Citizenship Education in Canada: 'Democratic' Engagement with Differences, Conflicts, and Equity Issues?

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ABSTRACT:

Recent research on multi-faceted citizenship education policy and practice in Canada illustrates five enduring themes, of interest to educators around the world. First, citizenship education policy mandates reveal diverse goals for 'good' or 'active' citizen engagement, critical and inclusive awareness, and skills. Students from different social identity and status locations tend to have unequal citizenship learning experiences, and school education is often disconnected from their lived experiences and concerns. Second, intersecting questions of national and ethno-cultural identity and social justice are prominent in Canadian curricular rhetoric, although achievement of inter-group equity, mutual understanding and justice is elusive. Third, although transnational issues and perspectives are increasingly included, some Canadian curricula seem to reinforce ignorance and stereotypes about other nations and peoples and about the causes of global problems such as war. Much of the global citizenship education activity in Canadian schools seems to be focused on co-curricular activities, often emphasizing charity fundraising, leaving the causes of human misery largely uninterrogated. Fourth, curriculum policy discourse in civics, social sciences, language and media literacy emphasizes the importance of student-centred pedagogy for development of critical thinking skills, while typical classroom practice seems often to retain teacher-centred transmission approaches. Last, implicit citizenship education is embedded in day-to-day school-related activities and relationships: patterns of discipline and conflict management, community service activities, and student voice and leadership roles. Thus active, engaged citizenship, attentive to multicultural diversity, is a prominent goal in recent Canadian citizenship education policy and programming—yet in practice, Canadian students (especially those from less privileged backgrounds) have few opportunities to practice democratically-relevant citizenship learning in school.

CANADA'S CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION CONTEXT

Although Canada's provinces and territories have jurisdiction over public education, there is considerable similarity (and some variation) across these education systems. Citizenship education goals are most explicit within history and social sciences, sometimes in language arts (media literacy) and health, and (in British Columbia, Ontario, and Québec) in recently created civics or citizenship courses. Some Canadian citizenship curriculum has been influenced by curriculum policies from the United States (Broom 2010; Osborne 2003;

Peck, Sears & Donaldson 2008) and elsewhere. Citizenship education goals are also prominent in the policies shaping social interaction in schools, especially safe schools and discipline regulations, extra-curricular character education and community service initiatives, and mechanisms for student participation in school governance.

Over the past 80 years, until recently, Canadian national immigration policy has become increasingly accepting of diversity (Troper, 2002). History education policy and resources, that once emphasized a single nationalist narrative focused on political leaders and events, now tend to emphasize social histories of diverse ordinary citizens (Osborne, 2003). Students also are increasingly expected to inquire and think like historians and democratic citizens, making sense of multiple sources and viewpoints (Seixas, 2009). On the other hand, Hughes, Print & Sears (2010)—comparing Canadian citizenship education capacity with that of Australia, England and the USA—call Canada’s recent citizenship education pronouncements “unfunded mandates,” because citizenship learning appears often in rhetoric and policy directives, but not in programming resources. More resources have been devoted to improving language and math standardized test scores and to controlling student behaviour (Westheimer, 2010).

To zero in on the province of Ontario: the Ministry of Education mandated in 1999 a new, half-year high school Civics course. Around the same time, Ontario began mandating high school students to complete 40 hours of extra-curricular community service before graduation: this mandate includes no funding for student preparation, support, inquiry or reflection on these community activities, and no link to formal citizenship education classroom work (Henderson, Brown, & Pancer, 2012; Schwarz, 2010). An Ontario Character Development Initiative, explicitly framed as citizenship education, formally mandates co-curricular character education activities, focusing on individual character traits rather than social or political institutions, in every school (Winton, 2010). Recent policy also shapes the implicit day-to-day citizenship education embodied in school conflict management practices (Bickmore, 2004). In 2005, an Ontario Human Rights Commission complaint against Ontario’s largest school district (Toronto) pointed to the discriminatory and disproportionately harsh effect of its discipline practices on non-white and special education students, leading to a revision in the mandated Code of Conduct. The 2012 Ontario Accepting Schools Act mandates severe punishment, as well as preventive action, against student bullying. Taken together, these Ontario policy developments illustrate the multi-faceted nature, and the challenges of improving, explicit and implicit citizenship education.

In this paper, I review recent research on citizenship education and its consequences in Canada, organized around five themes:

- Contradictory conceptions of citizenship (goals)
- Multicultural diversity & equity (inclusion & identity)
- Global citizenship (awareness & participation)
- Pedagogies & skills-building (teaching practices)
- Social relations and roles (citizenship in practice)

The first section overviews formal citizenship education in history and social sciences curriculum. The remaining sections address the above themes in Canadian citizenship education research. Each section includes analyses of curriculum and other policy mandates, then examines research on teachers’ conceptions and practices, students’ conceptions, and

other program outcomes. Weaving through all five themes is a question: How ‘**democratic**’ is Canadian citizenship education? In particular, how do each of these kinds of citizenship education policies and practices enable diverse Canadian students to engage with social conflicts, differences, & (in)equity issues?

CONTRADICTIONARY CONCEPTIONS OF CITIZENSHIP

Curriculum mandates in social sciences and citizenship, in various Canadian provinces, recently have increased their emphasis on ‘active’ & ‘responsible’ citizenship, in response to continuing low voter turnouts and broad disengagement of youth from formal politics (in Canada, as in many parts of the world). Some scholars affirm these as promising democratic reforms that will “provide numerous opportunities to develop new understandings of citizenship education, as responsible, deliberative and participatory” (Hébert, 2009, p. 14). Others argue that new terminology reinforces the continuing dominance of neoliberal individualist ideology, and downplays the value of collective action and of relational activity in the so-called ‘private’ spheres of homes and community work.

Kennelly and Llewellyn (2011) analyzed the ways newly-mandated civics course guidelines in the provinces of Alberta, British Columbia, and Ontario interpreted ‘active citizenship,’ including their embedded assumptions about gendered citizenship values such as autonomous rationality or caring. They found that: “Active citizenship is consistently coupled [in course documents] with cautions about the importance of compliant behaviour (i.e. ethics, duty and responsibility) and silenced from seemingly ‘inappropriate’ participation in civic dissent. ... Furthermore, the pairing of ‘informed and active’ suggests that citizenship might only be taken up by those reasonable individuals who take the time to deliberate on all aspects of a social issue before taking action, continuous with liberalism’s legacy of emphasis on the rational, rights-bearing individual” (p.903). Thus they find that, despite new language, these curriculum policies continue to encourage individuals to be self-regulating and responsible to the state, rather than emphasizing the importance of rights, dissent, or civic action.

My own earlier analysis of (grades 1-10) curriculum mandates in social sciences, health and language arts in the provinces of Manitoba, Ontario and Nova Scotia (Bickmore, 2006), similarly, showed that all included broad rhetorical goals advocating active citizen engagement and critical thinking, and certainly some spaces of possibility for teachers and students already interested in more critically engaged democratic citizenship. However, specific learning goals or content —addressing crucial democratic questions of social difference, equity, or other social conflict— were usually marginal or absent, such that teachers would have little guidance or incentive to ‘democratize’ their citizenship lessons.

Research on teachers’ classroom practice shows that, within the ‘same’ official guidelines, teachers have considerable autonomy to interpret the curriculum they implement in varied ways, including at times critical (as well as mainstream) political perspectives. Small-scale (qualitative) studies of teachers’ conceptions (Evans, 2006; Faden, 2012; Myers, 2007) show broad similarities between Canadian, US, and UK teachers, and wide variations *within* samples of Canadian teachers. One theme especially prominent among Canadian teachers in Faden’s study —not surprising in a ‘middle power’ country situated next door to a superpower— was an emphasis on the importance of affirming national identity.

From the research available, Canadian teachers' conceptions and citizenship teaching practices today often reflect mainstream liberal civic republican viewpoints that are considerably less critical than current curriculum guidelines. At secondary as well as elementary grade levels, teachers tend to emphasize personal responsibility rather than political engagement (Faden, 2012; Molina Girón, 2012; Sears, 2009; Sears & Hughes, 2006; Tupper, 2007). Llewellyn, Cook & Molina's (2010) case studies in four Ottawa, Ontario high schools found that students and even teachers referred to civic education as 'boring.' It emphasized procedural knowledge and compliance and rarely examined current issues: "Political engagement is not a priority for [these] schools" (2010, p. 792). Gibson (2012), observing and interviewing ten elementary teachers and their students following Alberta's 2005 roll-out of new social studies curriculum, found the teachers uncomfortable with much of the prescribed content and with the curriculum's new emphasis on skill development and inquiry. Further, she found no evidence that these teachers or students understood the democratic citizenship education purposes of social studies.

What are common Canadian student conceptions of citizenship? In a qualitative study in two Regina, Saskatchewan high schools, Tupper and Cappello (2012) invited students to create and explain visual images depicting their perceptions of good citizenship: the vast majority of these students, from various backgrounds, reproduced mainstream citizenship notions such as national pride, official multiculturalism discourse, and caring for the environment, family and neighbors. Thus these young people largely understood citizenship in individual rather than social or political terms, and apparently assumed that democracy and social justice had been already realized.

"For example, one Aboriginal student shared that she had experienced racism when applying for jobs. ... However, a white student quickly dismissed this experience through her statement that it had nothing to do with race. For these students, 'good' (multicultural) citizenship is committed to notions of universal citizenship, which cannot include experiences of racism" (p.53).

Tupper and Cappello concluded that failure to analyze or critique multicultural relations would reinforce the distinctly-imperfect *status quo*.

Similarly, high school students in Ontario (Llewellyn, et al., 2010; Llewellyn & Westheimer, 2009) and New Brunswick (Chareka & Sears, 2005, 2006) studies equated good citizenship with individual good behaviour, for instance volunteering in community clean up or assisting the elderly. In Chareka and Sears' study, students articulated the accepted view that voting was important citizenship behaviour, but many said they did not actually expect to vote themselves. Over all, students in these research projects didn't seem to have any clear understanding of political engagement or its value, nor of what skills would enable such democratic citizenship.

Social class and racial inequalities may play a chillingly important role in shaping students' conceptions of themselves as citizens and their opportunities to develop as citizens. Tupper, Cappello and Sevigny (2010) examined the citizenship conceptions and intentions of students in two Saskatchewan urban high schools: one with an affluent white population, one with a diverse working class population including many aboriginal students. Essentially all students in both schools articulated similar liberal notions of 'universal' (generic) citizenship at an abstract level. However, students in the racially mixed, working class

community (in contrast to the white, affluent community) experienced a disconnect from their lived experience, and did not imagine themselves actually becoming such empowered citizens. Similarly, Kennelly and Dillabough (2008) showed how 24 low-income youth in Vancouver, British Columbia articulated dominant narratives about ‘deserving,’ self-regulating liberal citizens. To make sense of the contradictions in their lives —their direct awareness of people living in dire poverty, victims of violence and social dislocation— these youth also articulated a conception of ‘bad’ citizens, whom they understood not as wronged by social injustice but as individually having made bad choices.

To sum up this section: Canadian social sciences and citizenship curriculum policy documents present an increasingly nuanced, inclusive picture of Canadian society and citizenship, rather than a simple master narrative of nationalistic political history, although they still generally embed mainstream liberal individualist assumptions. These curricula increasingly emphasize student development of skills and multiple perspectives, and some directly teach civics and affirm ‘active’ citizenship. However, evidence from various studies of teachers and students in schools suggests that Canadian curriculum-in-practice often reflects older, less democracy-oriented versions of citizenship, and that this education does not seem to inspire in students either critical awareness or intent to participate politically. Prevailing understandings of citizenship, even among students from less privileged life circumstances, seem to adopt mainstream narratives that blame individuals for their misfortunes, rather than advocating actions to hold governments or other social institutions accountable for patterns of social injustice.

MULTICULTURAL DIVERSITY: IDENTITY, RIGHTS AND INCLUSION

A prominent theme in Canadian citizenship education research involves intersecting questions of national and ethno-cultural identities, and the accommodation of difference within the Canadian community. Canada always has been a multi-national and multicultural state — beginning with the diverse Aboriginal peoples who have inhabited northern North America for centuries, continuing with the French and English colonists who eventually formed the first ‘Canadian’ governments, and continuing to incorporate many other waves of immigrant settlers from all over the world. Multiculturalism —institutionalized inclusion and accommodation of culturally, ethnically, and religiously diverse citizenry — has been explicit Canadian government policy since the early 1980s (Joshee, 2004; Troper, 2002). This means that diverse ethno-cultural and religious groups are encouraged both to retain their identity differences (rather than merely assimilating) and to integrate and participate in Canada’s pluralist society and governance. Citizenship education has been expected to facilitate mutual acceptance, understanding, and inclusion, and research has examined these challenges in school policy and practice.

Research on textbooks that are approved and commonly used in schools makes clear that an important citizenship education strategy for promoting the respect and rights of multicultural peoples in Canada is to incorporate these elements into the ways Canadian identity itself is defined. Textbooks generally present multiculturalism as a characteristic that already defines Canada as a nation. This narrative ignores or denies continuing patterns of racism against aboriginal and visible minority immigrant peoples, implying that equitable

‘universal’ citizenship has been achieved. Based on her analysis of approved high school social sciences textbooks in British Columbia, Bromley finds:

“Rather than depicting national identity as stemming from a common race, ethnicity, language or history, the government pursues ... strategies to simultaneously promote human rights, multiculturalism and a shared national identity — ‘nationalizing’ human rights and multiculturalism by framing them as part of national identity ... While there are ongoing tensions between the construction of national identity and emphases on human rights and multiculturalism, the boundaries between these ideas are blurring” (2011, pp. 151, 161).

For instance, textbook assessment tasks invite students to describe how the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms protects human rights, rather than, for instance, to probe cases of Charter rights violations that have been challenged and debated in the courts.

Recent curriculum guidelines and textbooks emphasize multiple-perspective social history and development of skills for inquiry to address diverse perspectives (Seixas, 2005). Peck, Sears and Donaldson (2008, p. 64) affirm that recent Canadian citizenship education mandates and approved texts incorporate social history, plural and changing identities, and multiple perspectives, diluting the previously-dominant narrative rooted in British cultural perspectives. Osborne, however, points out an important exception: francophone school systems, at least in Québec, present separate and different ‘national’ narratives than do anglophone school systems in the rest of Canada.

Taken as a whole, French language history textbooks concentrate too much on the province of Québec and neglect the history of English-speaking Canada, while English-language history textbooks do the opposite . . . The complaint that the two principal groups of Canadians—English-speakers and French-speakers—do not know enough about each other arise from what takes place in the schools (Osborne 2003, p596).

Canadian citizenship education in various provincial school systems incorporate *some* differences, while ignoring or excluding others, within their discourses of multiculturalism (framed a little differently as ‘interculturalism’ in Québec).

Thus Canadian citizenship education curriculum guidelines, in general, have incorporated some aspects of ethno-cultural diversity and pluralism, including some attention to questions of rights and inequity, over the past 25 years or so. At the same time, often these core questions in Canadian citizenship are addressed in superficial and limited ways, more as assumptions and idealized claims than as on-going conflicts and challenges that require complex political solutions (Bickmore, 2006; Éthier & Lefrançois, 2012; Peck, Thompson, Chareka, Joshee, & Sears, 2010). The over-riding message is one of social cohesion and integration into mainstream society, presenting inter-group inequities and frictions as past problems that Canada has resolved (Joshee, 2004).

Niens and Chastenay (2008) conducted an especially interesting comparison between the education policies and secondary citizenship education curriculum documents in the province of Québec and in the six counties of Northern Ireland. Both school systems address contentious questions of national identity and difference (the relationships of Catholics with

Protestants in both contexts, of Québec with the rest of Canada, and of Northern Ireland with Great Britain and the rest of Ireland) although remarkably little and indirectly, especially in Québec. Both systems have been primarily segregated. Québec curriculum, like other Canadian curriculum, presents a rather bland picture of peace through social cohesion, without really addressing the conflicts that make social cohesion a challenge. Northern Ireland curriculum addresses questions of human rights and makes more reference to the region's core inter-group conflict than does Québec curriculum. In both contexts, teachers had a lot of discretion about whether and how much to address controversial questions: we know from other research (reviewed in Bickmore, 2008a; Bickmore, 2008b, 2011a) that, on average, most teachers in various parts of the world tend to avoid teaching about controversial issues. Niens and Chastenay conclude that, by refusing to address identity and mutual accommodation conflicts in a concerted manner, citizenship education would tend to *impede* social cohesion across historic community divisions.

Another important dimension of social difference in Canada is the relationship between Aboriginal peoples and settler Canadians. The settler-dominated Canadian government generally treats Aboriginals as second-class citizens rather than as sovereign nations with whom Canada shares the land. Multiculturalism policies and curricula frame Canada as 'a nation of immigrants,' ignoring the particular rights and concerns of Aboriginal peoples, or subsuming them as just another difference — thereby reinforcing the dominance of settler peoples over Aboriginals. St. Denis (2011) argues that multiculturalism policies, ideologies, and curricula function to deny the rights of Aboriginal peoples to sovereignty and control over land. Mainstream Canadian curricula tend to erase the unique, continuing histories, knowledge traditions, and rights of Aboriginal peoples, presenting them primarily in an idealized past (such as how Native communities traditionally lived off the resources of the land, ignoring subsequent colonial occupation of that land). Educators often seem to believe that only schools with a substantial population of Aboriginal students should offer substantial curriculum about Native histories, such as studying treaties between Aboriginal nations and the British Crown on behalf of the Canadian colony (Deer, 2010; Tupper, 2012; Tupper & Cappello, 2008). Tupper and Cappello discuss the value of a recently produced Treaty Resource Kit for teachers, as a tool to resist and recast the dominant colonial narrative:

“By addressing the ideas, ambitions and interpretations of treaties from the First Nation signatories, another part of that historic relationship is enabled to come to light. The aspirations and frustrations since the signing of treaties are also set in relief, placed in a context that makes better sense of present realities” (p.567).

Although Aboriginal peoples hold distinct concerns not represented in Canadian multiculturalism, Tupper and Cappello's rationale for the value of such curriculum innovation could apply to any citizenship education about difference: “Students need stories both to make sense of their world and to enable them to contribute to their world; they need to both *understand* and have places from which to *stand*” (p.577).

How do teachers and students actually think about multicultural diversity and Aboriginal relations in Canada? Peck (2010) invited British Columbia secondary students from various immigrant and aboriginal backgrounds to select historical figures and events they considered especially significant and to explain their own narratives of Canadian history. She found that students' ethnic identities influenced their decisions about what they

considered historically significant, and how they linked these events into their narratives about Canada, although students of similar backgrounds did not necessarily construct the same historical narratives.

“In some cases, students suppressed their own ethnic identities in favor of creating a narrative of Canadian history that would appeal to a more “general” population. In other cases, students selected events for their timeline (either consciously or not) that reflected their ethnic identity and/or their perceptions of their ‘place’ in Canadian history” (p.611).

Such findings raise interesting questions about how teachers might use such diversity as an educational resource, to support the existing curriculum mandate to examine and juxtapose multiple perspectives.

In another study, Peck and colleague Alan Sears conducted interviews using graphic stimuli to probe a (predominantly white) population of younger (grade 7) students’ understandings of social diversity and tolerance in the province of New Brunswick (Peck & Sears, 2005; Peck, et al., 2008, pp. 74-75). They found that many of these students viewed non-Anglo immigrants as not really or fully Canadian, and to be unaware or downright negative about particular cases of accommodation for diversity in Canada. Based on a review of research literature, Niyozov and Pluim (2009) found similar levels of ignorance, and sometimes hostility, specifically about Muslim perspectives in Canada.

Among many scholars, Niyozov and Pluim affirm the importance of teachers in influencing students’ inter-cultural perceptions and biases —by omission or commission, and not always intentionally— in the context of implicit and explicit citizenship education. Public schooling is perhaps better placed and equipped than any other social institution to facilitate democratic peace-building through education. Thus it is worrisome that Canadian teachers—even those who self-identify as justice activists (Myers, 2007)—tend to avoid discussing or teaching about such contentious issues. Working in British Columbia with a group of novice elementary teachers committed to social justice, Kelly and Brooks (2009) found that most did not often plan pro-active, equity-based citizenship lessons:

“We found that the concepts of childhood innocence and developmental appropriateness mediated the topics and approach to topics that beginning teachers considered. Roughly half the participants believed that younger children are relatively uninterested in the events of the day, are incapable of forming nuanced opinions, and are unable to analyze political issues; while the other half disagreed.”

Despite their stated commitments to social justice education, these teachers generally responded to incidents of bias-based taunting in school only in “limited and generic” ways, not explicitly contradicting the oppressive understandings and attitudes their students brought with them into the classroom.

Thus, research shows that Canadian citizenship education about intercultural diversity and equity issues is increasingly inclusive and justice-oriented in policy pronouncements, but still practiced and understood in much less inclusive or thoughtful terms by teachers and students in actual schools.

GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP: TRANSNATIONAL AWARENESS, INTERCONNECTION AND PARTICIPATION

Richardson and Abbott (2009) show that recent globally-oriented curricula in Canada evidence an ideological tension between the national and the global. Global citizenship education is represented somewhat differently in various provincial curricula. For example (cited p. 380):

- In Quebec at the secondary level (grades 7-11), students follow a course called 'History and Citizenship' ... In this programme, issues such as 'the global economy' are identified, but the notion of global citizenship is never mentioned specifically (Government of Quebec, 2004 p. 20).
- In Ontario, grade 12 university preparation course entitled 'Canadian and World Politics,' students are expected 'to explain the rights and responsibilities of individuals, citizens, groups and states in the international community' (Government of Ontario, 2005, p. 257).
- In Nova Scotia, an optional grade 12 'Global History' course encourages students to develop globally oriented civic understandings such as 'perspective consciousness, knowledge of global dynamics, "state of the planet" awareness, cross-cultural awareness, 'awareness of the future and of human choices' (Government of Nova Scotia, 2003, pp. 101-2).

Richardson and Abbott argue that such citizenship education often reinforces a nationalist perspective, through dominant Eurocentric narratives that marginalize other experiences and viewpoints. Reviewing British Columbia social studies curriculum, Broom (2010) concurs, claiming that it mandates almost entirely Canadian history (with a little European and Ancient history) through grade 11. An *optional* grade 12 course covers primarily 20th Century Canadian and European history, plus a little World History approached from "a definite Western European slant." She points to the irony of nearly "absent curricula" on global perspectives in this age of globalization.

Based on analysis of elementary curriculum documents and interviews with educational leaders across Canada, Mundy and Manion (2008) agree that:

"Despite a rhetorical shift towards an emphasis on active citizenship ... most provincial curricula tend to under-emphasize the actionable dimensions of global problems, often by focusing on non-controversial themes at the expense of more controversial ones. ... One of the main areas of tension across provincial curricula was between conceptions of global education linked to competitiveness in a global economy, and those more focused on global social justice and environmental sustainability" (p.954-955).

Thus many (not all) Canadian curriculum mandates include more transnational dimensions than in the past, sometimes in ways that promote complex perspective taking, international human rights and participation, other times promoting neoliberal economic competition (see also Evans, Ingram, MacDonald, & Weber, 2009).

In a review of evolving curriculum guidelines and teaching resources in Canada, the US and Britain over the last several decades, Cook (2008) shows that peace education theory and practice has had an "uneasy relationship" with global education theory and practice. In

Canada, global education has been re-framed as global citizenship education, as a way of accessing resources and support as interest in citizenship has soared. Concurrently, perhaps even as a result, initiatives in peace education that critically examined the roots and consequences of destructive conflict, violence and war have been marginalized. Cook argues that most of the explicit peace education that remains evident in Canadian, US and British school curriculum work focuses narrowly on individual skills for getting along with others (p.903). My own analysis of the ways conflict, diversity, peace, and justice issues were represented in Canadian curriculum mandates (Bickmore, 2006) partly agrees with Cook's: Although several official curriculum goals (especially in the provinces of Manitoba and Nova Scotia) mention or allow for examination of large-scale as well as interpersonal social conflict challenges, explicit opportunities to examine particular conflicts and threats to peace in any depth are remarkably rare in the grades 1-10 curriculum documents I examined. Peace-building citizenship education, especially at explicitly political or global levels, has not been emphasized in Canadian public schools.

In sum, research on curriculum policies and texts suggests that, although transnational issues and perspectives are included more than in previous years, some Canadian school curricula may reinforce ignorance and stereotypes about other nations and peoples and about the causes and effects of global problems such as war. Research on actual teachers, students, and school practice includes some similar, and some more encouraging, results.

Many Canadian youth, especially in large urban areas such as Toronto and Vancouver, are first, second, or third generation immigrants who live globally-connected lives, and claim complex, multiple and fluidly changing identities (for example, see Ali, 2009). Their transnational connections come not only through popular culture and communications media, but through direct affiliations with people in their families' countries of origin and in Canada. These students may or may not experience implemented curriculum in school that speaks to and builds on their global interests and experiences.

Despite often-limited systemic support, motivated teachers do infuse global citizenship perspectives into their teaching. In one study involving six secondary teachers in the Toronto area, even those who said that global citizenship education was not a priority of other staff or leaders in their school were able to describe creative curricular and co-curricular global citizenship learning activities they had led—addressing issues such as land mines, fair trade in the coffee industry, and the global environmental impact of four wheel drive vehicles (Schweisfurth, 2006, p. 46). Another small study showed how the staff in one small-town Ontario elementary school made infusion of global citizenship education across the curriculum a school-wide priority (O'Sullivan & Vetter, 2007). A large proportion of the visible global citizenship education activity in Canadian schools seems to be focused on co-curricular activities, often emphasizing awareness and charity fundraising campaigns (Bickmore, 2007; Weber, 2012). This may have the unintended impact of leaving un-interrogated the social forces underlying and causing human deprivations and miseries, and/or reinforcing a sense of Canadian superiority.

PEDAGOGY AND SKILL-BUILDING FOR CITIZENSHIP

The following sections will expand the focus to include other areas of the curriculum and co-curriculum in Canadian schools, in addition to explicit social sciences and history

curriculum. Civics, history and social sciences course mandates and texts consistently mention critical thinking, inquiry, and participation goals, and advocate student-centred constructivist pedagogies to encourage such learning (Sears, 2009). Sears points to exemplary professional development and resources recently developed in Canada to support teachers' facilitation of thought-provoking pedagogies that build upon students' prior understandings, such as the Benchmarks of Historical Thinking project supported by the Historica Foundation (see also Seixas 2009). However, Sears also laments that typical classroom practice generally focuses, instead, on teacher-centred delivery and student memorization of content information, without much attention to thinking or skills development.

Critical media literacy skills, explicitly linked to citizenship goals, are named as a priority in language arts as well as social studies curriculum documents. Analyzing the media literacy components of elementary language arts, social studies, and character education mandates in the province of Ontario, Ferguson (2011) finds bland multiculturalist principles of inclusivity that fail to critique or resist the rampant consumerism and marketplace logic embedded in popular media texts. Freedom is represented merely as individual consumer choice:

“The emphasis throughout both texts is on respect for diversity and the acceptance (tolerance) of multiple perspectives. Such a civic model is limited in its capacity to challenge the consumer citizen identity promoted by mass media, and to counterpose more critical, egalitarian models” (p.144-145).

In a study of three contrasting Canadian media literacy and globally-oriented social justice secondary education programs, McKenzie (2006) argues that social class locations as well as program characteristics coincided to shape (or limit) students' opportunities to recognize and resist these implicit dominating discourses of neoliberalism embedded in popular media. Ferguson reminds us that the use of popular media texts in school, as the language arts curriculum guides make especially clear, is primarily “a technical solution to the problem of reluctant readers and low test scores” (p.146). Unfortunately, as a result, development of critical citizenship engagement skills and agency is not necessarily a priority in such curriculum.

A reasonable goal for citizenship education is to equip students to make sense of important current events and their implications. For instance, in an exploratory study in one Ontario high school, Stephane Lévesque (2003) assessed students' capacity to understand terrorism in historical terms. He found that students had widely-varied capacities in their sense of empathy, awareness of continuity and change, appreciation of evidence, and historical meaning-making. Teachers who learn to recognize and assess such components of historical thinking might better tailor their pedagogies to facilitate students' development of complex skills relevant to informed and engaged citizenship.

Teaching innovations and official curriculum guidelines do increasingly promote student inquiry, development of critical and historical thinking skills, and awareness of multiple perspectives, but implementation to reach these lofty goals is a work in progress. Challenges include teachers' frequently limited subject-area knowledge, especially in relation to critical perspectives relevant to contentious justice questions relevant to the diverse, globalized lives of students (Bickmore, 2005, 2008b).

“Leaving aside the problems facing teachers—rigid accountability systems, decreasing preparation time, adverse working conditions, and the like—it seems obvious that teaching history well demands not only pedagogical competence, but also a reasonable familiarity with history as a form of disciplined inquiry. Today, however, in some parts of Canada, it seems that up to a half of high school history teachers have less than an academic minor in the subject, while most elementary school teachers are, of necessity, generalists” (Osborne, 2003, p. 607)

The citizenship education demanded of Canadian teachers today —student-centred, skills-based pedagogies, examining social history from multiple perspectives, addressing questions of diversity and equity, critical media literacy in the one-touch information age—is enormously different from the citizenship education they received as students. Many teachers have not themselves been active citizens, so they may not have developed familiarity with the conflictual conversation, collective participation, and ambiguity that can arise from such experience (Myers, 2007).

“We do not contend that a simple accumulation of knowledge of diversity will be the cure for all the diversity-related ills of Canadian society. However, it seems to us that, without even a basic understanding of what it means to be Muslim, or Jewish, or Hindu, or francophone, or Jehovah’s Witness, or (fill in the blank), young Canadians will have difficulty understanding formal forms of accommodation such as *The Charter of Rights and Freedoms* or more informal and local forms of accommodation. They will also have limited sense of how to engage with the wider world in civic activities beyond the national context” (Peck, et al., 2010, p. 70).

A sense of what questions to ask, and how to conduct inquiry in the context of the overload of unreliable information available through an internet keystroke, is a crucial part of knowing how to design and facilitate students’ development as skillful, empowered, sensitive pluralist democratic citizens.

Even when teachers do have sufficient content knowledge, they are often reluctant — in the context of accountability for covering large amounts of standardized curriculum material— to facilitate the kinds of complex, uncertain student-centred pedagogies associated with development of democratic skills and sense of agency. Based on their review of North American research literature on classroom practice, Éthier & Lefrançois (2012) conclude:

“Most teaching practices at the middle or high school levels, including that of some otherwise excellent teachers with strong pedagogical content knowledge and a refined conception of historical thinking, focus first on discipline and behaviour management or on ensuring that all the subject area content has been covered, even if those classroom practices contradict the approaches to inquiry that were discussed in their methods course” (p.37).

Alan Sears and Andrew Hughes, based on their own years of research and review of scholarly literature, argue that such control-oriented pedagogies —offering little opportunity for student agency, critical thinking or skill development— continue to be unfortunately common in practice in Canadian schools (Hughes & Sears, 2008; Sears & Hughes, 2006).

SOCIAL RELATIONS AND ROLES: PRACTICING CITIZENSHIP IN SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

Three other types of initiatives shape the implicit citizenship education practice embedded in day-to-day school-related activities: patterns of discipline, conflict resolution modeling and education, and conflict management within the school, community service activities required by the school, and student voice and leadership roles within the school.

Discipline, Conflict Resolution Education, and Conflict Management

Schools are not democracies, yet they are intended to prepare students for democratic life. The ways school personnel handle authority and governance, discipline, conflict, diversity, dissent, and status competition or cooperation daily shape the citizenship roles that make up students' lived citizenship curriculum. In hierarchical school climates, students experiencing exclusion or constraint thereby practice different 'citizenship' relations and roles than students experiencing high status or special leadership opportunities. Such implicit models, practice, and sanctions are reinforced by explicit curriculum guidelines that (as mentioned earlier) may emphasize ethics, duty, and responsibility more than agency, creativity, dissent or civic action (Kennelly & Llewellyn, 2011). Curriculum guidelines in social studies, health, and sometimes language arts do say that students should develop capacities for interpersonal conflict communication and resolution, which are certainly a necessary (though not sufficient) condition for democratic citizenship (Bickmore, 2006), although we have little evidence that these goals are widely implemented in practice.

To practice conflict communication and resolution skills requires a certain amount of autonomy and opportunity, embodied in democratic rather than authoritarian forms of discipline and conflict management. Learning to recognize conflicts and comprehend contrasting viewpoints, in particular, are cognitive and social skills both *learned through, and important for*, democratic participation. Whether or not taught in formal classroom lessons, this is practiced (or over-ridden by dominant narratives, repression or disengagement) on a daily basis in human interactions within and beyond the school (Bickmore, 2011b).

In one study, the teaching staff and entire student body of a Québec elementary school (302 children) received a few hours of conflict resolution training, to be integrated into French and English classroom instruction (Stevahn, Munger, & Kealey, 2005). The teachers were trained and then taught their students a simple negotiation strategy: recognizing an interpersonal conflict and expressing willingness to talk it through; naming one's own needs, feelings, and reasons; listening and communicating understanding of another's needs, feelings and reasons; inventing multiple solution possibilities; and reaching agreement. Comparing pre- and post-tests, the research demonstrated that this initiative had positive results on students' average willingness and capacity to use such direct peer negotiation (presumably as an alternative to aggression, submission, or adult discipline sanctions). Teachers were more likely to effectively implement this training strategy when they collaborated with other teachers and/or had some prior understanding of dialogic conflict resolution. Students who had more quality opportunities (in their classrooms) to practice using the negotiation procedure to address 'real' conflicts developed more capacity and willingness to negotiate, compared to peers who were exposed to the procedure without

such opportunities to apply it in practice. The authors argue that, “students who are not taught to manage conflict constructively may never learn to do so” (p.17).

Restorative peacemaking practices in Canadian schools treat conflicts as learning and social engagement opportunities, instead of focusing on blame or punishment (Morrison & Vaandering, 2012). The negotiation process in the elementary school case just described is an example of a simple restorative practice. More complex restorative processes include problem-solving dialogue circles among stakeholders — including perpetrators, people harmed, and representatives of the relevant community in thorough preparation, carefully designed processes to balance power and encourage mutual respect, and follow up actions. Fully-developed restorative programming in schools means consistently carrying out a whole range of formal and informal activities designed to nurture equitable, caring and inclusive relationships, learning, and problem-solving, in place of the more typical school emphasis on compliance and control.

However, as occurs with other kinds of citizenship education, implementation and accomplishment of restorative and peacemaking education goals, too, are a work in progress. Restorative initiatives are gaining in popularity in many Canadian provinces, but these embody widely varied practices. Some school initiatives that are labeled ‘restorative’ do *not* actually challenge existing hierarchical and inequitable social relations in schools, while others do achieve school justice practices that are closer to the ideal (Vaandering, 2009, 2010). Many recently popularized initiatives aimed at reducing ‘bullying’ emphasize surveillance and controlling symptoms, more than addressing the causes of violence: some anti-bullying monitoring programs were directly reassigned resources formerly used for student-centered conflict resolution or equity education initiatives (Bickmore, 2011c). This research implies that conflict communication and resolution skills and relatively equitable, dialogic relationships can be developed in school, only if they are effectively taught and practiced. In contrast, just ‘telling’ students how to handle conflict differently without giving them opportunities to voice their own perspectives and practice skills, is insufficient.

Community Service

Another arena for practicing social relations and roles, that might foster democratic learning, is community service. Ontario now requires students to complete forty hours of community service as a condition of high school graduation. However, this compulsory community service requirement does not fund or require schools to provide support in finding quality placement opportunities, or preparation or inquiry learning activities, to accompany the community involvement hours. One study, based on surveys and focus groups with 25 affluent and 25 poor and working class students (Schwarz, 2010), showed that, compared with low-income students, affluent students usually had more social capital (pre-existing useful relationship networks) and more support for service activities from their schools: thus they often had more positive experiences carrying out their required service hours. Many of the poor and working class students, in contrast, were unable to find high-quality placement opportunities or transportation to access them, and often had distinctly less positive experiences completing their service hours.

Henderson and her colleagues’ (2012) survey, comparing students who had recently completed Ontario’s compulsory community service with an equivalent cohort of students who had graduated from high school just before the service requirement was instituted,

concluded, “that volunteering in high school has positive impacts on the political dimensions of a student's subsequent civic engagement, measured here as political involvement, political activism, political interest, and political efficacy. However, *those impacts are largely conditional* on two features of the volunteering experience: sustained commitment to one placement and a positive experience as evaluated by the student” (p.93). In summary, compulsory community service apparently *can* have positive effects on students’ development of political efficacy and inclination toward citizenship engagement. However, unfortunately —when implemented without requiring or resourcing schools to support all students through the process— such an initiative may inadvertently exacerbate, rather than mitigate, the barriers to engaged citizenship for socio-economically marginalized students.

Student Voice and Leadership in School

There are many ways in which diverse students could have a voice in decisions that affect them, both to improve their own and peers’ educational environment and to learn confidence and skills for citizenship. The most common such activities seem to be student councils or governance representatives and school meetings: some of these activities engage primarily higher-status, compliant students and/or have little actual meaningful decision making authority, but several exemplary initiatives are more inclusive and democratic in character (Bickmore & MacDonald, 2010).

An initiative encouraging systematic inclusion of student voice opportunities in over 50 schools since 1991 is the Manitoba School Improvement Program, run by a non-profit non-governmental organization with particular concern for at-risk (under-privileged) students (Lee & Zimmerman, 1999; Mitra, 2006). MSIP has included initiatives to help teachers learn classroom pedagogies to include more opportunities for student voice, inter-school student networking and skill-building activities, student input in school and district governance, and student action research projects culminating in presentations to decision makers (Pekrul & Levin, 2005). In their evaluation report, Pekrul and Levin show that MSIP participant increased their citizenship competence and confidence, skills, and school engagement that support academic achievement. These opportunities were especially beneficial for less vocal and less successful students, who are most often deprived of such learning and democratic voice experiences. However, they also noted the pervasive reluctance of many adults at most schools to support and sustain student voice initiatives.

“It is easy to shut down student input, something that happens often even in supposedly well-meaning schools. Our experience is that student voice is a lasting phenomenon only in those schools that continue to give it ongoing attention. ... Like teachers, students need support to help them develop their voice effectively” (Pekrul & Levin p.13).

Meaningful opportunities for student voice and shared leadership do not arise out of *laissez-faire* neglect, but actually require adult co-leadership to support, help to inform, and create mechanisms by which students would be heard. Given typical patterns of inequality among students, as well as between adults and students in schools, this need for tangible adult respect is particularly important for the lower-status young people who are most often left out of empowered citizenship in schools and societies (also Bickmore & MacDonald, 2010).

Informal citizenship education, practiced in school relations and roles, intersects with formal citizenship education in classroom curriculum. Éthier & Lefrançois (2012) urge educators to attend to citizenship learning opportunities in both domains:

“Whatever one might think of notions of legislative democracy, what could it possibly mean to students who have no say on the limits of freedom of expression in school media, for example? What could judicial and executive democracy mean to those without the power to affect the definition and the application of rules and sanctions?” (p.34).

Further research could clarify ways to expand the space and democratic power of citizenship education, building upon the intersections between explicit citizenship education curriculum and the activities and relationships of students’ (global and local) lives, within and well beyond the school walls.

SUMMING UP: HOW DEMOCRATIC IS CANADIAN CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION?

There is much to learn from research in Canadian citizenship education. Active, engaged citizenship is a prominent goal in a whole range of recent policy and programming. Research points out the resources, actors, and action necessary to turn those idealized pronouncements into meaningful, sustainable democratic education practice in classrooms and schools.

An important strength of Canadian citizenship education research is its attention to questions of ethno-cultural and socio-economic diversity and equity in the design and implementation of citizenship education programming. The research reviewed here points to several specific areas ripe for improvement. Other questions of diversity and equity, and citizenship exclusion—linked to patterns of gender-based, homophobic, and anti-Muslim violence, and the extreme economic, cultural and democratic marginalization of many Aboriginal communities in Canada—deserve further attention in future research and practice. Canadian global citizenship education, too, shows potential as a growing area of practice and research: as institutions in this middle power country in an age of globalized neoliberal economic inequalities, instant communications, and way too much war, Canadian schools could more consistently support and build upon its people’s enormous wealth of transnational identities and relationships to support democratic peace-building learning and action. The research I have reviewed suggests that Canadian students, especially those from less privileged backgrounds, have too few opportunities to practice democratically-relevant citizenship learning in school-sponsored activities.

The recent Canadian research reviewed here points to a paradox of peace-building citizenship: multiculturalism in education cannot succeed in building support for just and mutually respectful inter-group relationships without naming and affirming difference, while naming and resisting inequities. Well-intended denial or papering over of specific social differences and social remedies in multicultural citizenship education evidently has been ineffective at improving inter-citizen relations.

What high-quality democratic citizenship learning opportunities have in common, cutting across the wide range of citizenship education types and domains reviewed here, is

that they provide students with sustained, guided opportunities to engage constructively with investigating and addressing interpersonal, community, national and/or transnational conflicts. What well-educated citizens can do is to contribute to collective debate and decision-making to address and resolve such problems, nonviolently and fairly. Canadian citizenship educators and scholars have contributed significantly to our understanding of how to meet these challenges.

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