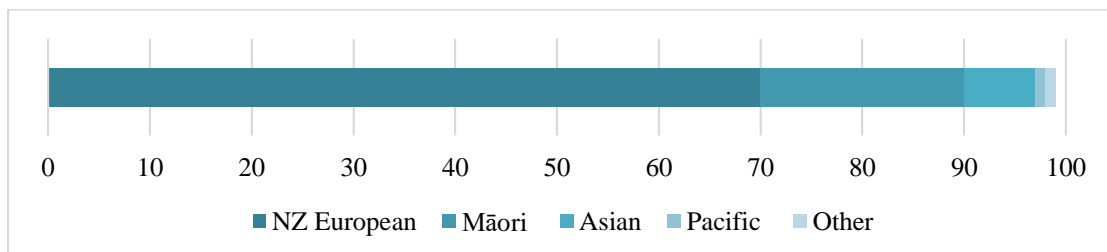
School A is an urban, co-educational Year 9-13 state funded secondary school in Hamilton, Waikato, New Zealand with a roll of 612 students. Figure 30: Ethnic composition at school A (School A's website) shows the ethnicity of students at School A, based on data retrieved from the school's website.



**Figure 30:** Ethnic composition at school A (School A's website)

As can be seen on Figure 30, School A has a mix of ethnicities which might be represented in the questionnaires and focus groups. This information is analysed in closer detail in Chapter Four. As a state-funded school, School A adheres to the New Zealand Curriculum (NZC, 2007). The subject Social Studies, which is important in my research as the curricula delivering political literacy education, is taught four hours per week at Year 9 and three hours per week at Year 10. Participating classes in the survey were one Year 11 History, and one Year 11 Geography class. The teacher I interviewed at School A as part of my semi-structured interview was a History teacher, and the Head of the Social Sciences Faculty.

The second school that participated is referred to as School B. This school is a rural co-educational, Year 9-13, state funded secondary school in the Waikato district, New Zealand, with a roll of 713 students. Figure 31: Ethnic composition at school B (School B's ERO report) shows the ethnic composition of students at School B. The data was retrieved from the school's latest ERO report.



**Figure 31:** Ethnic composition at school B (School B's ERO report)

As Figure 31 suggests, School B has a less diverse ethnic make-up with a large ethnic majority of NZ Europeans (70%) and a comparably small Māori population with 20%. This could influence political perceptions of participants since indigenous Māori are said to be more likely disengaged from politics than NZ European/ Pakeha ethnic groups (Electoral Commission, 2014a; Hipkins, 2012; Lang, 2010; Vowles, 2012). Literature suggesting lower political engagement by Māori often refers to voting as their only indicator of political participation. It would therefore be interesting to analyse the data I collected regarding this trend, and whether it can be verified or falsified in my data. Unfortunately this was not the focus of this thesis, and therefore I won't elaborate on this trend in the detail I would like to. School B is also state-funded, and adheres to the New Zealand curriculum (NZC, 2007). Social Studies is also taught four

hours weekly in Year 9 and three hours weekly in Year 10. The class that was selected for me from School B was a Year 11 Geography class. The Social Studies teacher I interviewed happens to be a Geography teacher, and Head of the Social Sciences Faculty.

It can be said that both schools share important characteristics such as school roll, and the type of school (state-funded, co-educational, secondary). This enables a comparison between the students of School A and B. The two schools are quite different in other aspects though, such as the decile (School A is decile 4 while School B is decile 6). The ethnic composition is quite different since School A is more culturally diverse, and has a higher percentage of Māori than School B. These differences can be beneficial because they helped to create a broader range of different opinions, perspectives and understandings of politics which I aimed to find out. As mentioned above, some aspects of my research methods did not work the way I intended.

## *(2) My research methods in action*

The first research method I used was the student questionnaire. Refer to Table 8: Student questionnaire (coded questions to align with research questions), p. 104). Before I used the questionnaire with my participants I trialled it with my Year 11 Geography class, and I received positive feedback from my students whose comments included: “I thought you did a very interesting brainstorm”, and “it was good ... you asked questions”, “everyone understood”. During the trial I also learned that many students had good ideas on the terms, but were unsure about how best to express themselves. This encouraged me to implement the brainstorm before the questionnaire, and to allow plenty of wait time for students to collect their thoughts before they respond with answers. Feedback on the questionnaire was also very useful. Students indicated issues with about five questions they found too complex. I reviewed these questions together with students to find an easier way of asking the questions, or to give additional information. One very interesting student comment was: “I wish we would have done something like this in Social Studies last year!”. When asking for clarification the student shared how she liked sharing her opinions, but how this had not been so much focus of her junior social sciences education. I found that many

participants showed interest in sharing their opinions in the questionnaire and focus group conversation – as discussed in detail in Chapter Four.

Conducting the student questionnaire went very smoothly except for one participant who seemed to have lost her answers half way through the survey, and about three participants who had to repeat a question because it was auto-deleted. Another issue was the answer size, which proved too short for some students. I therefore increased the answer size for the second questionnaire. This was also an indication that students were interested in the survey and had a lot to say about political processes. I elaborate on this in Chapter Four.

The focus group was conducted after the student questionnaires. In contrast to my expectations, only a small minority of students gave me permission to invite them to the focus group. Due to this, participants were not selected according to their answers in the questionnaire but whether they wanted to participate or not. This also meant that focus groups varied in size from five to eight students. Each of the focus groups was very different from each other. For example the focus groups at School A were rather led by me as the researcher, whereas the focus group at School B required less facilitation and was led more by participants. This could also be a result of the size, since the focus group in School B was the largest with eight participants. Overall, the focus groups were a great addition to the student questionnaires and provided insights into participants' perceptions. In Chapter Four, themes resulting from the focus group conversations are discussed. Writing out transcripts from the focus group conversations proved difficult, especially with larger focus groups, since participants tend to talk over each other in lively discussions. This however is a finding in itself, because it indicates young people are passionate about political topics and indeed have a lot to share.

My last research method, teacher interviews was the shortest and probably least significant. I anticipated to have interviews with three Social Studies teachers from three different schools but ended up with two interviews only. This was a result of time restrictions and having one less school to participate in my research. Generally, the interviews might have been improved by sharing the questions with the teachers in advance to make sure they were prepared to answer questions in more depth. I might also have benefitted from selecting the teachers more carefully, and not relying on

Heads of Faculty selection. Both teachers who participated have a high teaching and leadership role in their schools and seemed under time pressure at the time of the interview, which meant the teachers seemed unprepared to elaborate. In retrospect, a teacher questionnaire could have been beneficial.

As indicated in this section, I was able to collect a great deal of valuable data with my selected research methods. Due to the interest and depth of answers the participants shared in the student questionnaire and focus group conversation, my research methods seem to have been successful. This will be further investigated in Chapter Four's analysis and interpretation of data.

## Chapter Four: Potential for political participation of young New Zealanders

“We do have our own opinions... Just because we are young, doesn’t mean our opinions don’t matter or that they are wrong” (Participant from School B, Focus group conversation).

In Chapter Three, I outlined the decisions made prior to conducting my research (philosophy of education, research questions, research paradigms, research methods, ethical considerations, and methods of analysis). I also reflected upon my experiences in the participating schools, and on the research methods in action. Due to the interest and depth of responses the participants shared, I concluded that my research methods seemed to have been successful. The quotation above comes from a focus group conversation at School B. I think it well describes the experiences, I had with participants during my research. The young people I talked to during focus group conversations, had a great deal to share about politics. Participants seemed interested, knowledgeable, and enthusiastic about political issues and processes. As the quotation suggests however, some participants felt excluded, misunderstood, and discouraged from engaging in politics, by the perceived attitudes of political leaders and older generations. This chapter summarises my findings from the student questionnaire, focus group conversations, and teacher interviews. The findings are summarised under the five research questions as shown in Figure 32: Research Questions.



**Figure 32:** Research questions

To decide which questions in my student questionnaire related to the five research questions, I coded them accordingly. Table 8: Student questionnaire (coded questions to align with research questions), p.104, shows the student questionnaire. Each question is marked with one or more colours. At the bottom of the table is a legend that specifies, which colour relates to which research question. I also coded the transcripts of the focus group conversations, to find out which comments related to each of the five research questions.

To interpret participants' responses, I decided to apply three different methods of analysis: Constant comparison analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), microinterlocutor analysis (Onwuegbuzie, Dickinson, Leech & Zoran, 2007) and classical content analysis (Bauer, 2000). These methods of analysis were described in detail in Chapter Three. Refer to Methods for data analysis, p.86. Constant comparison analysis was used to group the student questionnaire questions and relate them to one of the five research questions. Constant comparison analysis was also used to find themes from participants' responses, and with this, explain participants' political perceptions. Microinterlocutor analysis was applied to focus group conversations, using clues such as silence, interruptions, hesitation and laughter to comment on participants' confidence and interest. Classical content analysis was used for questionnaire and focus groups by counting the amount a certain response was given and to comment on how many participants support an idea or political perception. The three methods of analysis were not applied in clean steps, but rather in layers, helping to gain a deeper understanding of participants' perceptions. Therefore, for each research question in this section, several methods of analysis were used to describe participants' perceptions. These descriptions include: Bar graphs of how often a response was made in a questionnaire question (classical content analysis), participant comments including reference to clues such as laughing, hesitation and silence (microinterlocutor analysis), and themes (constant comparison analysis).

I decided to use the three methods of analysis (constant comparison analysis, microinterlocutor analysis and classical content analysis), because my research questions sought the perceptions of participants. Each method of analysis provided an insight or explanation of these perceptions, by grouping similar ideas, analysing focus group conversation clues, and counting responses. By providing focus group

conversation notes for many of the themes in this chapter, the reader of this thesis, may gain an insight into the political perceptions of the participants. The methods of analysis are in alignment with my philosophy of education since they are analysing participant's perceptions, without a comparison to an absolute truth. This is related to humanism and phenomenology (Newby, 2013). Since my methods of analysis support the understanding of contextual factors, particularly by using microinterlocutor analysis, they also support postmodernism, which is another philosophical strand I support.

The first section of this chapter introduces the participants of the student questionnaire and focus groups. The information about participants was taken from Questions 1 to 6. Refer to Table 8: Student questionnaire (coded questions to align with research questions), p.104. Information about the participants of my research is important to explain my findings and compare the results to other studies. Secondly, findings regarding my five research questions are presented. Findings are summarised under each of my five research questions. The structure of Chapter Four is visualised in Figure 33: Organisation of Chapter Four contexts.



**Figure 33:** Organisation of Chapter Four

<b>Background information about participants</b>			
Q 1	What is your first name?		
Q 2	How old are you? [14, 15, 16, 17]		
Q 3	What is your gender? [male, female]		
Q 4	Which cultural group do you identify with? [Maori, New Zealand/ European, Other European, Pacific Islander, Asian, Other (please specify)]		
Q 5	Which school do you attend? [school A, school B]		
Q 6	In which community do you live? Eg. Hamilton East		
<b>Your whānau/ extended family and politics</b>			
Q 7	Describe how decisions are made in your whānau/ extended family. For example how the amount of pocket money is negotiated. Is this decided by the parents, children or together?		
Q 8	How would you like decisions to be made in your whānau/ extended family?		
Q 9	Do you think you are a leader? Describe the qualities you have that make you a leader.		
Q 10	Describe the qualities of a leader in your family/ whānau who you think is great. This could be a parent, sibling or other member of your family/ whānau.		
<b>Rangatiratanga / leadership and New Zealand Government</b>			
The political leadership of New Zealand is called a democracy. This means everybody over the age of 18 can nominate and elect other New Zealanders to be their leaders. People who want to be elected, form groups, called parties. People within a party have very similar viewpoints about many issues. The parties with the most votes receive a certain number of seats in Parliament. Decisions are then made in Parliament together. The people belonging to a party usually vote for the same things. The next questions ask you about your opinions towards this system.			
Q 11	You have just read about how decisions are made in New Zealand. Do you think this is a good or bad way of making decisions? Explain why.		
Q 12	Why do you think only people over the age of 18 are allowed to vote for their leaders?		
Q 13	Even though you are under 18, would you like to vote? Explain why or why not.		
Q 14	Have you heard of a political party before or met a member of a political party? Describe your experience briefly.		
<b>Kaupapa/ issue/ purpose</b>			
Kaupapa/ a purpose/ issue is something that matters to you. It might be something that affects you and your whānau, your school, your community, New Zealand or the world. The next questions will focus on issues important to you.			
Q 15	Describe an issue that matters to you. It can be more than one issues.		
Q 16	Where do you find out about issues that matter to you? [Newspaper, internet, friends, parents, school, books]		
Q 17	Describe what you have done to support this issue or to protect your whānau/ extended family, iwi, community or school from the effects of an issue. (If it does not apply to you, describe why you did not or could not do something against the issue.)		
Q 18	Do you think New Zealand leaders make life better for every New Zealander? Explain why you think that.		
Q 19	What do you think about politicians?		
<b>Whakaaro/ opinion</b>			
Please finish the following four statements with your own opinion.			
Q 20	I think politics is boring because...		
Q 21	I think politics is interesting because...		
Q 22	I would read or watch the news if it had stories about...		
Q 23	I think politicians should...		
<b>Kotahitanga/ solidarity</b>			
The following questions are about working together to achieve something that matters to you.			
Q 24	Describe a possible action you could do if you disagree with a political decision.		
Q 25	Are you or have you been involved in any of the following actions? (Please tick) [Writing a letter to a political leader (or party), Participating in a demonstration (=people gather, often using posters to show their opinion), Volunteering (=working without getting paid) to make someone's life better, Discussing an issue that is important to you with other people, Refusing to buy a product because you don't agree with how a company treats its workers or because you don't agree how something is produced such as by using child labour, Posting something on Facebook or other social networking sites that shows your opinion about an issue that is important to you in order to influence others, Other]		
Q 26	Who do you talk to about issues that matter to you?		
<b>Wharekura/ school and politics</b>			
These questions are about your school and particularly the subject Social Studies. I am interested in what you have learnt about politics at school.			
Q 27	Describe how decisions are made at your school and who makes them. You could choose an example such as school rules or uniform.		
Q 28	Are you involved in making decisions in your school/ classes at school? Give an example that shows how you were involved or excluded.		
Q 29	Is there a subject at your school that teaches you about politics (refer to the definition of politics we have developed at the start of the session)?		
Q 30	In Social Studies, what have you learned that helps you to get involved in politics? Give one or more examples.		

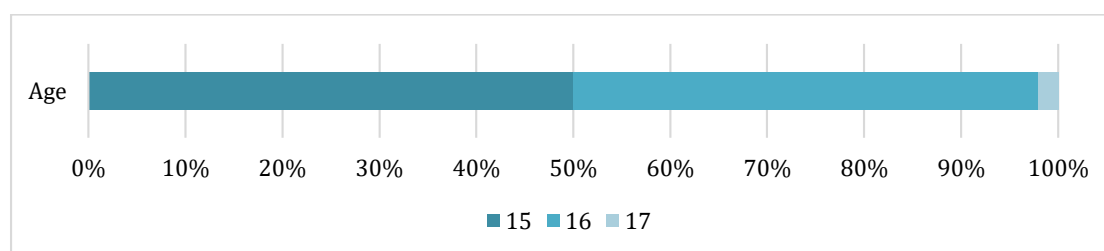
	Background information about participants
	Research Question 1: How do young New Zealanders perceive political institutions, political decision making processes and political personalities (political perceptions)?
	Research Question 2: How do young people perceive themselves as political beings (self-efficacy)?
	Research Question 3: How do young New Zealanders perceive political participation and how do they participate in political processes (political participation)?
	Research Question 4: How could the Social Sciences learning area in the New Zealand Curriculum (NZC, 2007) be used to provide a platform to learn about political institutions and political decision-making processes, in order to empower young New Zealanders to participate in political processes?

**Table 8:** Student questionnaire (coded questions to align with research questions)

## Background information about participants

Background information about participants was collected to gain an understanding of participants' ages, ethnicity, gender, socio-economic background and school communities. This information is helpful in order to compare the findings of this research with other research. It was also important to find patterns in participants' responses. Background information about participants was collected in the student questionnaire, Questions 1 to 8. See Table 8: Student questionnaire (coded questions to align with research questions), p.104. Findings from Questions 1 to 6 are summarised as follows. Question 1 of the student questionnaire, asked for participants' names. This was done, so responses could be connected to a participant. This is useful, to recognise trends in participants' answers. For example one participant chose inappropriate language across the whole questionnaire. It was important to note that these types of comments were only made by one participant rather than by several participants. The names were also collected so I could invite participants to the focus group conversations based on their answers in the student questionnaire.

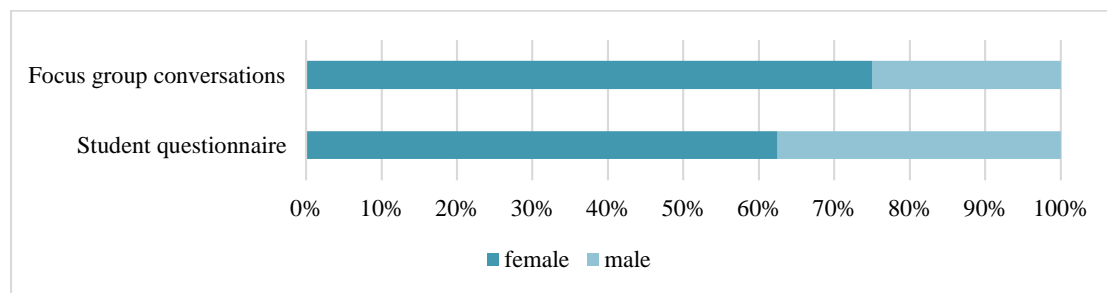
Question 2 (How old are you? Choice: 14, 16, 16, 17) of the student questionnaire, asked participants to state their age, which is displayed in Figure 34: Age of participants in student questionnaire.



**Figure 34:** Age of participants in student questionnaire

At the time of the student questionnaire, 24 participants were 15 years old, 23 participants were 16 years old and one participant was 17 years old. This data shows that all participants were below the voting age, which is the group my research was interested in. All participants attended Year 11 secondary school at the time of the questionnaire.

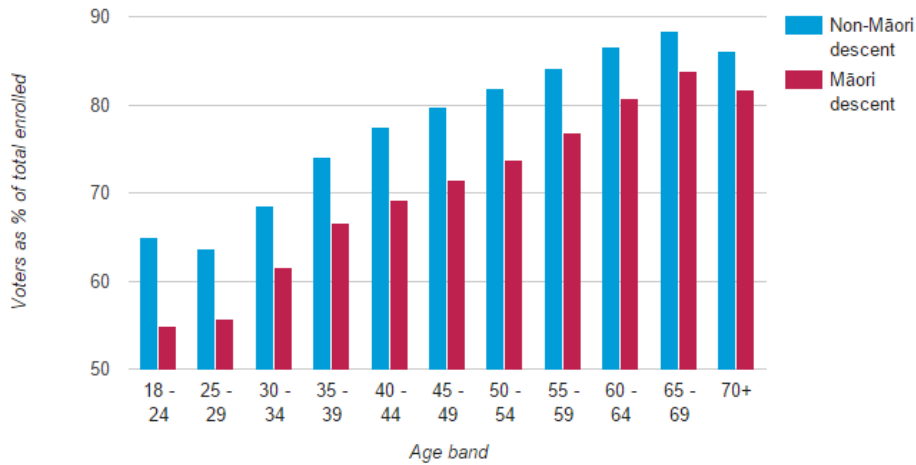
The third aspect of background information of importance, was the gender of participants. Question Two asked the participants: What is your gender? Choice: male, female. It has been reported, that male and female participants differ in their interest, participation and perceptions of politics (Amadeo, Torney-Purta, Lehmann, Husfeldt, & Nikolova, 2002; Fridkin & Kenney, 2007; ICCS, 2010). In my student questionnaire and focus group conversation, I collected responses from significantly more females than males, displayed in Figure 35: Female - male ratio in student questionnaire and focus group conversation. While this might have influenced the responses collected in the student questionnaire and focus group conversations, I was interested in describing perceptions of young people, rather than generalising these results for the whole of New Zealand.



**Figure 35:** Female - male ratio in student questionnaire and focus group conversation

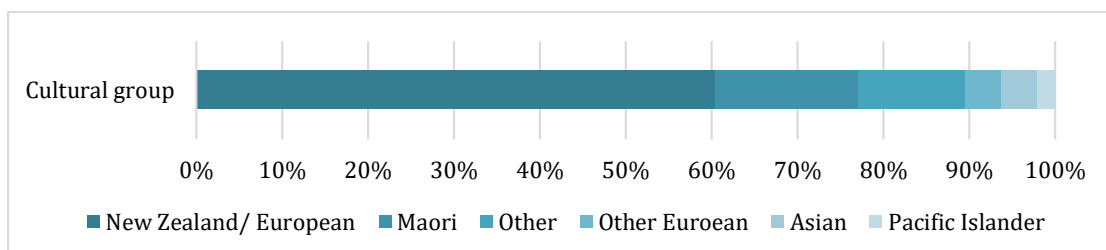
Question 4 (Which cultural group do you identify with? Choice: Maori, New Zealand/European, Other European, Pacific Islander, Asian, Other please specify) asked participants which cultural group they identified with. Most New Zealand political participation literature (Electoral Commission, 2014a; Lang, 2010; Vowles, 2012) I had reviewed found a correlation between belonging to an ethnic group and political participation. Lang (2010), in her report on the New Zealand results of the International Civic and Citizenship Education study (ICCS), for example comments that: “the mean civic knowledge scores for students identifying as European or Asian were considerably higher than those of students identifying as Māori or Pasifika” (p. 9). Hipkins (2012) argues in her report on New Zealand results of ICCS that while Māori students were less likely to participate in general elections in the future, Māori and Pasifika students were more likely to stand as a candidate in local elections or be part of a political party (p. 3). New Zealand voting statistics suggest Māori are less likely to participate in elections than non-Māori, which is particularly significant for younger

voters (18-24 year olds) as Figure 36: 2014 general election voter participation by Maori descent (Electoral Commission 2014a), shows.



**Figure 36:** 2014 general election voter participation by Maori descent (Electoral Commission 2014a)

The gap between Māori voters and non-Māori voters in the group of 18 to 24 year olds lies at 10% the gap between Māori voters and non-Māori voters in the 70+ age band lies at only 5%. While my research is not interested in political participation of different ethnic groups, statistics about belonging to ethnic groups can affect perceptions of political processes and political participation, and might be of interest to researchers reading my research. Even though both of my participating schools had a significant population of diverse ethnic groups, the participants in my study are predominantly of New Zealand/ European descent as shown in Figure 37: Belonging to cultural groups: Participants in the student questionnaire.



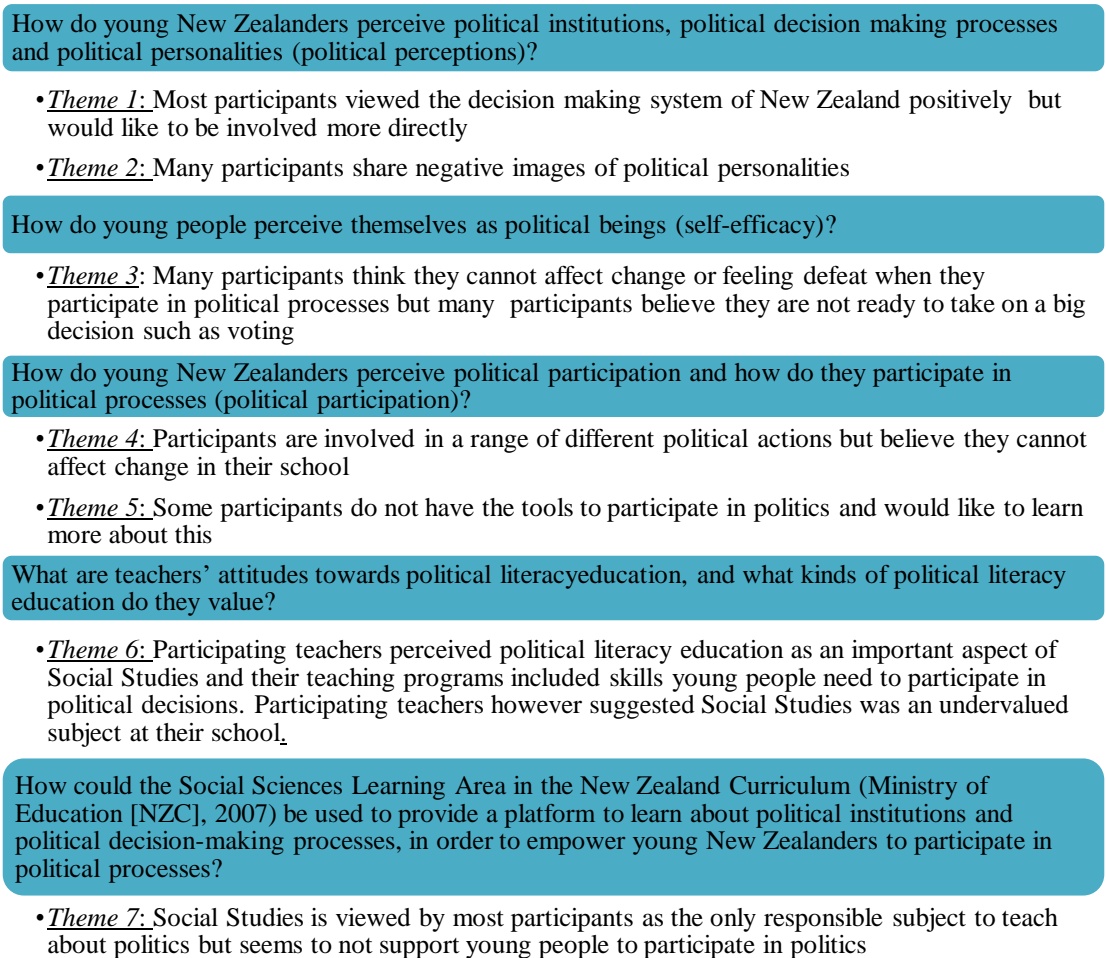
**Figure 37:** Belonging to cultural groups: Participants in the student questionnaire

Responses given in the category *other* were: Fijian Indian, New Zealand/ European and Maori, South African, Indian, Nepalese and North American.

Question 5 (Which school do you attend? Choice: school A, school B) asked which school participants attended. Thirty-one percent of participants attended School B (15 participants) and 69% of participants attended School A (33 participants). This background variable enables insights into the school environment of participants and how this might influence political participation. This however, can be influenced by personal experiences a student makes in a particular school, such as being in a particular class and having certain teachers. My questionnaire included two questions (Question 27 and 28) dealing with decision-making in participants' schools, which give greater insight in schools' A and B cultures of allowing students' to influence decisions and have power. See Table 8: Student questionnaire (coded questions to align with research questions), p.104. Differences between Schools' A and school B is discussed later in this chapter. The belonging to school A or B is an indication of the socio-economic background of a participant. An indication for the socio-economic background is given by the decile ranking of the school. As discussed before, School A has a decile of 4 while School B has a decile of 6. Decile rating should not be confused with the quality of a school as it is purely about the socio-economic background of families sending their children to a particular school, as Graham Stoop ( 2012) Chief Officer of the Education Review Office (ERO) indicates. Socio-economic background includes occupation, income and education of parents and caregivers in a school community. The socio-economic background is important to my study, since some political participation literature (Amadeo et al., 2002; ICCS, 2010; Lang, 2010) reviewed, indicated a correlation between socio-economic background and political participation.

Besides the decile rating of schools, the community participants live in, can also influence political perceptions. Possible influences could be local political party candidates, local issues such as water fluoridation (Hamilton City Council, 2014) or activities offered to youth in a community. I therefore, asked participants (Question 6) which community they lived in. Since School B is rural, most participants of School B live in the same town, while participants of School A live in different districts. In order to conceal the identity of the two participating schools, I haven't commented on the areas participants live in. Particularly during the focus group conversations, participants

made references to community issues, as discussed later in this chapter. The next section introduces the findings in relation to the first of my five research questions. The seven themes I arrived at are listed underneath the five research questions. The themes are highlighted in italics and are numbered from 1 to 7. The themes are also displayed in Figure 38: Themes, displayed under the research questions.



**Figure 38:** Themes, displayed under the research questions

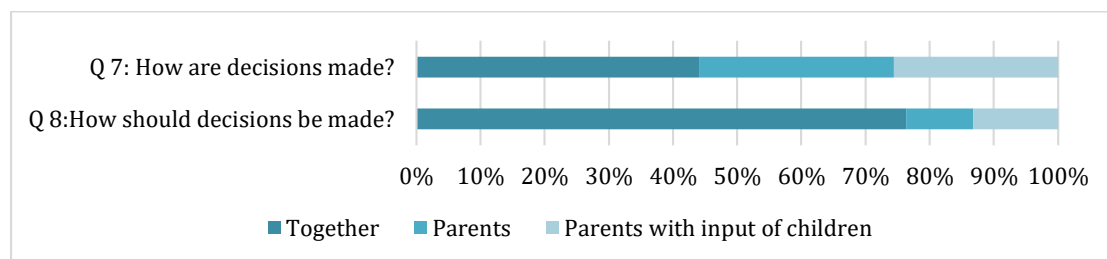
**How do young New Zealanders perceive political institutions, political decision making processes and political personalities (political perceptions)?**

This research question was interested in how participants perceive political institutions, political decision making, and political personalities. Out of all research questions, participants seemed to be most interested in the discussion of political personalities. This is evident from categorising responses from the student questionnaire and focus

group transcripts. As follows, themes emerging from the grouping of the student questionnaire and focus group data, are outlined.

*(1) Most participants viewed the decision making process of New Zealand positively, but would like to be involved more directly*

Political decision-making processes were discussed in the student questionnaire at a political level (How are decisions made in New Zealand?) and at a family level (How are decisions made in your family?). Introducing decision-making on a family level, aimed at introducing a political context at a smaller scale, making it more accessible for participants. The question on family decision making, was divided into the following two questionnaire questions: Describe how decisions are made in your whanau/ family? For example, how the amount of pocket money is negotiated. Is this decided by the parents, children or together? (Question 7), and How would you like decisions to be made in your whanau/ family? (Question 8). These questions aimed at accessing background information to the experience participants had with making decisions, and their perceptions of decision-making. Some responses were invalid, since some participants referred to the pocket money issue solely, for example, stating the amount of money they received. This led to 43 valid responses for Question 7 and 38 valid responses for Question 8. Three differing perceptions emerged from the responses to both questions, decisions are made: together, by parents with children's input, and by parents alone. Figure 39: Grouped and categorised participant responses to Question 7 and 8 of the student questionnaire, shows participants' responses.



**Figure 39:** Grouped and categorised participant responses to Question 7 and 8 of the student questionnaire

As the figure shows, there is a significant difference between how decisions are made in participants' families, and how participants would like decisions to be made. About 77% of participants (29 participants) want decisions to be made together, while this is only the case in 43% of participants' families (19 participants). It is also interesting that there is a significant difference between participants from different schools. For example, 10 of the 11 participants who said their parents made decisions at home, attend School A, while only one participant of School B said the parents made decisions at home.

I described the New Zealand decision-making system to participants before they responded to the student questionnaire. This is the description participants received:

The political leadership of New Zealand is called a democracy. This means everybody over the age of 18 can nominate and elect other New Zealanders to be their leaders. People who want to be elected, form groups, called parties. People within a party have very similar viewpoints about many issues. The parties with the most votes receive a certain number of seats in Parliament. Decisions are then made in Parliament together. The people belonging to a party usually vote for the same things.

The majority of participants (39 participants) expressed a positive opinion about this process of decision making. The most named reason (18 participants) for this positive attitude, was that this type of decision-making offers choice, and a say for people. In the focus groups conversations, New Zealand's decision making system was described by participants as public, democratic and shaped by discussions and democratic decisions. While many participants were content with New Zealand's decision-making system, many participants asked to involve young people more in this process. This became particularly evident in the focus group conversations. The following comments were made.

**Interviewer** [...] Do you think this is a good way to make decisions or how would you do it if you could make your own system?

**Participant** Make sure that everyone can vote

**Participant** That everyone has a voice

**Participant** We deserve a voice

**Participant** yup

**Participants** [laugh]

**Participant** That sums it up  
**Interviewer** Is there anything else?  
**Participant** We do have a lot to say  
**Participant** We do  
**Participant** We do

**Participant** I mean sure we don't know a lot but we still know some stuff and we still wanna have a say in some things because it will affect us  
**Participant** Yeah [agreement]  
**Participant** It will affect us in the future

These comments were taken from two focus group conversations, one in School A and one in School B. More than one participant in each of the focus groups agreed to this notion of giving young people a bigger voice in the political-decision making process. As follows are some comments participants made on how they would like to be included in decision-making.

**Participant** I think it would be interesting if they added maybe teenage vote because in some ways we are the next generation, so we have to like suffer of all their decisions like if they do something bad but if we like have an opinion now we can share it, then why not?

**Participant** There should be like a teenage party  
**Participants** [laugh]  
**Participant** Like labour party  
**Participant** Just to get some ideas  
**Participant** Just like something that represents us like represents our voice

In two different focus group conversations the teenage vote/ teenage party came up. It was discussed by more than one participant, and there seemed to be agreement among participants for this idea. Reasons stated for including young people in the decision-making process were: political decisions affect young people's future, young people's voice should be represented, and that there is no reason not to include young people's voices. While there was significant agreement among participants to increase young people's voice in political decisions, less agreement was given around the issue of voting for under 18 year olds. For more information on participants' perceptions on voting below the age of 18, refer to Theme 3 (p.122). The following participants suggested letting young people vote on some issues, but not others.

- Participant** I think in some general things like picking a flag or something. What's wrong with having a 16 year old vote because there could be some old people who just vote for whatever they... for the same reasons the 16 year old votes
- Participant** Teenagers have knowledge... not all but the majority one ... fresh knowledge

The reason given for allowing young people to vote on some issues, was that they might have similarly good or bad intentions as older generations. Another participant suggested that teenagers might have something valuable to share, which the participant called fresh knowledge. Participants also suggested a way to increase engagement of young people in politics, through portraying information in a more interesting way, as shown in the focus group conversation statement, as follows.

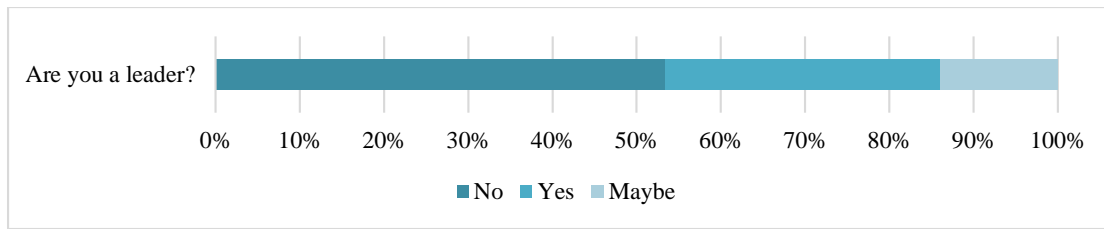
- Participant** But the other thing is that the information needs to be portrayed in a way that is interesting
- Participant** Yeah [agreement]
- Participant** Because a lot of people these days don't have very long attention spans and don't want to listen to long lectures [bell goes]
- Interviewer** [...] What could you do to make it more interesting?
- Participant** Word it differently
- Participant** Get people more involved as well

Portraying information in a way that is interesting could engage young people, but also the general population, to become more involved in political decision-making. It was for example suggested, to use easier vocabulary in political discussions to achieve higher engagement among people. The comment made in the focus group conversation displayed previously, that people did not want to listen to long lectures, also indicates discontent with political personalities, which is discussed in detail in Theme 2, as follows.

*(2) Many participants share negative images of political personalities*

This theme was the most discussed issue in the focus group conversations, and came up on several occasions, even without directly asking participants. Since this seemed to be a theme important to participants, I allowed more time in sharing participants' opinions and perceptions on this theme. Before participants were asked questions about





**Figure 41:** Participants' responses to the question: Are you a leader?

Of particular interest is that of the 23 participants who did not consider themselves as leaders, 20 participants attend School A. Only 3 participants in School B, said they were not a leader. This raised the question of whether the school or the community participants grew up in, had something to do with this result. The belief in one's ability to lead, could for example be influenced by whether one is included in decisions at home. Interestingly, the participants who indicated they were not leaders, came from the same school as the ones indicating they were not involved in decision making at home (refer to Theme 1, p.110). I cannot further investigate this correlation since this is not the intention of this study, however, this might be an interesting context to investigate in the future. Since there was no question on leadership in the focus group conversations, there is no more information available about participants' leadership perceptions. When looking at participants' perceptions of political personalities, it is important to keep in mind, that many participants did not perceive themselves as leaders, and that expectations of good leaders varied a great deal, as shown in the Wordle (p.114).

Before asking participants for their perceptions of political personalities, I asked them whether they had met a politician before. This question was posed in the student questionnaire, in Question 14: Have you heard of a political party before or met a member of a political party? Describe your experience briefly. The results were interesting as only 14 participants had met a member of a political party, while the majority of 28 participants had never met a member of a political party. Five participants' answers were unclear and did not indicate whether they had met a politician or not. The places where participants met members of political parties, were during youth events, in church groups, at cultural events, at the beach, and at school. School was the most named place to meet a politician, which indicates a responsibility schools carry in introducing young people to important experiences, such as meeting a

political leader. Only one participant made a comment about a political personality that can be regarded as positive:

**Respondent<sup>4</sup>** Yes. I have met Politician x, and Politician y, from the National party. I have seen them during our Indian cultural events, they encourage these communities to keep their cultures alive.

The participant seems to view these two particular politicians favourably, since both encourage the sustaining of Indian cultures. A majority of participants, however, shared negative images of politicians, some of which shared as follows.

**Respondent** I have met Politician x before. The experience felt very underwhelming. I felt as though when a member of a political party has a public appearance it's not very genuine, it's more them 'representing their party'. For instance when Labour party members come to [school A] events in red clothes.

**Respondent** He talked and I did not listen

**Respondent** I've met some political members who have come to my school or to some church activities. I didn't really think much of them. They're just normal people who want power and have opinions and lie by making promises they can't keep. Of course not all parties are corrupt or narrow minded

**Respondent** I think I have, but it wasn't very memorable (quite boring)

The first experience described above, suggests the participant feels that politicians are putting on an act to receive votes, rather than genuinely caring about the people of New Zealand. The participant also criticises the appearance of the politicians s/he met, since they did not seem genuine. The second participant comment displayed above, is quite interesting because it suggests a distance between this particular politician and the participant. The participant did not explain why s/he did not listen, or what the politician talked about, but just described a disconnect between them. My impression from talking to participants in the focus group conversations, this disconnect seems to be a common

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<sup>4</sup> In order to differentiate, participants' comments from focus group conversations are referred to as 'participant' while comments from student questionnaire are referred to as 'respondent'

experience, and might encourage young people to disengage from political processes. The third participant comment above, suggests that politicians might be corrupt, power hungry, and make false promises which the participant rejects. I described similar findings from an election event, I carried out at a high school prior to the 2014 general elections (refer to Chapter Two, (4) Case study evidence: Real life experience during a school election event , p.68).

Participants also debated images of political personalities in the focus group conversations. Political personalities came up on several occasions in the focus group conversations, often without a direct question, by me as the interviewer. As follows, some interesting conversations participants had during the focus group conversations, are displayed.

- Interviewer** [Silence]...So what do you think about [...] politicians [...]?  
**Participant** They look really secretive ... [laughs]... I understand it is their job but it is like keeping a lot that we don't know about inside  
**Interviewer** [Silence]...You mean like dressed in their suits like secret agents.  
**Participant** yes  
**Interviewer** Do people agree? Or are they really relatable. Like when you see them, would you go over and talk to them?  
**Participant** [Loud] no  
**Participants** no  
**Participant** They look snobby

I had this conversation with participants from School A. Three participants were involved in this discussion, and there was agreement by all participants in the focus group, that politicians were not relatable. Particularly interesting seemed the choice of the word 'secretive', since this should not be a characteristic of an employee of a democratic state. I found it also interesting that the participant was convinced that being secretive, is part of a politician's job. All participants agreed they would not want to have a conversation with a politician if they met him or her. I find this concerning, as for a person under the age of 18, discussing political issues with a politician, is one of the few opportunities to affect political decision-making. A similar conversation happened in another focus group conversation at School A, which is displayed as follows.

**Interviewer** So do you think you as young people have enough of a say?  
**Participant** Sometimes I feel like [...] when a politician comes over. It feels so phony like if the Prime Minister comes to an event in his blue tie representing national and it's always like: "take a photo, he involved with the community"  
**Participants** [laugh]  
**Participant** ... it's not like actually what do you guys think, it's more of a "I'm gonna talk to you, maybe come vote for us, remember" and it's  
**Participant** Brownie points for their side  
**Participant** They don't want to genuinely interact with us but...  
**Participant** ... they have to  
**Participant** Yeah [agreement]

The common perception of many participants in this focus group was that politicians did not genuinely want to be involved in conversation with young people. Many participants believed that the politicians were more interested in the participants' future votes, than in their opinions. Participants in a focus group conversation at School B, criticised politicians' involvement in scandals, see conversation transcript notes as follows.

**Participant** My opinion of politicians is that they are really shallow and that they only think about themselves  
**Participants** [laugh]  
**Participant** No offense anyone listening  
**Participant** Sorry Prime Minister...  
**Participant** Like that guy who got all those wood pigeons... you know he though 'I can do it and nobody is going to catch me because I am up here'. And that's like you are just a normal person, all the rules apply to you, stop being so stuck up and just accept the rules  
**Participant** Or that British one... there was a British one who was in like a bar and he threatened someone using his role in politics  
**Participant** Yeah and there was this British one who was actually in charge of like government rules and stuff and he was like breaking all of them  
**Participants** [laughing]  
**Interviewer** Is there any good politicians? [laughs]  
**Participants** [laugh]  
**Participant** I think there are... but we don't hear about them?  
**Participant** Yeah you only get to hear about the bad stuff they are doing cause you don't... that's all the media focuses on

This conversation shows that participants were influenced by scandals that political personalities are involved in. Two of the scandals mentioned by participants, were not

from the New Zealand context but still influenced participants' opinions of politicians. At the same time, participants seemed to be aware of the influence of the media in shaping their ideas and opinions, as mentioned towards the end of the conversation, displayed above. The last statement, above, can even be interpreted as a critique aimed at the media to broaden their focus, by also reporting on positive images of politicians. A conversation from the second focus group conversation in School A, highlights another aspect of the negative image participants shared of politicians. Some participants agreed that the language, used in political discussions or speeches, was difficult to understand.

- Interviewer** What do you think about the language they use? Is it easy to follow?
- Participant** No [agreement]
- Participant** I think that's what makes it boring cause no one really understands
- Participant** It's really big words
- Participant** [laugh]
- Participant** I can't really follow through with it, unless you ask an adult that's watching it as well like
- Participant** What does this word mean?
- Participant** And they try to trip each other out when they are arguing. They don't care about the people watching it they are just trying to make themselves look better

Participants in this conversation, argued that the language should be easier in order for everyone to understand political discussions, and decision-making. One participant also stated that the arguing between politicians, makes it difficult for people to follow conversations. This participant also stated that s/he believes that the politicians seem not to care about the people, listening to their conversations. One participant also mentioned that s/he is forced to ask an adult to explain political discussions, which suggests a reliance on someone, possibly more experienced to relay political information. If not everyone can follow a political debate, due to the complexity of it, this can exclude groups of people from participating in political decision-making. Excluding groups from political decision-making, in turn, should not be a feature of a democracy which should include all people of a nation.

Since participants shared particularly negative images of political personalities, Question 23 of the student questionnaire became particularly interesting: I think

politicians should... Participants shared a range of different opinions about what politicians should do, and how they could improve their job. The dominant opinion, was that politicians should involve the people of New Zealand more, and should think more about everyone's opinion, rather than their own. This opinion was shared by 17 participants. three participants stated politicians should become more honest and two participants stated politicians should be more exciting. The focus group conversations helped deepen my understanding, of how participants believed politicians could improve their presence and relationships with young people. Refer to the focus group material, provided as follows.

- Interviewer** So when you watch these meetings of [...] politicians talking, like what could make it more interesting?
- Participant** Have them shorter...
- Participant** A jazz band..
- Participant** Because it is such a long process like it is just, it seems so boring
- Participant** Or like easier, they speak all technical and stuff like that
- Participant** And they just drag it, they have like 10 minute long speeches on their childhood when it's about the flag
- Participants** [laugh]
- Participant** Is it difficult to understand them?
- Participant** Kind of
- Participant** Sometimes
- Participant** Sometimes
- Participant** Like sometimes I am: 'Did you see that happen?' and then they are like: 'That's not what happened'. And I am like: 'Sorry...'

A few participants, suggested having shorter political conversations and to use easier terms to make the conversations more understandable for everyone. The last comment made by a participant, mentioned the need to verify understanding of a political debate with a more experienced person. As discussed before, this could exclude people from political decision-making who do not have the political literacy ability to follow political debates. Participants also suggested, they wanted the politicians to be more focussed on the topic at hand, as for example the flag, rather than issues not immediately related to the issue. A participant from the focus group conversation in School A, focussed on politicians' appearances. Refer to focus group conversation notes, as follows.

**Interviewer** So what could a politician really do to engage you and make you feel like you can make a change?

**Participant** Ahm I think if you wanna get people following you I think you need to be more relatable. As much as it is professional to wear a suit but if you just wore normal clothes and joined a community service group or did something that was not about representing what you are but just being genuine and just getting an understanding of people and where they come from. Not just from one city but if you went around New Zealand I think. If you are trying to tackle issue it is sometimes good to know different perspectives

**Participant** Instead of just his own ones

The participant suggests, that politicians should be more sincere in their involvement with community members. This may include engaging in community activities, or talking to different people around New Zealand. S/he also suggested that politicians might have to consider showing themselves as they really are, which might include not wearing a suit to each event they attended.

### **How do young people perceive themselves as political beings (self-efficacy)?**

This research question focuses on the image, young people have of themselves as political beings. This question is important, since the image of one self's ability to engage in political processes, can either increase or decrease political participation. It is useful to revisit Bandura's three forms of political efficacy, which were introduced in the introduction (p. 11). Bandura (1977) argues, there are three forms of political efficacy: political efficacy (one's belief to be able to make a change), internal efficacy (one's belief in understanding politics) and external efficacy (factors outside of oneself that affect ones belief in making a change such as political scandals). Research suggests, that political participation increases with high efficacy of each of the three types (Bandura, 1977; Campbell, Gurin, & Miller, 1954; Catt, 2005; Scotto & Xena, 2015). Focus group conversations and questionnaire responses suggest that many participants show low levels of efficacy across all three types of political efficacy. This can be translated into Theme 3, as follows.

- (3) *Many participants think they cannot affect change or feeling defeat when they participate in political processes. Many participants also believe they are not ready to take on a big decision such as voting*

I recognised low political efficacy (I cannot make a change), and low external efficacy (scandals affecting one's belief in making a change) in comments made across all focus group conversations, and student questionnaire responses. Question 17 in the student questionnaire dealt with the perception of one's ability to create change (Describe what you have done to support [an] issue or to protect your whanau// extended family, iwi, community or school from the effects of an issue. If it does not apply to you, describe why you did not or could not do something about the issue). In total, 19 participants stated they had not done anything about an issue, while 20 participants mentioned different actions such as engaging in discussions (9 participants), financially supporting a cause (5 participants), signing petitions (1 participant), joining a human rights group (2 participants) and doing the right thing themselves (3 participants). As follows, are some statements made, that give reasons why participants did not do something about an issue.

**Respondent** I don't have the power to do anything. New Zealand have voiced their concerns towards these issues but it ultimately depends on what the government decides

**Respondent** I don't have the authority to make decisions in New Zealand

**Respondent** I can't do anything about it. The government is so corrupt that will not listen to anyone

**Respondent** Nothing, because I don't think the government will listen to me

**Respondent** Because the voice of one person is not heard by people with power

These statements show low political efficacy, since participants seem to feel like their voice is not heard. Participants even suggest that the government may be corrupt, which stops them from affecting change. This seems to be related to external efficacy, since this belief may be influenced by scandals that happened and were portrayed in the media, such as dirty politics (Hager, 2014). Focus group conversations, displayed as follows, provided more insights into participants' perceptions.

- Participant** Didn't more people say "no" to changing the flag than "yes"?
- Interviewer** Yes they did like a survey on the internet.
- Participant** More people said "no" to changing the flag. Meaning our opinions doesn't matter to him...
- Participant** But the Prime Minister said he would change the flag anyway.
- Participant** Yeah, our opinion doesn't matter...
- Interviewer** Do people agree with that, that our opinion doesn't matter? Or...
- Participant** I think it does...
- Participant** I think it does...
- Participant** It is like it is not just his country it is ours too so he doesn't get to make all the rules I guess. And if he did a survey and he doesn't really care what we think it is not really saying something good about him.

As the conversation above suggests, the flag debate seemed to influence many participants' belief in their ability to create change in a negative way. Without probing participants, the conversation above took place. The conversation shows that the flag debate was perceived by participants as the decision of one person only, the New Zealand Prime Minister, in terms of ignoring the general population. This perception seemed to inspire the thought that '[their] opinion doesn't matter'. This conversation I believe could spark a debate about how decision-making is taught at schools and how current issues are portrayed in the media and in schools to young people. The conversation as follows, also suggests low external efficacy since participants were unsure of whether their petitions or letters of complaint are looked at. One participant even speculated that the message sent, might be manipulated.

- Participant** So what could stop you from doing something about issues? Because I can see there are issues and you really care about it and you really disagree.
- Participant** Just the commitment, you could get a whole school behind sending postcards, no offense at all to the idea, send it to parliament but they are getting thousands of others and they might just see it as a number not really look into
- Participant** Do they read it?
- Participant** Do they actually see them?
- Participant** Yeah I am not sure
- Participant** Or if it's some assistant reading it and then they might summarise...
- Participant** ... writing statistics up
- Participant** ... and manipulate what it's really the idea.

**Interviewer** So you think that there's not really a venue for you where you can have actual influence?

**Participant** It's pretty hard, yeah

**Participant** And people aren't always aware of what's going on. And so if something like this like a protest goes on, not a lot of people understand it...

The following conversation suggests some participants' misconception, regarding their options to participate in political actions.

**Interviewer** Have you done anything, like getting involved in these issues? Have you done anything or would you do anything?

**Participant** I would, if I would feel like I could make a difference.

**Interviewer** So at the moment you feel like you can't?

**Participant** No

**Participant** Ya that's right

**Interviewer** So what do you think it is that is stopping people from doing something about it? What would be the barrier?

**Participant** Nothing happens...

**Participant** You might get hurt by the police  
[Students mumble]...Do people agree with that, that you might get hurt?

**Participant** Yes, you might just get yourself into a lot of trouble...  
Police are pretty much under the Prime Minister's control so... [laughs]

**Interviewer** [Silence]... Like for example my year 9 class has written a letter to our local MP about not changing the flag?

**Participant** Politician x?

**Interviewer** Yea

**Participant** That's gonna do so much [sarcasm]

Participants involved in this conversation, seemed to agree on the fact that they could not make a difference. Participants even believed, when they did something about an issue, they could get hurt by the police. I wonder where these perceptions originate, and how the media and schools might shape these perceptions, which appear to stand in the way of political participation. The second conversation displayed above, shows a sarcastic expression of a participant regarding writing a letter to a local Member of Parliament. It was interesting to hear this form of sarcasm, from a young person, especially about a common form of political participation. I wonder about the role of school, parents and the media which may have shaped this. The following conversation,

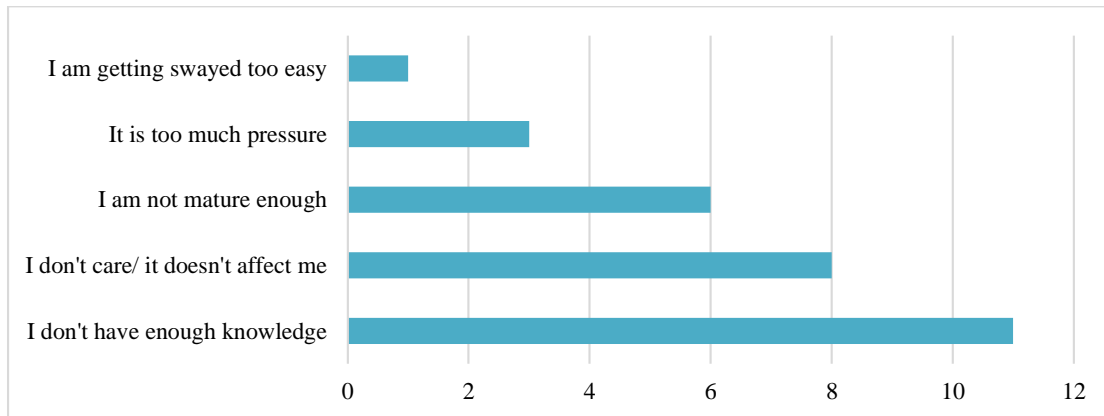
highlights several issues around participants' perceptions of themselves as political beings.

- Interviewer** [...] have you ever done something about something you got really into? Like that you want to change. Have you ever tried changing something?
- Participant** [loud] I don't know how!
- Participant** Yeah we are not in a position to change it
- Participant** Yeah and I don't really think many people would listen
- Participant** We are just like a teenager
- Participant** I am stating my opinion but some people just don't listen and don't really care
- Participant** Yeah like some people, like parents sometimes think other kids are like not old enough to know and haven't got their own authority and they think the parents should make all the big decisions and don't let the kids have their own say and stuff
- Participant** yeah
- Participant** I think why a lot of young people don't necessarily vote is because when they were younger people told them that they don't know and so they feel like they can't and also that they just don't really care because they don't know anything about it. And they don't think it's important

One participant stated s/he did not know how to create a change which could influence his or her ability to participate in politics. This issue is discussed further in Theme 5 (p.133). A second issue raised, was that other people might not listen to young people because they are 'just like a teenager'. One participant mentioned that the reason older people might not listen to younger people, is that they might not have their own authority yet. Another participant added that being told you 'don't know', influences young people's belief in one's ability to affect change. The belief of not being able to affect change due to a lack of knowledge and understanding of politics, is called internal efficacy. Internal efficacy can also be influenced by other people who tell someone they don't know something. A low internal efficacy was expressed by some participants, and seemed to be a reason for rejecting the lowering of the voting age.

I asked participants why they thought only people over the age of 18 were allowed to vote for their leaders (Question 12). Thirty-one participants stated that people over 18 were more mature (experiences, knowledgeable and able to think for themselves). Eight participants said 18 was the legal age for most things, and therefore also for voting. Eight participants stated people over 18 were more responsible, and more affected by

political decisions. Question 13: Even though you are under 18, would you like to vote? Explain why or why not, uncovered some interesting findings. Thirty-four participants said that they did not want to vote, until they were 18 years old, while only 12 participants stated, they would like to vote already. Two participants were undecided. Participants provided a range of reasons for not wanting to vote yet, displayed in Figure 42: Participants' reasons for not wanting to vote while they are under 18 years old.



**Figure 42:** Participants' reasons for not wanting to vote while they are under 18 years old

As Figure 42 suggests, most participants (20 participants) stated reasons that suggest a high value placed on voting. Instead of saying voting is boring, many participants seemed to grasp the significance of voting, and the decisions and considerations it involves. For example, the statement '[voting] is too much pressure', indicates that voting for the participants does not just involve the day the general elections happen, but a preparation time, and careful following of news and current political issues. This became also evident from the statements made during focus group conversations, and questionnaire responses, displayed as follows.

**Respondent** No [I don't want to vote yet because] I don't think I have enough knowledge about the political aspects and views to start making my own opinion

**Respondent** I think it is not appropriate for anyone under the age of 18 to vote. I think this because the decision [...] has to be made with citizens that actually know what is right for our country and will vote honestly.

- Interviewer** Good, so once you turn 18, do you think you will get straight out there and vote. Are you excited about it?
- Participants** No [agreement]
- Interviewer** Ok. Why not?
- Participant** Because you have to keep a track of like... if you are gonna start voting then you can't say much like complain when they win. So, if you like vote someone and they win, so you gonna have to be more careful and it's like...
- Participant** ... too much thinking...
- Participant** ... and you have to know all the knowledge about all the situations for and against a party. There is multiple once as well so...
- Participant** You've gotta know what other parties' perspectives are

Comments made in the student questionnaire, show that participants have doubts about their political knowledge which can be called a low internal efficacy. The focus group conversation comments show the thoughts participants have about the act of voting. Participants mention the importance of knowing about different parties, and making the right decision. They also acknowledge that this may take up some time and effort which they may not be able to put in just yet. Participants in another discussion, as follows, suggested that people needed to be more educated on politics, so they could make proper decisions.

- Participant** Sometimes people might to enjoy it but it is important that we just have a bit more education on politics in school just so people...
- Participant** ... cause we have to participate in it and if we don't know a lot about it...
- Participant** ... so then we're gonna be doing like stupid things and vote for like wrong people and then...

One participant also mentioned a fear of failing in his/ her decision, which might result in a government which is bad for New Zealand. Another participant suggested that learning about politics might not be enjoyable, but important and that school should take over this role. The role of school and political literacy education, is a context of another research question, discussed later in this chapter (Theme 6, p. 135). Some participants even argued that once they turned 18, they would only vote if they felt like they knew about the parties and policies. This is evident from the focus group conversation data, displayed as follows.

**Interviewer** [...] So once you turn 18, do you think you will go vote and get excited to vote?

**Participant** Yes

**Participant** No

**Participant** I would

**Participant** I don't know... cause it is a really big decision

**Participant** Yeah it depends if like, like if I think I know something about politics but then I go to talk to my parents and they are like "no"... [laughs]

**Participant** Yeah it is like you don't actually know anything [laughs]

**Participant** Like if I know, if I know in my mind that I know about politics... and what it required, yeah then I would vote. But if I am not ready to like make that decision yet then I'll wait

Findings regarding this research question, suggested that many participants have low levels of efficacy across all three types of political efficacy, which could influence their participation in political processes. However, there were many participants who asked for a bigger voice in political decisions, and who argued that young people have knowledge and ideas to share about politics, such as the focus group conversation comments suggest, displayed as follows.

**Participant** Like they're letting older people vote as well and they are gonna be like in our next generation but like when we grow up

**Participants** [laugh]

**Participant** No, I am not trying... to be nasty but that is just my opinion. They should let younger like not 10 year olds but let us have a say as well

**Participant** I think 16 is a good age

**Participant** It's like the legal age for some things

**Participant** If you are able to drive [incomprehensible] you are able to make some decisions

**Participant** A little bit of decisions and as you get older you get more authority through...

**Participant** But I guess older people are sometimes wiser people

**Participants** Yeah, no [undecided]

**Interviewer** Do you think older people are always wiser?

**Participants** [loud incomprehensible talk]

**Participant** Well I guess it depends like what experiences you have had

**Participant** And they might not think the same way as us. And they might have a really like dead set opinion. But we might be really... we might see things in a different light

- Participant** Because we have grown up a lot differently from how our parents did
- Participant** And like social media is a lot different like
- Participant** I think like we should have a bigger voice but I don't think we should have the right to vote yet, I just don't think
- Participant** yeah

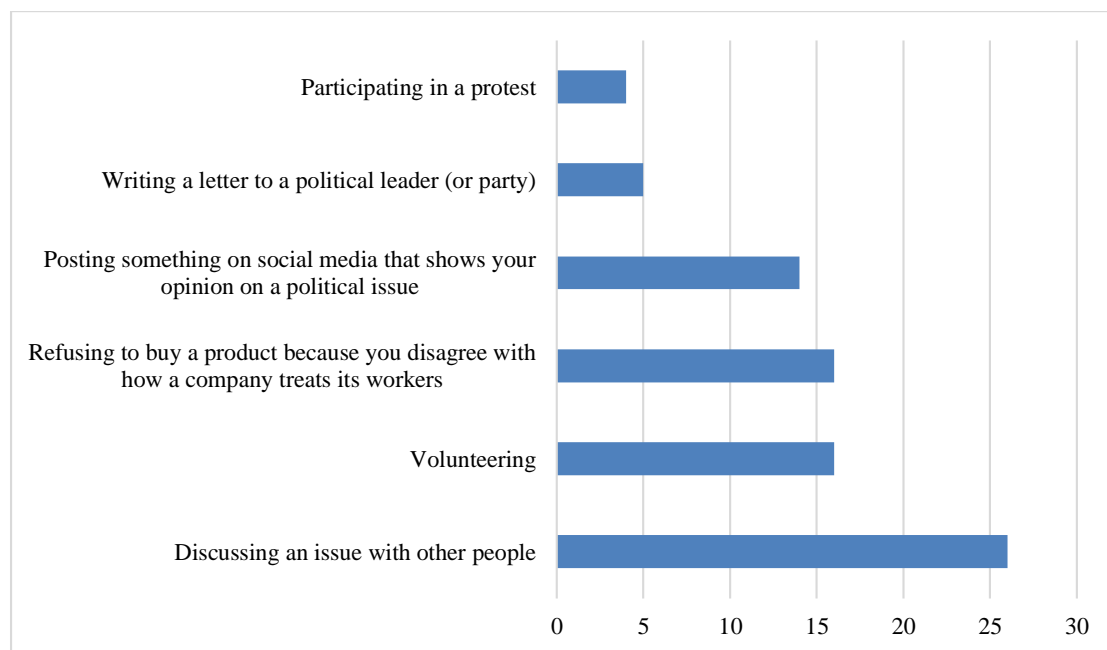
This conversation includes differing messages the participants wanted to communicate. Firstly, there is a notion that while young people might have different opinions, this might not be a bad thing, but could be useful, “we might see things in a different light”. Secondly, some participants argue that there seems to be a change in society, “social media”, “we have grown up a lot differently” which might mean that young people can bring different skills to a decision, than other generations. One participant suggested to slowly increase the decision-making for young people, by involving young people only in some decisions, and as they get older.

### **How do young New Zealanders perceive political participation and how do they participate in political processes (political participation)?**

This research question was interested in how young New Zealanders participate in politics, and perceive political participation. Before I asked participants about their participation in political processes, I asked Question 15 (Describe an issue that matters to you. It can be more than one issue) to find out about participants' interests. In contrast to the image of the apathetic (Liddle, 2013) young New Zealander, responses to this question show that the participants were interested in a range of issues such as the refugee crisis (7 participants), the flag debate (13 participants), poverty and child poverty (5 participants), human rights (3 participants) and many more topics. Interesting also was that participants within a school generally agreed in their interests. For example, all participants mentioning the refugee crisis as a topic of interest, came from one class in School A. This suggests, that young people's interests may be influenced by topics discussed in schools, which gives teachers a significant role in selecting issues for class discussion. In relation to issues participants were interested in, I asked participants which political actions they carried out to support issues. Findings of this question, are summarised in Theme 4 as follows.

(4) *Participants are involved in a range of different political actions but believe they cannot affect change in their school*

I first asked participants, which political actions they could participate in, to find out which political actions they were aware of (Question 24: Describe a possible action you could do if you disagree with a political decision). Across both schools, the most named political action, participants chose, was to write a letter (16 participants). Other possible actions named, included protests (5 participants), petitions (4 participants), and using social media (1 participant). Five participants stated that they could do nothing about it. Talking to a Member of Parliament, for example, was not mentioned, which could be explained by the fact that political personalities were not viewed as approachable by participants (refer to Theme 2, p.113). I also asked participants to answer a multiple choice question, about which political action they have actually been involved in (Question 25: Are you or have you been involved in any of the following actions/ please tick). This question could be skipped if it did not apply. Figure 43: Political actions participants are involved in or have been involved in at the time of the student questionnaire, shows the range of political actions participants have been involved in.



**Figure 43:** Political actions participants are or have been involved in at the time of the questionnaire

Most participants (26 participants) have discussed issues with other people. Some participants volunteered (16 participants), refused to buy a product due to ethical considerations (16 participants) and posted something on social media about a political issue (14 participants). Only a few participants wrote a letter to a political leader (5 participants), or participated in a protest (4 participants). Overall, it seems like participants are involved, or have been involved in a range of different political actions (1 participant skipped this question). This also stands in opposition to the perception of apathetic young New Zealanders (Liddle, 2014). However, most of the above stated political actions are not likely to be registered or mentioned in the public discourse on youth political participation. In contrast to political actions such as voting or protests, the above named political actions may go unnoticed by the public. Therefore, I am wondering how political actions, such as the ones named above, could make it into the public discourse, and which roles schools could take in making this happen?

Even though many participants had engaged in political actions before, most participants believe they cannot affect change in their own school. I first asked participants to state how decisions were made at their school (Question 27: Describe how decisions are made at your school and who makes them. You could choose an example such as school rules or school uniform). The results were significant and concerning, since only 10 participants believed they were involved in decision-making at their school. Four participants believed their teachers made decisions, while a majority of participants believed senior leadership (19 participants), and the Board of Trustees (25 participants) were in charge. Some participants mentioned two or more decision-making bodies, so I added up how many times each decision-making body was mentioned. As follows, some interesting comments made in the student questionnaire are summarised.

**Respondent** The Principal and the Board of Trustees [make decisions], but we don't get a say, but they lie and say we do

**Respondent** It's such a dictatorship with uniforms, I find that people should be allowed to wear incorrect shoes, hair colour or piercings, because they have no effect on learning... the school cares more about the uniform than the actual grades

**Respondent** The Board of Trustees makes decisions, I don't really know what goes on there

**Respondent** No [I am not involved in decisions], the occasional survey but that's it

**Respondent** I can make decisions but I don't know if it means anything

These comments suggest, that some participants are unsure about the decision-making process at their schools ('I don't really know what goes on there'). Some participants, however seem to understand the process, and suggest they are excluded from decision-making, which is however covered up by their school. One participant even suggests, their school has the system of a dictatorship, since decisions are not made together. I also talked about these issues with participants in the focus group conversations. Comments from focus group conversations are displayed as follows.

**Interviewer** [...] how are decisions made here at school, do you think? And who is making them?

**Participant** Board of trustees

**Participant** So unfairly....

**Participant** Not us...

**Participant** I mean they might send out surveys for us to do but nothing is really...

**Participant** ...it's up to them...

**Participant** ... yeah. At the end of the day, to make the school look nicer [they send out surveys]

Participants in this focus group criticise their involvement in school decisions. Participants, for example, suggest that the only reason students at their school get involved was to make the school look nicer. One participant described the decision-making at his/her school as unfair. Another area of concern, was whether student representatives had an actual influence on decisions, as suggested in the focus group conversation data, as follows.

**Interviewer** Ok. Is there a way for you to influence it?

**Participant** Well if the student rep gets on there [laughs because new student representative is part of the focus group]. They can give a student perspective... yeah

**Participant** Does it get passed on though?

**Participant** I don't know... in the student council not really...but...

**Participant** ... so then they give us this voice but then really, it's not actually...

- Participant** We don't really have a voice  
**Participant** Yeah because everyone has been asking for things like hoodies and stuff, just warmer jackets or just let us wear our mufti when it's cold, like it hasn't really...  
**Participant** ... nothing has happened  
**Participant** ... nothing's changed

Some participants suggested that issues raised by the student representatives, would not be passed on, and it was therefore not an effective way to influence decisions. A lot of the conversation, focussed on uniform, so I wondered whether this might be an issue, schools could deal with in a different manner, involving students more directly. This may be beneficial for young people, since the type of decision-making they experience at school, might influence their perception of political decision-making. If young people felt success in making-decisions at school, this may influence their belief in being able to affect change in political decisions. While many participants took part in various political actions, some participants in the focus group conversation stated, they would like to learn more about how to get involved. I summarised findings regarding this issue under theme 5 as follows.

(5) *Some participants do not have the tools to participate in politics and would like to learn more about this*

This issue was raised by the participants, and was discussed across two focus group conversations. While some participants were able to name political actions they could take to create change, or have been involved in, some participants were unsure how to participate. This is evident in the focus group conversation as follows:

- Interviewer** Awesome. Have you ever affected change?  
**Participant** Mmmh, no  
**Participant** Yeah  
**Participant** [mumbles]  
**Participant** [loud] I don't know how!  
**Participant** Yeah we are not in a position to change it

When asked how they could affect change, participants seemed to think for a while, and one participant suggested s/he didn't know how. It was also mentioned, that young people were not in a position to change things, which might mean they did not have the

tools to create change. Participants in another focus group, even asked directly for help to create change, and also for their voices to be heard:

- Participant** If people want to say: “Well you are dumb teenagers and you don’t know much” then help us learn
- Participant** Yeah [agreement]
- Participant** I think you find that that we would know a lot more from school
- Participant** I feel like they try and put everything on us and say ”oh it’s gonna be your world soon” but then they don’t let us have our own choices, and don’t respect our choices and let us have our own future
- Participant** Yeah
- Participant** I mean, sure we don’t know a lot, but we still know some stuff and we still wanna have a say in some things because it will affect us.

Participants in this conversation seemed to acknowledge that they may have limited political knowledge, but would like help to improve this knowledge, in order to take charge of future decisions. I wonder, how schools and political leaders could take on this role of supporting young people to engage in political actions. One participant also suggested that political decisions would affect young people in their futures, and it was therefore crucial for young people to be involved in them. Other participants suggested that it could be the role of schools, to help young people become more engaged in politics:

- Participant** They’re not really preparing us for the big world as such. Like we may be good in classes but if we are out of class because we have no practical skills. Because jobs these days will want about two years experience. Well I don’t even have any experience anyway so...
- Participant** ... you can say I have experience in the classroom...  
[laughs]
- Participant** [laughs]
- Participant** And what she was kinda saying is that you could be at our age, next year or the year after, you could go carrying on the same subjects and not learn any more about politics. You could leave, get a job, but then it comes to voting and you will have the same knowledge as someone back here... And I think that’s why it is so important that yeah just take more time

Participants in the focus group conversation above, suggested spending more time learning about politics in school, since the official learning of politics may end when leaving school. More on the role of school and politics, is discussed in Theme 7, refer to p. 142.

### **What are teachers' attitudes towards political literacy education and what kinds of political literacy education do they value?**

This research question sought to understand how teachers perceive political literacy education. In order to answer this question, I conducted semi-structured interviews with a Social Studies teacher at each of School A and School B. I anticipated interviews with three Social Studies teachers, but ended up with two interviews only. I believe teacher interviews might have provided more significant findings if I had interviewed more than two teachers, and if the interview questions had been shared with teachers prior to the interview. This may have enabled teachers to prepare and respond in more detail. I used the same methods of analysis for the teacher interviews as for the student questionnaire and focus group conversations: constant comparison analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), microinterlocutor analysis (Onwuegbuzie, Dickinson, Leech & Zoran, 2007) and classical content analysis (Bauer, 2000). The findings of the analysis of the interviews were translated into Theme 6.

*(6) Participating teachers perceived political literacy education as an important aspect of Social Studies and their teaching programs included skills young people need to participate in political decisions. However, participating teachers suggested Social Studies was an undervalued subject at their school.*

At the start of the interview, I asked teachers about their journey to become a Social Studies teacher and whether they enjoyed teaching Social Studies (see Appendix 2: Guidelines semi-structured teacher interview, p.179). Teachers A (male) and B<sup>5</sup> (female) were both Heads of Faculty of Social Sciences at the time of the interview. Teacher A had a background in English and History and had changed to Social Studies

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<sup>5</sup> The teacher from School A is referred to teacher A and the teacher from School B is referred to teacher B from this point forward.

later in his career. The reason for changing to junior Social Studies, was to sustain student numbers in his senior History classes. He stated that, he only sometimes enjoyed teaching junior Social Studies as evident from the following comments:

**Interviewer** Do you enjoy teaching junior social studies?

**Teacher A** Sometimes... when kids produce good work and they are enthused... sometimes it is pushing things up hill and you sometimes have to try to get them away from the narrow interests they have and learn more of the world. We are a small country, miles away from anywhere else.

In this statement it is evident that the teacher recognised a disinterest of his students in the subject and perceives it as his job to broaden his students' minds. He also suggested that this disinterest might be a result of New Zealand's remote location. Teacher B was trained in Geography and Physical Education. She expressed her opinion about teaching Social Studies as follows:

**Teacher B** I enjoy teaching junior Social Studies. You are able to choose anything you like, really... and get a good mix. It's pretty flexible and you can adapt it as you go.

This statement seems to suggest that the Social Sciences learning area provides teachers with the opportunity to align their interests with topics they teach. I also asked the teachers about the topics they taught to their junior Social Studies classes to learn about political processes, Year 9 and 10 students (relates to Levels 4 and 5 of the New Zealand curriculum(NZC)). Teacher B said in Year 9 she taught about how the New Zealand government worked, how elections happened, and how New Zealand's political system compared to other countries. In Year 10, students learned about terrorism, refugees and about different types of conflicts around the world. She also suggested politics was learned through discussing current events such as the flag debate, and that teaching the concept of perspectives was important to understand politics. The political literacy education provided by this teacher seems to be well aligned with the NZC Social Sciences learning area. For example, comparing the New Zealand political systems with other countries is suggested in the following Achievement Objective (AO) of the NZC (2008): "Understand how systems of government in New Zealand operate and

affect people's lives, and how they *compare* with another system". The language, Teacher B used, suggests a focus on knowledge and understandings

**Teacher B** ... we learn about different types of conflicts in the world  
... we learn how government works  
... current events quizzes also often have political questions in them

It was also interesting to note that Teacher B referred to the Conceptual Strand dealing with politics, called: "Culture and Organisation" as follows:

**Teacher B** I enjoy teaching the Cultural strand

Referring to the Culture and Organisation conceptual strand as cultural strand might be a result from combing the *Social Organisation* and *Culture and Heritage* conceptual strands of the 1997 *Social Studies in the New Zealand Curriculum* into one conceptual strand: Culture and Organisation. This was discussed in detail in Chapter Two, p. 58. This might be problematic since the emphasis might be on culture, rather than organisation which includes political literacy teaching. Teacher B also mentioned she enjoyed teaching about inequality. Teaching about inequality could be a significant topic to acquire political literacy skills if it includes thinking about the roots of inequality and critiquing political leaders or political processes. Critical investigations were mentioned by Collins (1992) as part of his definition of political literacy. Teacher B also mentioned that people from the City Council and a politician had spoken to her students:

**Teacher B** Politician V came to talk to our students before, not to our class only but the whole school. We also had people from the Council to talk to us, only our Year 13s. The topic was how decisions are made in the Council. Not so much to junior classes...

The last statement is particularly interesting. It seems junior classes are not a focus for political learning at School. I wonder whether this is a common phenomenon around New Zealand schools, and whether junior classes in particular should be targeted for political learning. Teacher B suggested a slightly different model on teaching political literacy. He mentioned that he used many different Achievement Objectives (AOs) in

Year 9 and 10 to teach about political concepts such as: ‘Understand how systems of government in New Zealand operate and affect people’s lives, and how they compare with another system’, ‘Understand how people define and seek human rights’, ‘Understand how the ideas and actions of people in the past have had a significant impact on people’s lives’, and ‘Understand how people’s management of resources impacts on environmental and social sustainability’ (NZC, 2007, Fold-out chart). Teacher A described his approach on teaching politics as follows:

**Teacher A** I tend to start from: “How does the government affect you”, and most students don’t really see that. Like when you buy stuff you pay tax and GST and then from there: “Why do you pay tax?” Then I can build up from that: “Why would people want to vote?” and that there is the government and that they can affect it. So students connect with it.

This statement suggests that Teacher A wants to connect his students with the ideas and actions of the government. He also suggested that students could affect the government. Relaying this notion to his students, might influence their political efficacy (Bandura, 1977) positively. Based on my personal experience, Social Studies appears to be a subject undervalued in some schools. I was therefore interested in how the participating teachers viewed this issue.

**Interviewer** Do you believe Social Studies is a valued subject at your school?

**Teacher A** Not particularly... because it is the only subject that doesn’t carry over as compulsory into senior classes. It is often used as a filler upper for teachers who have surplus lines to teach. It has been badly understaffed over the last 7 or 8 years. We are still understaffed with social sciences specialists

**Interviewer** Do you believe Social Studies is a valued subject at your school?

**Teacher B** Not particularly. It seems to be for part timers and such... it is often viewed as a subject everybody can teach. I can sort of understand that, people can identify with but you also have to have the passion to teach it. Leading on to senior subjects, it is important to teach Social Studies at junior level well. It still is a core subject though and it branches out over a few different senior subjects

Both teachers seem to agree that Social Studies was undervalued at their school. Teacher A for example, was concerned by the understaffing happening in Social Studies at his school and the lack of Social Science specialist teachers. Teacher B was concerned by the use of part timers and the perception that Social Studies could be taught by everybody. Due to the shortcomings of the guidance for political literacy teaching in the NZC (refer to Chapter Two, p. 58), employing staff who are not trained in Social Studies can result in an incomplete understanding of political concepts. Teacher A suggested, however that political literacy education was an important aspect of Social Studies.

**Interviewer** Do you believe it is important to teach politics as part of Social Studies?

**Teacher A** I do, because most... a lot of Social Studies teachers think of teaching Social Studies as a political act, as making people aware of the world, how it operates, who has power, why they have power, how they exercise it, and what actions were taken to enhance and reduce that power.

**Teacher A** You do run into student barriers that politics is boring and you can't change anything. This is probably a reflection of what parents say.

Teacher A, shared an interesting perspective on political literacy teaching, which was close to Collin's (1992) definition of political literacy. This becomes evident for example, when he stated "making people aware of the world... who has power and why they have power". To understand this, a critical investigation of political systems or leaders is required. In his second statement, Teacher A suggested that there may be student barriers, making the teaching of political literacy difficult. He also suggested that students might be influenced by their parents. This statement also suggests that he viewed it as a barrier that students have a low self-efficacy (Bandura 1977). Since this research sought to understand how young people participate in politics, I asked teacher B to summarise the most important skills a young person needed to learn to become involved in politics.

**Interviewer** What do you think are some of the most important skills a young person should learn to become involved in politics?

**Teacher B** It starts with respecting other people's opinions and not being afraid to share their own... ahm... they should also

understand the processes, for example voting. They probably don't start learning about voting until they get contacted and go through it themselves.

**Teacher B** I think that kids can participate in society already though using social media and so on. But it would be nice to be able to teach them to do it in a mature way. They can share their opinion but it doesn't have to have bad language and it needs to be taken seriously.

Teacher B raised some important issues in her statement. Firstly, she suggested that being able to be involved in a political discussion is an important skill for young people to become engaged in politics. She also suggested that understanding the tools to participate in politics was crucial (refer to Theme 5, p.134). Teacher B believed though, that voting as a means of participation cannot be taught but needed to be experienced in order to understand it. I wonder whether it would help young people to be taught about voting in schools in more detail, to be able to take that step when they turn 18. Teacher B also raised the issue that young people are already engaged in society by using social media. She however suggested that young people might need some guidance and support to become more mature in sharing their opinions online. Both teachers agreed that some valuable political literacy resources had been provided to their schools. Teacher B for example mentioned the kids voting programme (Electoral Commission, 2014c) and suggested to use a similar method to teach about the New Zealand flag referendum. Teacher A also liked the idea of students voting but suggested this could be better co-ordinated throughout New Zealand. He was critical about that textbooks on political literacy teaching as “incredibly boring and don't break it down for students”. He suggested to use cartoons instead that displayed how the government worked and to provide “sharp and concise” information on New Zealand politics on a website. He suggested this website to be similar to the BBC website's political section (BBC, 2016). Lastly, I was also interested in teachers' perceptions on how students were involved in schools' decision-making processes. I asked this question to students as well (described in Theme 4, p.130). In contrast to most students, teachers thought that students were involved in their schools' decision-making quite well.

**Interviewer** At your school, do students have a chance to participate and influence school-decisions?

**Teacher A** Some active student representatives had significant impact, for example on allowing cell phone use in class. There was also significant pressure from students to constructing shelter on school grounds. So, some practical things... The student council does not currently work as effectively though. Also sports coordinators run successful activities

**Interviewer** Do you believe students can experience decision-making at school and can have influence on school-decisions?

**Teacher B** Yes, I think they do get quite a bit influence. Only last week every student got two online surveys to do regarding their opinion on tutor time and about ICT. Also voting student council... the Board of Trustees representative. There was a formal ballot box for that. I think they understand they have influence and their opinion is valued

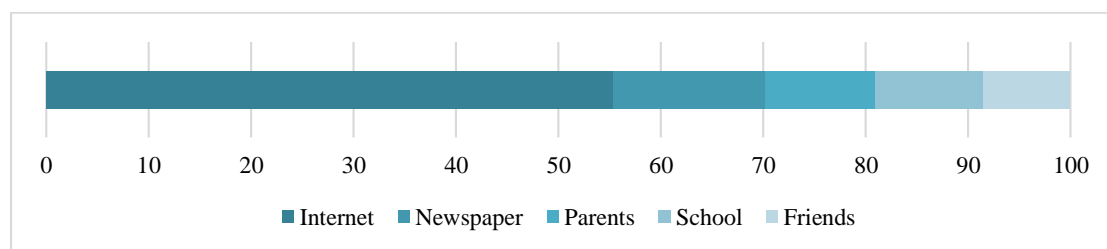
Most students from School A and B believed they were not involved in school decision-making and their opinions were not valued by the school and school leaders (refer to Theme 5, p. 134). However, Teachers A and B agreed that students did influence decision-making at their schools, and that their opinions were valued. Teacher B even suggested, she thought students were aware of their influence in decision-making. Teacher B also viewed the surveys, students were asked to complete at their schools positively, while some students suggested they were only used to “make the school look nicer”. This discrepancy between teachers’ and students’ perceptions is interesting and could be subject to further investigation.

**How could the Social Sciences learning area in the New Zealand Curriculum (Ministry of Education [NZC], 2007) be used to provide a platform to learn about political institutions and political decision-making processes, in order to empower young New Zealanders to participate in political processes?**

This research question focuses on the role of the Social Sciences learning area in the New Zealand curriculum to provide political literacy education. As discussed in Theme 4 (p.130), many participants did not think they could influence decision-making at their school, which could have a negative influence on participants’ self-efficacy. Findings relating to this research question, suggest that participants viewed Social Studies as the responsible subject to teach political literacy but that Social Studies classes did not prepare participants to participate in politics. These findings are detailed in Theme 7.

(7) *Social Studies is viewed by most participants as the only responsible subject to teach about politics but seems not to support young people to participate in politics*

Before participants were questioned on their experience of Social Studies and political literacy learning,, they were asked to state where they found information about political issues (Question 16) and who they talked to about political issues (Question 26). Refer to Table 8: Student questionnaire (coded questions to align with research questions), p.105. These questions provided information about the significance of school and teachers, as a source for political information. As discussed in Chapter One, people and institutions influencing political learning are called political socialisation agents (p. 28). The main political socialisation agents, the literature suggests are: family, peers, school and the media (Rattinger, 2009). These were used as multiple choice options in Question 16. Instead of the media, I used newspaper, internet and books, to understand better which types of media participants preferred to use to access political information. Figure 44: Participants’ preferred medium/ institution/ individual to access political information, shows where participants access political information.



**Figure 44:** Participants’ preferred medium/ institution/ individual to access political information

As Figure 44 suggests, most participants (26 participants) preferred accessing political information on the internet. Significantly fewer participants (7 participants) read newspapers to inform themselves about politics. Parents and schools were only mentioned by 5 participants each. Friends were named by 4 participants as a source for political information. These results make evident that social media might be a significant influence on young people’s political opinions and perceptions. This might be concerning, considering there is little censorship for information on the internet. Results from Question 26 however, show that participants’ families also carry a responsibility in shaping participants’ political perceptions. Thirty-three participants in the student questionnaire named family as one of the people they talk to about politics.

Significantly less participants (5 participants) mentioned teachers. Friends and peers were mentioned by 21 participants. This aligns with findings from the literature (Quintelier, 2015; Rattinger, 2009) which suggest that family is the most influential socialisation agent. Literature also suggests that peers are becoming more important in influencing political opinions and perceptions. I wonder how teachers could make themselves more available for political discussion? An interesting issue regarding the influence of peers on political perceptions was raised by a participant in a focus group conversation at School A:

- Interviewer** So [you talk about politics more to] family than friends? With friends what do you talk about? More like other things?
- Participant** Most of my friends are not interested in adults. Maybe [name] but only sometimes, on and off.
- Participant** Yeah probably my parents because they are over 18, so they got the choice to vote and stuff like that. Maybe give my opinions and see what they think...

The participant suggested that politics may be an adult topic, not usually discussed between young people such as his/her friends. Another participant mentioned that s/he discussed politics with parents, since they were allowed to vote and therefore might be better informed. Besides socialisation agents, I was interested in the Social Sciences learning area and how it might be used to provide political literacy education. Before findings are presented, it is useful to revisit a definition of political literacy: "...political literacy is presented as the capacity for critical reflection upon political institutions and processes, especially in terms of the values engaged by these institutions and processes" (Collins, 1997, Free Institutions and Political Literacy section, 14). In addition, Anderson (2008) suggests that there are three competences of political literacy: knowledge, understanding and practical competence. In order to find out how participants perceive political literacy education in the Social Sciences learning area and in particular how to improve it, it is important to keep these definitions in mind.

I asked participants whether there was a subject at their school that taught them about politics (Question 29). Refer to Table 8: Student questionnaire (coded questions to align with research questions), p.105. Social Studies was identified by most participants (18 participants). Geography (15 participants) and History (8 participants) was also named

often. This might have been influenced by the fact that the questionnaire was completed by two Geography and one History classes. Ten students stated there was no subject that taught them about politics. Interestingly only subjects in the Social Sciences learning area were mentioned by participants. When I asked participants in a focus group conversation about this, participants suggested the responsibility could also be taken over by other classes:

- Interviewer** ... And do you think it is a responsibility of Social Studies? [to teach about politics]
- Participant** Mmh, not just Social Studies
- Participant** Yeah, like other classes as well
- Participant** Might as well learn it in careers [subject that teaches about skills for future careers]...
- Participants** [laugh]
- Participant** Yeah we could have quizzes each week
- Interviewer** Yeah because then as soon as you go to Year 11 there is no Social Studies<sup>6</sup>...
- 
- Interviewer** Have you learnt anything about politics in another subject?
- Participants** Not really, no
- Participant** Not yet anyway

One participant suggested politics could be taught as part of a Careers class. The Careers class at School A was criticised by participants, because it did not teach valuable skills. Participants therefore suggested to use this class to teach about politics. It was also suggested to have weekly quizzes to stay informed about political issues. One participant also suggested this may be important, since there was no Social Studies class after Year 11, so another subject might have to carry on the learning about politics. The following participant shares a similar concern:

- Participant** ... you could be at our age, next year or the year after you could go carrying on the same subjects not learn any more about politics you could leave, get a job but then it comes to voting and you will have the same knowledge as someone back here... And I think that's why it is so important that yeah just take more time

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<sup>6</sup> It is a school's decision whether to offer Years 11, 12 and 13 Social Studies.

Some participants suggested politics might be taught as an individual subject at school or integrated into Social Studies or Geography. Participants acknowledged that some people might not want to learn about politics, but that it was important to be informed.

**Participant** I think politics should be a subject at school... because no one understands it...

**Participant** [mumbles]

**Participant** We should be taught about it...

**Participant** ..more...

**Interviewer** ... in Social Studies

**Participant** It is the same as like a language someone wants to understand how to speak Japanese but you don't necessarily want to learn it... like people don't want to learn about politics but they have to

**Participant** I think also teach it a little bit in schools as well. Like don't make it like a subject. But make it like...

**Participant** ... Incorporate it...

**Participant** ... like Social Studies and Geography. Just have like a topic where we can discuss it

**Participant** So learn it like in Years 9 and 10 Social Studies and then when you enjoy it have it like an option class

I was also interested in what participants learned about politics in Social Studies. Participants in the focus group conversations seemed unsure about what exactly they learned in Social Studies. This was evident from mumbles, unfinished sentences and unclear statements, such as “a little bit”, “What was that thing we learned about last year?” or “We did some stuff on...”. As follows, some participant comments from the focus groups are shared.

**Interviewer** So what have you learnt in Social Studies about politics?

**Participant** Law

**Participant** What was that thing we learnt about last year? Start of the year? Was it the Treaty of Waitangi and how that changed a lot?

**Interviewer** So in Social Studies have you learnt anything about politics?

**Participant** Yeah

**Participant** A little bit

**Participant** In Year 9 we learnt about all the different parts

**Participants** [mumbles]

**Participant** And what kind of thing was that?

**Participant** Ahm, the voting system...

- Participant** And whereabouts it happens in the world
- Participant** I found it interesting learning about all the different types of government
- Participant** Yeah, all the different types, I remember now, like democracy and
- Participant** I forgotten it all now, democracy is the only one I know
- Participant** There is communism...
- Participant** Monarchy...
- Participant** Dictatorship...
- Interviewer** Was it lots about New Zealand politics as well?
- Participants** [incomprehensible mumbles]
- Participant** We learnt about like Politician Z, the Prime Minister, and at the time it was like Politician W and stuff like that
- Participant** Yeah, yeah, like the leaders and parties

As evident from the focus group conversations above, participants learned about political belief systems “Democracy, Monarchy, Dictatorship”, the Treaty of Waitangi, political terms, political institutions, and about some politicians. It is interesting that participants did not mention learning about political participation (other than voting) or about critically investigating an issue or political institution. These would be aspects of the definition of political literacy learning stated previously (p. 144). An interesting participant statement follows:

- Interviewer** What kind of things did you learn in Social Studies?
- Participant** Different types of government and what they think is the best way to run a society...

I believe this statement is interesting due to the choice of language. The participant stated that they learned about what “they” thought was the best way to run a society. This seems to suggest the participants’ opinions on how a society should be run was not of importance, but rather focused what “they” thought. It is unclear what or who the participant meant by “they”. This could be the teacher, a book author, or the New Zealand government. An area some participants wanted to learn more about was political parties and their agendas:

- Participant** We didn’t really talk about what the parties represent though
- Participant** So that’s quite confusing
- Participant** Yeah I don’t really know what the parties really stand for...
- Participant** I know the Greens stand for like environment
- Participant** But I don’t know sort of Labour and National...
- Participants** [incomprehensible talking]

- Participant** I would say how [...] is so cool, but then Mum would say yeah, but I don't like what she stands for
- Participant** Like what I heard is that Labour is like the social party is that right?
- Participant** Yeah like the workers party
- Participant** And National, aren't they very business minded or something?
- Interviewer** Yeah
- Participant** Like for upper class people...

This issue came up in two different focus group conversations. Participants stated that they did not know much about political parties. One participant raised the issue that not knowing party agendas, could cause him/her to like a politician even through the participant might not agree with the values of this politician's party. An unclear understanding of what political parties stand for can cause stereotypical perceptions such as "National is for upper class people". I wonder whether an unclear understanding of political party agendas would be an issue around New Zealand schools. I also wonder how teachers could react to tackle this issue.

Overall, participants seemed to view learning about politics favourably and thought this was helpful:

- Interviewer** So do you think this is really valuable to learn about this?
- Participant** Yes
- Participant** Ahm, yeah. To see how much the world has changed, our country has changed to turn it into this.
- Interviewer** Something else? Like the words and what they mean like democracy and parliament and what they all mean?
- Participants** Yes
- Participant** Yes that was helpful too. So you know what you talk about.
- Participant** I remember learning this...

Reasons for why it was helpful were for example, to be able to engage in conversation with other people "so you know what you talk about", and to be able to understand how New Zealand was changed into its current state. I was also interested in how politics was taught. Opinions differed on this question as evident in this conversation:

- Interviewer** Do your teachers usually ask for your opinions a lot?
- Participant** No.

- Participant** No. It is a case of they teach us we have to learn. They don't say why we have to learn it. They don't ask we just have to learn it.
- Interviewer** Does everyone agree with that or do you have a different opinion?
- Participant** Half way

As discussed previously (Chapter Two: (3) Schools and educators, p.62), pedagogies used to teach can also influence young people's political perceptions. For example, if political institutions are presented as created by humans and with a possibility to change, young people might believe they could have an influence on changing a political situation (Detjen, 2007). As the conversation suggests, some teachers might not ask for students' opinions or allow students to challenge their opinions. Challenging each other's opinions however, is an important skills part of political literacy. Lastly, I wanted to know how Social Studies supported participants to get involved in political decision-making. I asked this question in the student questionnaire (Question 30). See Table 8: Student questionnaire (coded questions to align with research questions), p.105. Most participants (12 participants) said that Social Studies did not prepare them for political participation, while 15 participants mentioned different ways it helped them to get involved. Some participants (9 participants) mentioned that they learned about voting and the government, a few participants stated they learned about having discussions (3 participants) and watching the news to get involved (3 participants). Comments such as the following were made in the student questionnaire:

- Respondent** Our Social Studies teacher taught us to watch the news every day to gain more knowledge about the country and the issues in the country. This helps us to make our decisions.
- Respondent** I have learned that my opinion is important and can be heard if I let someone know. I have learned that just because someone is in power, it doesn't mean they make the best decision. I learned that I can find out more by watching the news or listening to what other people have to say
- Respondent** We do class discussions on what our thoughts on a certain topic are.

These comments suggest that Social Studies has taught some participants strategies to participate in politics such as being able to discuss an issue, staying informed by watching the news and being critical towards political leaders and their decisions.

Practical tools on how to get involved in politics, appear not to have been taught to participants:

- Interviewer** Did [Social Studies] help you to get involved? Like did you learn anything to participate?
- Participant** Not really that stuff, no...
- Interviewer** So more about what it is?
- Participants** Yeah [agreement]
- Participant** Just like we learned about the government but we didn't learn like how to make a government
- Participant** If people want to say: "Well you are dumb teenagers and you don't know much" then help us learn
- Interviewer** Did school help you to get involved into politics? Did school help you to get involved/ to make a difference in the world?
- Participant** No
- Participants** No
- Interviewer** Do you think that would be helpful to learn something like that?
- Participants** Yes
- Participant** Yes it would probably useful because we learn so many things we don't use in our everyday lives.

Many participants in the focus groups agreed that they were not taught the tools to participate in politics. One participant mentioned that they did not learn about how to make a government, but rather about governments. This could also lead participants to believe they are not able to change the government. Another idea participants agreed on, was that learning tools to participate in politics might be helpful.

This Chapter has summarised findings from the student questionnaire, focus group conversations and teacher interviews. Each research method helped me to find out a great deal of information, and provided a different view on participants' perceptions. While the student questionnaire provided a valuable overview of participants' perceptions, the focus groups enabled me to gain deeper understanding of participants' thinking processes. It was also interesting to gain insights of how experiences of political literacy learning and school decision-making between teachers and students differed. The combination of the three methods of analysis: constant comparison analysis, microinterlocutor analysis and classical content analysis, shaped the seven

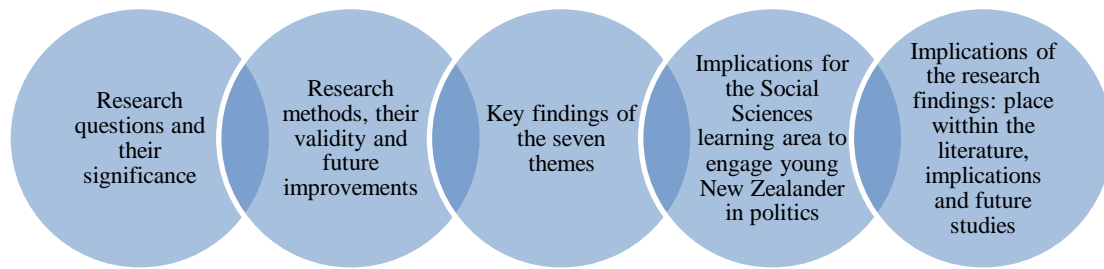
themes discussed in this chapter. I believe each of the seven themes could provide useful guidance for teachers of political literacy. The themes enable insights into the political perceptions of the participants and might also be applied to young people in other New Zealand schools. Knowing about the issues raised by the participants regarding their immediate and future political participation, can support teachers to improve political literacy education. Chapter Five: Further discussion, discusses issues raised in the previous four Chapters and sums up findings of this research.

## **Chapter Five: Further discussion and conclusion**

“I feel like they try and put everything on us and say ‘Oh it’s gonna be your world soon’ but then they don’t let us have our own choices, and don’t respect our choices, or let us have our own future” (Participant, Focus group conversation, School B).

Chapter Four summarised my research about Year 11 students’ political perceptions. Each research method assisted me to find out a great deal of information and provided a means to gain different views on participants’ perceptions. The research findings were synthesised into seven themes and discussed in detail. The themes provide insights into the political perceptions of participants, and might also be applied to young people in other New Zealand schools. The quotation above, suggests how important it is to this participant to share his/her political opinions and perceptions, and to have his/her choices respected. I believe this applies to many other participants in my research, and possibly to a lot of young people within New Zealand schools. The findings of this thesis are of interest to New Zealand Social Sciences teachers, teachers across the curriculum, education policy makers, parents, political personalities, and other people who are involved with young New Zealanders.

This chapter revisits my research questions and their significance. I discuss how useful they were, how well they were answered, and possibilities for further questions. Secondly, the research methods, and methods of analysis are discussed. I analyse their usefulness and validity, and suggest possible future improvements. Thirdly, the seven themes identified in Chapter Four are re-visited and summarised. Fourthly, the implications of my research regarding the use of Social Studies to empower young people to engage in politics, are summarised. Lastly, I reflect upon the place of this thesis within political participation literature and for possible future studies. Figure 45: Overview of Chapter Five’s contexts, outlines the contexts of this chapter.



**Figure 45:** Overview of Chapter Five's contexts

### **Research questions and their significance**

The research questions originated out of a combination of reviewing current literature (Bolstad, 2012; Catt, 2005; Diesing, 2013; Dinsdale, n.d.; Hipkins, 2012; ICCS, 2010; Lamprianou, 2013; Lang, 2010; Satherley, 2011; Sheerin, 2007; Wood, 2015, 2010; Vowles, 2012) and public discourse (Arsenau, 2014; Electoral Commission, 2014a, 2014b; Hager, 2014; Liddle, 2013; The Wireless, 2014; Utiger, 2015), on the political participation of young people, and my experiences as a social sciences practitioner in New Zealand and German secondary schools. I decided to carry out qualitative research that focussed on students' political perceptions due to the availability of comprehensive quantitative political participation studies in the New Zealand context (Bolstad, 2012; ICCS, 2010; Hipkins, 2012; Lang, 2010; Satherley, 2011). Qualitative research also suited my philosophy of education that drew on themes of humanism, phenomenology, critical theory and postmodernism (Newby, 2013). Due to the qualitative nature of my research, all six research questions focussed on political perceptions of participants. Each research question resulted in a great deal of information which is summarised in Chapter Four. Participants' comments suggested they were interested in the research questions and had a great deal of information to share.

**Interviewer** How did you like the survey? Did you enjoy doing it or not, and why?

**Participant** It was ok, I couldn't write as much as I wanted too, not enough words

**Interviewer** You had to make your answers shorter?

**Participant** Yes, a lot shorter.

- Interviewer** How did you like the survey? Did you enjoy doing it or not, and why?
- Participant** Like there wasn't enough room for writing but... like if I wanted to expand on an idea, there wasn't enough room.
- Participant** That was my problem too.

Participants from both schools suggested there was not enough space to share their ideas, which indicates the research questions behind the student questionnaire were interesting to participants. Using microinterlocutor analysis (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2007), I found participants also had a great deal to share in the focus group conversations. This was indicated by participants interrupting each other (marked with '...') and the ability of participants to sustain a conversation without constant probing by myself as the interviewer. I believe the research questions uncovered significant implications regarding young people's political participation, as summarised later in this chapter (p. 160). The research questions also provided a platform for the participants to share their opinions.

### **Research methods, their validity and future improvements**

Three research methods were used in this research: student questionnaire, focus group conversations and teacher interviews. I was able to collect a great deal of information with each of the three research methods, which suggests their success. Each research method showed its particular strength and possibility for future improvements as discussed. The nature of the content of the student questionnaire was viewed positively by participants.

- Interviewer** How did you like the survey? Did you enjoy doing it or not, and why?
- Participant** Yes, it had some interesting questions which I couldn't put myself into words. But I got to answer them through those questions....
- Participant** It was good, there was a lot of interesting questions in there.
- Participant** I liked the survey. The questions were quite good, because I could put my own opinions into what I think about politics.

These comments suggest the questions in the student questionnaire were able to help participants to reflect upon their own political ideas and express them. The comments

also suggest the questions were interesting. The use of mainly open questions, rather than multiple choice questions, enabled insights into participants' interests. Some questions resulted in longer answers, which suggests these questions were more interesting than others. Using *SurveyMonkey* to conduct the survey proved successful, since this online tool enabled me to survey many participants (48 participants), and still have good organisation of the data as it was facilitated electronically. *SurveyMonkey* provided tools to analyse data such as bar graphs or tables that included all responses to a particular question. This enabled the grouping of data, using constant comparison analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This also enabled me to count response patterns, using classical content analysis (Bauer, 2000). Depending on the focus of future studies, questions of the student questionnaire could be omitted, or further questions added. If this questionnaire was used again however, the word limit should be higher. I suggest a minimum of 400 characters per question. More time could be provided to participants to share their opinions as well. I suggest 1.5 hours since some participants were writing over their break, as I had only allowed one hour for completion. Since answers got shorter towards the end of the student questionnaire, having less questions could be considered as a further option. I also suggest using at least three schools, to access a broader range of participants.

The focus groups were the most successful research method since they enabled more insight into the student questionnaire answers. Participants sustained their discussions over a long period at times and did not need much input from myself as the researcher. Due to the voice recording, I was able to create a detailed transcript which was particularly valuable for microinterlocutor analysis. The focus group questions seemed to have been interesting to participants, which is evident from ways students interrupted each other, marked by '...'. It might have been interesting to have asked participants whether they enjoyed the focus groups and why, in order to get their perspective on the focus group conversations. I believe the conduct of the focus groups was empowering to participants since in my role as researcher, I remained in the background and brought conversations back on track only when they moved into an unfocused direction or fell silent. In order to keep conversations going, I suggest a minimum of 7 participants for such discussion. The seating during the focus group conversations may have been improved by using a round table to allow everyone the same distance from the voice recorder.

The teacher interview was the least successful method, due to the following reasons. The teachers chosen for the interviews were Heads of Departments, which meant they were under time pressure and seemed not to be able to focus on the conversation for a long time. Interviews therefore, were relatively short (under 10 minutes each). It would have also been useful to have the interviews conducted in a quiet and neutral place such as a meeting room at the University. This might have prevented distractions such as teachers walking past the interview room, or hearing students talking in the classroom next door. The interview process would have been improved by providing teachers with the interview guidelines (see Appendix 2: Guidelines semi-structured teacher interview, p.179), prior to the interview to enable preparation. The teachers may have benefited from having a copy of the *New Zealand Curriculum* available, for reference in terms of discussing conceptual strands and Achievement Objectives. In addition, a teacher questionnaire might have provided more valid results, had more than two teachers participated. It might be also worth considering having teacher focus groups, rather than individual interviews. This would enable participating teachers to bounce off each other's ideas, and to learn from each other during the conversation. An opportunity for a focus group such as this could be facilitated at a subject specific conference such as the Social Sciences Conference (SocCon, 2015). A workshop for interested teachers could be offered.

The analysis methods used in the questionnaire, focus group conversation and teacher interview provided a good range and worked well together. The development of themes using constant comparison analysis, was particularly useful in order to report on specific implications. I believe similar methods of analysis be used with a larger sample. In that case, it might be useful to use electronic grouping tools such as offered by *SurveyMonkey* (SurveyMonkey, 2016).

### **Key findings of the seven themes**

The research findings were summarised in seven themes which highlight issues in the political participation of young New Zealanders. Key findings of the seven themes are summarised as follows to provide a foundation for making suggestions for development for Social Sciences teachers and other stakeholders in young New Zealander's political

participation (refer to Section: Implications for the Social Sciences learning area to engage young New Zealanders in politics, p. 160). When discussing my research findings, it is important to view them in light of participants' backgrounds as summarised. My research participants, were aged between 15 and 16 years, so below the voting age. There were significantly more female participants (75%) than male participants (25%). A majority of participants were of New Zealand/ European origin (60%) and a small percentage of Maori origin (25%). Most participants (69%) were from School A with a decile rating of 4 and fewer participants (31%) were from School B with a decile rating of 6.

*Theme 1: Most participants viewed the decision making system of New Zealand positively, but would like to be involved more directly*

Most participants of this research, viewed the political decision-making system of New Zealand positively. However, many participants asked for more inclusion of young people's opinions and decisions. A suggestion many participants agreed on, was to have a teenage party or a teenage vote. Participants asked for greater inclusion in the political decision-making process because it affected their future, and because they had valuable ideas to share. Participants suggested the depiction of political information in a more interesting way, and using simpler language to support young people to become more engaged in politics.

*Theme 2: Many participants share negative images of political personalities*

Only 14 participants had met a politician before, while a majority of 28 participants had never met a politician. Participants shared an overall negative image of political personalities. Politicians were described as not genuine in their interest in the general population, disconnected from young people, power hungry, corrupt, making false promises, secretive, not relatable to, and not approachable. Participants suggested this image was influenced by personal experiences but in particular by scandals such as 'dirty' politics (Hager, 2014). Some participants also criticised the media for reporting mainly negative stories about politicians rather than positive ones. Some participants

also suggested they had to rely on adults to understand political conversations, due to the difficult language used.

*Theme 3: Many participants think they cannot affect change or have feelings of defeat when they participate in political processes. However, many participants believe they are not ready to take on a big decision such as voting*

I found low levels across all three types of political efficacy (Bandura, 1977). Political efficacy (the belief in one's ability to affect change) and external political efficacy (the role of external factors such as scandals to affect one's belief in the ability to affect change) were influenced by participants' perceptions of the New Zealand Government and its political decision-making processes. Some participants believed the Government was corrupt, and a few participants believed they could not affect change. These perceptions were particularly influenced by the flag debate, which some participants perceived to have been decided by the Prime Minister alone. Some participants also wondered whether petitions and letters were looked at by political leaders in charge. Low internal efficacy (one's belief in the ability to understand politics) was evident from participants' views that they should not be able to vote whilst below the age of 18. Participants believed they were either not mature enough, voting was too much pressure, or they thought they did not know enough about politics. Some participants argued this was influenced by older people telling them they did not have valuable knowledge about politics. Concluding thoughts on this theme are that participants regard voting as an important act that requires a great deal of political understanding, which they might not be ready to carry out yet. However, many participants still agreed they wanted to have a greater influence in some decisions, such as the flag debate.

*Theme 4: Participants are involved in a range of different political actions but believe they cannot affect change in their school*

Most participants have been involved in political actions such as discussing politics, volunteering, selective consumerism (The Institute of Grocery Distribution, 2007), posting an issue on social media, writing a letter to a political leader or participating in a protest. Most of these political actions however, are not evident in statistics such as

voting statistics, and might therefore, be ignored by the media which can shape negative comments about youth political participation. Most participants also believed they were not involved in decision-making at their school, and that decisions were made by Board of Trustees and senior leadership members. Participants also suggested when they got involved through surveys and elections, they were not authentic and their choices were not respected. Some participants even believed student representatives did not have influence on decision-making at their school. Uniform regulations were discussed most by participants, as a decision at their school they were excluded from.

*Theme 5: Some participants do not have the tools to participate in politics and would like to learn more about this*

Many participants suggested they do not have the tools to affect political change and are unsure how to participate. Some participants also acknowledged that they had limited political understanding, and asked for help to learn more about these tools, so they can engage in political decision-making. One participant suggested that political decisions would affect them in their futures, and it was therefore crucial for young people to get involved in them. Participants suggested that schools could take over this role to teach them how to participate in political processes. One concern, participants had, was that political learning may end when they left school, so the time they are at school should be used efficiently to learn about politics.

*Theme 6: Participating teachers perceived political literacy education as an important aspect of Social Studies. Their teaching programs included skills young people need to participate in political decisions. However, participating teachers suggested Social Studies was an undervalued subject at their school.*

Teachers agreed that Social Studies is not a valued subject at their school and that this affects staffing in light of trained social sciences specialists. Not having qualified and educated social scientists, can affect the quality of political literacy teaching, since the New Zealand curriculum does not indicate political concepts explicitly in the Social Sciences learning area. One teacher suggested that a political literacy focus is needed in senior rather than junior classes, since senior students might have to participate in an

election in the near future. One teacher also suggested young people already participated in politics through social media (Montgomery & Gottlieb-Robles, 2013), but that young people might need support in appropriate ways of participating using social media (Frechette, 2013). Teachers differed in their approach of teaching political literacy. One teacher seemed to focus on systematic understanding, while the other teacher focussed on skills and critical investigation. Neither teacher mentioned the provision of practical tools, or deliberate teaching approaches to teach young people how to engage in politics.

*Theme 7: Social Studies is viewed by most participants as the only responsible subject to teach about politics but seems not to support young people to participate in politics*

Participants' preferred method of accessing political information was social media which might be of concern since there is little censorship (Frechette, 2013). Parents were stated as the preferred medium to discuss politics. Teachers appear less important for discussions about politics, which seems to suggest teachers have less influence on the political socialisation of young people. Subjects in the social sciences were named as useful for teaching politics. These included Social Studies, Geography and History. However, participants believed politics could also be taught in other subjects across the curriculum, or through politics as a subject. Many participants were unsure about what exactly they learned about politics in Social Studies. Findings also suggested participants did not learn about practical tools to participate in politics, as well as critical investigation skills. This is surprising due to the focus of the Social Sciences learning area on Social Inquiry Skills Processes (SISPs). The four skills part of the SISPs, social inquiry, values exploration, decision-making, and reflection (NZC, 2007, p.30), aim at teaching young people how to critically investigate issues. Some participants suggested their opinion was not valued by teachers, which could influence their internal efficacy (Bandura, 1977). Findings also suggested participants did not learn about political parties and political personalities, which resulted in some stereotypical perceptions of political parties. Implications of these findings are discussed in the following Section: Implications for the Social Sciences learning area to engage young New Zealanders in politics.

## **Implications for the Social Sciences learning area to engage young New Zealanders in politics**

The key findings summarised previously, suggest changes that could be made to improve young New Zealanders' political literacy, and therefore support them to increase their engagement in politics. It has to be noted that only 48 student participants and two teacher participants were involved in this research. Therefore, these findings and implications are not to be viewed as general rules that apply across all New Zealand school settings and communities. Rather they highlight issues or barriers that young people perceive to prevent engagement in political processes. Implications summarised in this section do not just concern Social Sciences teachers but also other stakeholders of young people's political participation. This includes schools, parents, politicians, the media and education policy makers.

Firstly, I suggest teaching more practical political participation tools to students in Years 9 to 11 Social Studies. These tools include writing a petition, posting a political issue on social media or having a political discussion. I believe it is important to apply these understandings such as suggested by Anderson (2008) with his concept of practical competence. This could for example be as part of a project such as the social action project described in Chapter Three, p. 75. Using political participation tools as part of community learning (Davis & Pratt, 2005; Schultz, 2007) is another way to practice political participation. One important tool for participation in politics is to be able to articulate understandings of political concepts. I believe in order to articulate good political concepts, the concepts need to be first understood. This was also suggested by Anderson (2008) who argues there are three strands of political literacy: knowledge, understanding and practical competence. Once students understand a political concept, they have to be supported in articulating this understanding. This support can be given through questioning, as done in the student questionnaire in this research. Some participants suggested the questions in the student questionnaire, helped them to express political ideas they did not know how to express otherwise.

**Interviewer** How did you like the survey? Did you enjoy doing it or not, and why?

**Participant** Yes, it had some interesting questions which I couldn't put myself into words. But I got to answer them through those questions....

- Participant** It was good, there was a lot of interesting questions in there.
- Participant** I liked the survey. The questions were quite good, because I could put my own opinions into what I think about politics.

I also believe that students have to practice political discussions in their development of social inquiry processes. This could be done using activities such as *DeBono's six Thinking Hats*<sup>7</sup>, *Irish Debates*<sup>8</sup>, political role-plays, or *Values Continuums*<sup>9</sup>. Each of these teaching tools can be used with a political issue and supports students to practice discussing their opinions, and articulating understandings of political concepts.

Secondly, some participants suggested their opinions were not valued by their teachers. This can cause a low internal-efficacy (Bandura, 1977) which can in turn, be a factor leading to political disengagement. Therefore, I suggest using pedagogies and teaching methods that value young people's opinions and perceptions. Effective pedagogies for teaching political literacy were introduced in Chapter Two (Pedagogies for political literacy education, p. 70). These pedagogies included constructivism (Scheurman, 1998), social inquiry (NZC, 2007), counter-socialisation (Ochoa-Becker, 2007), moralisierung (Kant, 1803) and the genetic approach (Detjen, 2007). A teaching method that values students' input is whole-class brainstorming. Any political topic can be introduced by eliciting students' prior knowledge, using a whole-class brainstorm. I believe, allowing students to share their knowledge before they are given definitions of political concepts, enables them to belief in their ability to know about politics. Aligning and connecting new learning to students' prior understanding is suggested by the Social Sciences Best Evidence Synthesis (BES, 2008) as two of the four elements of effective social sciences pedagogy. Teaching methods discussed previously (De

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<sup>7</sup> *DeBono's six Thinking Hats* enables the analysis of a problem from several perspectives. Each participant gets one hat, representing a perspective. The participants discuss an issue from the perspective, their hat indicates (De Bono, 1992).

<sup>8</sup> During an *Irish Debate* a controversial issue is debated by groups. One group is against the issue and the other group is for the issue. Only one participant can speak at a time and is bound to a certain time limit. Points are given for successful arguments. The Irish debate is a simplification of the Irish Times Debate (Fanning, 2005).

<sup>9</sup> During a *Values Continuum* activity, statements are read out by a facilitator and participants place themselves along a continuum, indicating their agreement or disagreement. Often there are discussions about the place participants chose on the continuum (Deardorff, 2000).

Bono's six thinking hats, Irish debate, values continuums and political role plays) can also support students to believe their opinions are valued.

Thirdly, research findings suggest students should learn more about political personalities and political parties, in order to prevent stereotypical perceptions. Participants suggested they were particularly interested in political party agendas so they could make up their minds about them. This could also include meeting political personalities such as described in Chapter Two: Case study evidence: Real life experience during a school election event, p. 68. As suggested in the description of this election event, politicians need to understand the purpose of the event and avoid increasing the negative image young people might have of them already. It might be worth sharing some of the comments participants in my study made about politicians - with politicians.

Fourthly, Collins (1992) suggested that critical investigation is an important skill to be learned for political literacy. Most participants (students and teachers) did not think that critical investigation was part of their Social Studies program. This might be rooted in the conception of the Social Sciences learning area of the New Zealand curriculum, which omits many important political concepts such as *power, democracy, sovereignty, mana*. The Social Sciences learning area does not explicitly refer to teaching practical tools to get involved in politics. However, the Social Inquiry Skills Processes: Inquiry, values exploration, decision-making and reflection (NZC, 2007, p. 30) implicitly suggest critical investigation can be applied to political learning. In this sense, these implications do not just concern Social Studies teachers but also policy makers of the New Zealand curriculum. Policy makers should consider updating the Social Sciences learning area to make Social Inquiry and critical investigation explicit in the curriculum. Another important stakeholder to support teachers in making changes to their teaching practice of political literacy, are school leaders.

As discussed, Social Studies seems to be an undervalued subject in some New Zealand schools. Some schools seem to use non-social sciences specialists to teach Social Studies. This in turn can cause an incomplete political literacy education since these non-subject specialists might not be able to apply the Social Sciences Curriculum, nor have experienced initial teacher education to do this. Each curricula has its discipline

specific way of working and subject-specific literacies which often do not transfer between subjects. In addition, the learning areas in the New Zealand curriculum are organised in a different ways and might be difficult to investigate and apply for those who are not specialists. These ways of working are often rooted in philosophical assumptions. I therefore suggest that school leaders employ qualified social sciences subject specialists rather than teachers educated in other subjects. I also suggest political literacy teaching to be part of initial teacher education programs as already done at many Universities (Hunter, 2013) around New Zealand.

A sixth issue, evident in my findings is that many participants felt excluded from decision-making in their schools. This could be an issue to be looked at by school leaders. Students could be questioned whether they feel excluded from decision-making and what suggestions they have to be included. A context that was mentioned a few times referred to uniform regulations. I wonder whether school leaders could include students in their decisions on school uniform regulations more directly. Some participants criticised the use of school surveys which they felt were used to improve the image of a school, rather than to listen to students' opinions. I wonder how surveys may be used more effectively to show students that their opinions are listened to and applied.

A final suggestion is geared towards the media. Participants criticised the media for portraying politicians in a negative light, talking about scandals politicians were involved in or emphasising dirty deals between politicians. There also have been some negative reports regarding young New Zealander's political apathy (Liddle, 2013; RadioNZ, 2014; Robinson, 2014). I believe that reporting on positive aspects of young people's political engagement, might support young people's belief in their ability to create change (political efficacy) and their belief in their generation to be knowledgeable about politics (internal efficacy).

## **Implications of the research findings: place within the literature, implications and further studies**

I believe the benefit of, and significance of this research was to uncover and make evident young people's political perceptions and their experiences of political processes. Further research could investigate whether similar perceptions and experiences of political processes might be observed in young people in a range of New Zealand settings. The implications of this research might also be of significance to stakeholders of young New Zealander's political participation such as Social Sciences teachers, parents, political personalities, education policy makers or the media. This research uncovered seven themes, some of which suggest barriers to young people's political participation such as being able to understand political discussions between politicians, needing the tools to participate in politics and understand what different parties stand for. Knowing about these barriers is essential for stakeholders to conduct further research into how these barriers might be minimised. This research has also showed that the young New Zealanders in my study, are interested in politics and able to sustain political conversations. In contrast to reports on apathetic young New Zealanders (Liddle, 2013; RadioNZ, 2014; Robinson, 2014) participants viewed political participation as an important process which they would like to be involved in more directly.

I suggest further studies emerging from this research can be derived from each of the seven themes. As listed here (1-7), each theme has been re-arranged into a possible research question. This list is not intended as exclusive, but rather as a starting point for future research.

1. How can young New Zealanders below the voting age of 18 be more actively engaged in politics?
2. How do young New Zealanders perceive political personalities, and how does this affect their political participation?
3. How can young New Zealander's three types of political efficacy (internal, political and external efficacy) (Bandura, 1977) be increased?
4. How can young New Zealanders be directly involved in decision-making in their school setting?

5. How can the social inquiry skills processes (SISPs) described in the Social Studies learning area of the NZC, be applied to teach young New Zealanders about practical tools to engage in politics?
6. How do New Zealand Social Studies teachers perceive political literacy teaching, and how can they be supported to provide a political literacy program aligned with research on political literacy?
7. How can the Social Sciences learning area make explicit politicians concepts and ideas to assist the pedagogies of political literacy?

More generally, research questions and research methods, as well as methods of analysis could be applied to a wider region within New Zealand, in order to find out whether the results of this research apply to other young New Zealanders. This could also be implemented by using a different age group, a diversity of ethnic composition, differing school decile ranges, or gender composition.

This research sought to understand how young New Zealanders (Year 11: aged 14-16) perceive and participate within political processes. I collected information by reviewing political participation literature and by engaging in conversations with young New Zealanders and Social Sciences teachers. These conversations uncovered young people's perceptions of barriers to their participation in politics. However, the conversations also showed a passion the participants had for politics that is rarely discussed in political participation literature, nor in public discourse about young people and politics. I believe the participants were genuinely interested in political discussions and decisions, but had encountered difficulties being a part of them. These difficulties included not understanding language used in political discussions, negative images of politicians, not having the tools to participate in decisions, and a feeling of defeat when participating. I believe that Social Studies has the capacity to help young New Zealanders to overcome these difficulties, and be able to affect change.

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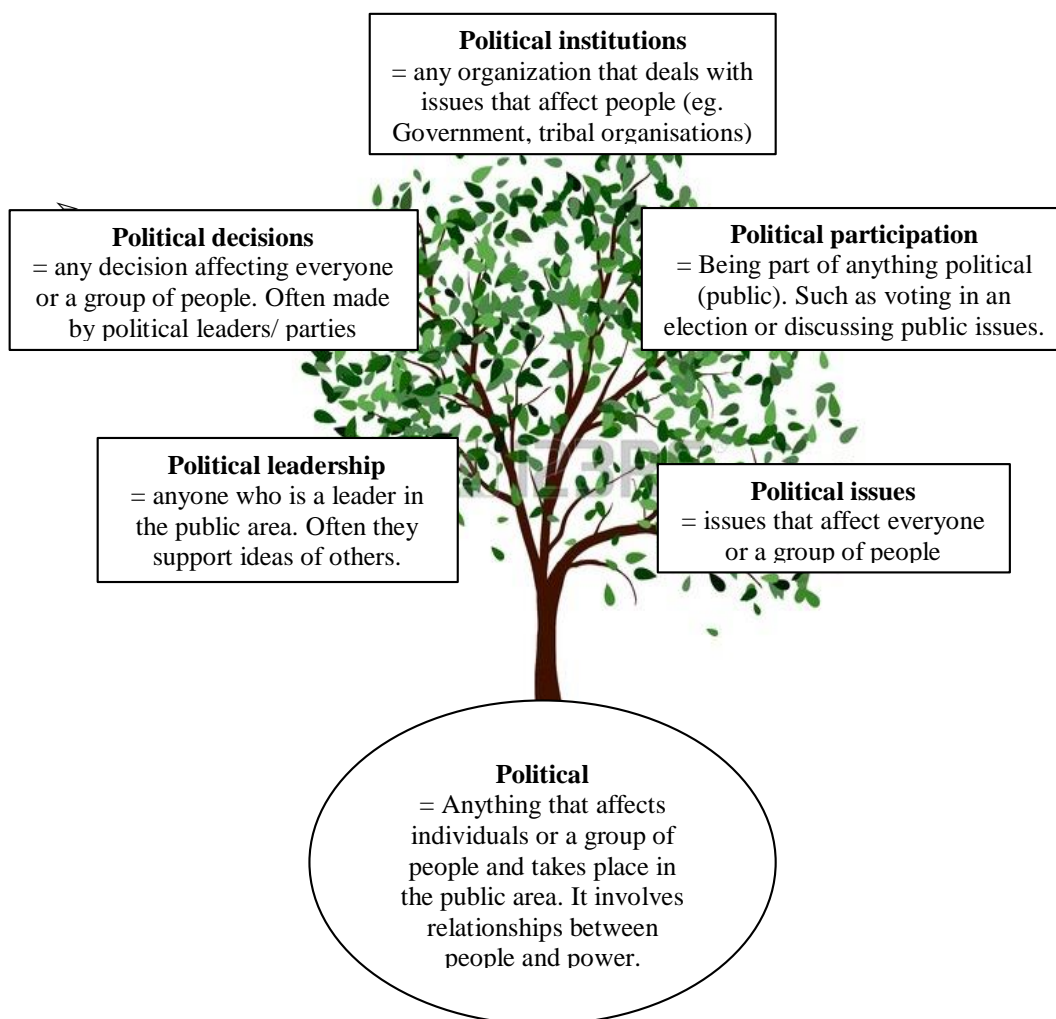
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## Appendix 1: Pre-Questionnaire Brainstorm

This is an outline of the brainstorm activity I conducted before the student questionnaire. I explained to students that there are a few difficult words in the questionnaire, which we will define together. I brought the terms, presented in boxes below, and attach them to the board. Then I worked out definitions together with the class. The definitions provided below serve as a guideline for me, and are intended to be understandable for year 11 students. The tree symbolises the word family (political) from which other members of the same family originate (such as political issue). The terms below the tree were be integrated in the definitions worked out with the class. I brought the tree on an A3 poster to be attached to the board. The image, terms and definitions stayed up during the student questionnaire for student reference.



**Government**= The party or parties with the most votes form the government and make decisions

**Parliament**= The place where elected members make decisions (Wellington)

**Democracy**= System in New Zealand. We elect party representatives who make decisions for us.

**Parties**= People with similar ideas and opinions group in parties (groups). Parties can be elected.

## Appendix 2: Guidelines semi-structured teacher interview

1. General Data
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Date:</li> <li>b. School:</li> <li>c. Name:</li> <li>d. Teacher of which classes: (to be able to match data later)</li> <li>e. Tape recording ok?</li> <li>f. Could you please outline your educational pathway after leaving school?</li> </ul>
2. Teaching Profession and teaching SST
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. What were your reasons for becoming a Social Studies teacher? Have these changed?</li> <li>b. Do you enjoy teaching Social Studies?</li> <li>c. Which topic, strand, AO in the New Zealand Curriculum (NZC, 2007) do you enjoy most?</li> <li>d. Which AO(s) in Year 10 do you suggest can be used to teach students about politics? What do you think the AO (s) asks the teacher to teach?</li> <li>e. Where else in the New Zealand Curriculum can you find evidence of the importance of political education?</li> <li>f. How would you like to teach about politics and what contexts/ strands might be used?</li> </ul>
3. Perception of political climate at school
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Do you feel your Social Studies teaching is valued at your school? What is some evidence for and against that?</li> <li>b. What is your department strategy for decision-making about learning programs in Social Studies? What are some of the things you plan together as a department, what are some of the things you are responsible for yourself?</li> <li>c. What are your views about civic education? What school-wide and community wide factors would support you to teach civic education/ political literacy in Social Studies?</li> </ul>
4. Attitudes towards students
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Do you think young people should be given more responsibilities in daily duties (driving age, banking, criminal charges)?</li> <li>b. Would you favour a decision to lower the voting age to 16 in Aotearoa, New Zealand? Why?</li> <li>c. Do you think teaching of civic education would make a difference in the political participation of your students? Why?</li> </ul>
5. Civic education program
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. What is your understanding of civic education?</li> <li>b. What do you think are the most important concepts/ contents/ understandings/ topics around politics students should acquire in Social Studies?</li> <li>c. What kind of strategies do you use to make sure students can acquire knowledge/ information about political ideas?</li> <li>d. Where do you access and search for these strategies and resources about political literacy?</li> <li>e. What are some expectations you have towards guidelines to support you to teach political literacy within the New Zealand Curriculum?</li> </ul>

## Appendix 3: Letter to invite principals to my research

### Letter to inform and seek approval from the Principal about the research

**Title of project:** Year 11 students' perceptions of political institutions, political decision-making processes and political personalities: How do young new Zealanders participate in political processes?

Dear Principal,

I am a Masters student from the University of Waikato. At the moment I am in the data collection stage of my Education thesis as part of my Masters of Education. I am also a Social Sciences teacher at a local High School.

This letter is a formal invitation for your school to participate in my research about Year 11 students' political perceptions and political participation. My research will involve three Waikato co-educational secondary schools. One Year 11 social sciences class and one teacher will be selected to participate in each school. Three different methods will be used to gather research data: student questionnaire, semi-structured teacher interview, student focus group conversation.

The goal of my research is to find out Year 11 students' perceptions of political institutions, political decision making processes and political personalities as well as the scope and range of their participation in political processes. The findings will be used to develop guidance for political literacy education in the social science learning area of the New Zealand curriculum.

By giving approval for the school to participate in the research, the following workload is anticipated from participants:

Students	Teachers
	a. Initial meeting (30 minutes)
a. Student questionnaire (50 minutes)	b. Student questionnaire (50 minutes)
b. Tape-recorded student focus group conversation –only sample of 6 students- (30 minutes)	c. Semi-structured teacher interview (45 minutes)

Please refer to the attached participant information sheet for further information about my research. If you have any questions you would like to discuss, please feel free to contact me. My contact details are included with the information sheet attached with this letter. Please feel free to contact my supervisor, Dr. Philippa Hunter, if you feel more comfortable asking her any questions you may have.

Yours sincerely,

**Researcher:**

Janina Rack, [janina.rack@googlemail.com](mailto:janina.rack@googlemail.com)  
M: 0220241324

**Supervisor:**

Dr. Philippa Hunter, [phunter@waikato.ac.nz](mailto:phunter@waikato.ac.nz)  
P: 078384555 ext. 7817

## Appendix 4: Participant Information Sheet

### Participant information sheet

#### **Project Title**

Year 11 students' perceptions of political institutions, political decision-making processes and political personalities: How do young new Zealanders participate in political processes?

#### **Purpose**

This research is conducted and published as part of an Education thesis for a Masters of Education at the University of Waikato.

#### **What is this research project about?**

The goal of my research is to find out Year 11 students' perceptions of political institutions, political decision making processes and political personalities as well as the scope and range of their participation in political processes. The information gathered, will be analysed and used to create guidelines for political literacy education in the social science learning area of the New Zealand curriculum.

#### **Methods**

The data collection takes place in three selected co-educational Waikato secondary schools. It will include one year 11 class and one social science teacher per school. There are three stages of data collection: Student questionnaire, semi-structured teacher interviews and student focus group conversations.

#### **The anticipated workload and how long will it take:**

Students: Questionnaire (50 minutes) and tape-recorded focus group conversation - sample of 6 students- (30 minutes)

- a. Questionnaire: Students will be asked to participate in a questionnaire, using SurveyMonkey, a questionnaire tool on the Internet. The questionnaire will take place during a social sciences period. The questions will focus on political perceptions and political participation.
- b. Focus group conversation: No more than 6 students will be invited to participate in a tape-recorded focus group conversation. The students are invited based on the range of different statements provided in the questionnaire. These students will be contacted by the researcher through the subject teacher and will meet at a convenient time during school hours. The conversation will focus on the same topic as the questionnaire and is conducted in a group.

Teachers: Initial meeting (30 minutes), student questionnaire (50 minutes) and interview (45 minutes)

- a. Initial meeting: The researcher will have an initial meeting with the participating teacher to inform him/her of the processes of the research and to agree on a time schedule.
- b. Student questionnaire: The teacher will meet the researcher again at the agreed upon time to facilitate the student questionnaire. This will take no longer than 50 minutes and will happen during a period of Year 11 social sciences. Each student will need individual Internet access to complete the questionnaire.
- c. Interview: The last meeting will take place a few weeks after the questionnaire. The researcher and selected teacher will have a professional conversation about political literacy teaching in the social sciences.

#### **What will happen to the information collected?**

The information collected will be used by the researcher to write an Education thesis as part of a Masters of Education at the University of Waikato. The research will be published as part of a thesis on the University of Waikato virtual library. It is also possible that articles and presentations may be the outcome of the research. Only the researcher and supervisor will be privy to the notes, documents,

recordings and the paper written. Afterwards, notes, documents will be destroyed and recordings erased. The researcher will keep transcriptions of the recordings and a copy of the paper but will treat them with the strictest confidentiality. Although, participants will be named in the publications and every effort will be made to maintain participant's anonymity, this cannot be guaranteed.

#### **Declaration to participants**

If you take part in the study, you have the right to:

- Refuse to answer any question, and to withdraw from the study at any point in time.
- Ask any further questions about the study that occurs to you during your participation.
- Be given access to a summary of findings from the study when it is concluded.

#### **Who's responsible?**

If you have any questions or concerns about the project, either now or in the future, please feel free to contact either:

##### **Researcher:**

Janina Rack, [janina.rack@gmail.com](mailto:janina.rack@gmail.com)  
M: 0220241324

##### **Supervisor:**

Dr. Philippa Hunter, [phunter@waikato.ac.nz](mailto:phunter@waikato.ac.nz)  
P: 078384555 ext. 7817

## Appendix 5: Student participant information pamphlet

**Consent form for students**

**Project**

Year 11 students' perceptions of political institutions, political decision-making processes and political personalities: How do young New Zealanders participate in political processes?

**Consent: Participation**

I have read the Participant Information Pamphlet for this study and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions about the study have been answered and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I also understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time, or to decline to answer any questions in the study. I understand I can withdraw any information I have provided up until 1 week after the tape-recorded group discussion. I agree to give information to the researcher under the conditions of confidentiality set out on the Participant Information Pamphlet.

I agree to participate in the brainstorm activity and questionnaire under the conditions of the Participant Information Pamphlet.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Additional consent: Tape-recorded group discussion**

I agree to be contacted by the researcher through my teacher a month after the questionnaire to participate in tape-recorded group discussion as set out in the pamphlet.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Participant Information Pamphlet on a study on



#### Project Title

Year 11 students' perceptions of political institutions, political decision-making processes and political personalities: How do young New Zealanders participate in political processes?

#### Aim

This study is part of an education thesis for a Masters of Education at the University of Waikato.

#### What is this study about?

The focus of my research is to find out what Year 11 students think about politics and how they participate in politics. The goal of my research is to create guidelines for teaching politics in social sciences classes in New Zealand.

#### If you agree to participate in this study you will be involved in:

<b>Questionnaire and Brainstorm</b>	- Whole class during social sciences period - 50 minutes
<b>Tape-recorded group discussion</b>	- Group of 6 students only - 30 minutes

### Methods and workload

<p><b>Questionnaire &amp; Brainstorm</b></p> <p>Whole class (50 minutes)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Brainstorming political ideas</li> <li>Completing a questionnaire during one social sciences period through SurveyMonkey, an online survey tool</li> <li>The questions focus on political ideas and participation.</li> <li>Signing a consent form (agreement) to take part in the questionnaire and to be invited to the tape-recorded group discussion through your teacher</li> </ol>
<p><b>Tape-recorded student discussion</b></p> <p>Group of 6 students (30 minutes)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A discussion with Janina Rack, the researcher will take place a month after the questionnaire</li> <li>The discussion will happen in a group of no more than 6 students who have given their consent to participate.</li> <li>The discussion will be about the same topic as the questionnaire</li> </ol>

### What will happen to the information collected?

The information collected will be used to write an education thesis as part of a Masters of Education at the University of Waikato. The study will be published on the University of Waikato's Research Commons Database. It is also possible that articles and presentations are written about the study. Only the researcher and supervisor can see all notes, documents and recordings. Afterwards, notes, recordings and documents will be destroyed. The researcher will keep notes of the recordings and a copy of the notes but will treat them confidential. Although no participants will be named in the publications and while every effort will be made to disguise participant's anonymity, this cannot be guaranteed.

#### Declaration to participants

If you take part in the study, you have the right to:

- > Refuse to answer any question, and to withdraw from the study at any time
- > Ask any further questions about the study that come up at any point in time.
- > Be given access to a summary of findings from the study when it is finished.

### Who's responsible?

If you have any questions or concerns about the project, either now or in the future, please feel free to contact either:

#### Researcher:

Janina Rack  
[janina.rack@googlemail.com](mailto:janina.rack@googlemail.com)  
 M: 0220241324

#### Supervisor:

Dr. Philippa Hunter  
[phunter@waikato.ac.nz](mailto:phunter@waikato.ac.nz)  
 P: 078384555 ext. 7817

## Appendix 6: Teacher consent forms

### Consent form for teachers to read and sign to participate in the research

#### **Project**

Year 11 students' perceptions of political institutions, political decision-making processes and political personalities: How do young New Zealanders participate in political processes?

#### **What will happen to the information collected?**

The information collected will be used by the researcher to write an Education thesis as part of a Masters of Education at the University of Waikato. The research will be published as part of a thesis on the University of Waikato's Research Commons Database. It is also possible that articles and presentations may be the outcome of the research. Only the researcher and supervisor will be privy to the notes, documents, recordings and the paper written. Afterwards, notes, documents will be destroyed and recordings erased. The researcher will keep transcriptions of the recordings and a copy of the paper but will treat them with the strictest confidentiality. Although, participants will be named in the publications and every effort will be made to maintain participant's anonymity, this cannot be guaranteed.

#### **Declaration to participants**

If you take part in the study, you have the right to:

- Refuse to answer any question
- To withdraw from the study at any point in time
- Ask any further questions about the study that occurs to you during your participation
- Be given access to a summary of findings from the study when it is concluded

#### **Consent**

I have read the Participant Information Sheet for this study and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions about the study have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time. I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Participant Information Sheet.

In detail, I consent to:

- Attend an initial meeting with the researcher to discuss the process of the research and agree on a time schedule
- Support the researcher during her work with my class (questionnaire and student- focus group conversation)
- Participate in a semi-structured interview with the researcher
- Attend a post-research meeting with the researcher to be informed about accessing the research through an electronic link and sharing this information with the participating class

I understand the research will be used to advance Social Sciences teachers' awareness of teaching political literacy and to enhance understanding students' political perceptions. Research findings might be published in seminars, presentations or research journals.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

#### **Researcher:**

Janina Rack, [janina.rack@googlemail.com](mailto:janina.rack@googlemail.com)  
M: 0220241324

#### **Supervisor:**

Dr. Philippa Hunter, [phunter@waikato.ac.nz](mailto:phunter@waikato.ac.nz)  
P: 078384555 ext. 7817