

OVERVIEW OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY: DEMOCRATIC CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION, TRENDS, CHALLENGES, & IMPLICATIONS FOR THE ASIAN CONTEXT

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An issue

- We live in a world in which ‘democracy’ is the preeminent form of government
- A majority of 125 electoral democracies out of 195 countries in the world (Puddington & Roylance, 2016)
- A growing trend across the world that citizenship is based upon the concepts, processes and values of education for democratic citizenship
- And yet, our world is far from being *democratic...*

What is at stake?

- The preparation of informed and concerned citizens is especially urgent due to the troubling political, educational, and sociological problems that confront us every time we read the news ...
- Heated debates continue about what constitutes good citizenship and what democracy means ...
- Critical questions proliferate about free speech, privacy, and other civil liberties; globalization, immigration, and inclusion; Islamic fundamentalism; environmental protection...

The important questions

- How are today's young citizens, upon whom the future of our nation and democracy depends, being educated to understand these issues, make informed decisions, and contribute to building a more just society?
- What approaches are employed in classrooms, given the well documented constraints of schooling? What are the teaching dilemmas? What are the tensions?

Democratic citizen

- In a democracy, the source of all authority - the legitimate basis of all power - is the collective body of the people, the citizens of the polity. Popular sovereignty of the citizens and thereby government by consent of the governed (Mouffe, 1995)
- A citizen is a full and equal member of a polity, such as a democratic nation-state (Mouffe, 1995)
- A democratic citizen is not merely a “good citizen – patriotic, loyal, and obedient to the state; democratic citizen is also a critic of the state, able and willing to participate in its improvement (Engle & Ochoa, 1988, p. 3)

Democratic citizenship education

- “...involves preparing young people in the essential areas of knowledge, skills and values of an informed, responsible and participative citizen of their respective (democratic) countries.” (Sim & Print, 2005, p. 58)
- “must include far more than knowledge of government, its structure, organization or procedure...teaching that nurtures...a reasoned commitment to democratic principles with emphasis on equity, freedom and self-governance...develop deep understanding of how these principles apply to every aspect of life – personally, socially and publicly. Above all, the democratic citizen must be a vigorous thinker, a competent decision maker and an active participant who supports equitable conditions for all peoples and honors freedom to the greatest extent possible.” (Ochoa-Becker, 2007)
- Decision making abilities, along with all of the knowledge and intellectual processes that go into the making of decisions, are at the centre of democratic citizenship as well as the education that should be received by its citizens (Engle, 1960)

Enactment: What we don't know much in research?

- “Conceptual statements are legion, but descriptions of citizenship education in practice are not.” (VanSledright & Grant, 1994, p. 307)
- “An educational endeavor filled with so many “musts” and “should” and given to so many earnest exhortations begs for description, analysis, and explanation.” (Parker, 2008, p. ix)
- “Yet little is known about classes that teach citizenship...few have documented the content and processes of social studies classes, how they align with theories of citizenship, and how they influence the development of citizens.” (Pace, 2008, p. 26)
- Review of social studies research in the latest *Handbook of Research in Teaching* noted that the role of teachers and teaching in citizenship education has received little attention (Barton & Avery, 2016)

Some obstacles

- Difficult to research contested concept/s where there is a lack of consensus
 - i.e. ‘citizenship’, ‘democracy’, ‘democratic citizenship’
 - “there is no consensus on what “citizenship’ means nor on the implications of “citizenship” for curriculum and instruction” (Ross, 2001, p. 23)
- Field research in classroom is messy and difficult
 - “tangled contexts in which teachers work” (VanSledright & Grant, 1994, p. 307)
- Lack of skills and experience in doing classroom qualitative research
- Not generalizable
- Longer time needed to publish

Why should we know more?

- Kahne et al., (2000, p. 332), in a quantitative study on classroom opportunities to learn about democracy and citizenship, concluded:
“There is an enormous need to undertake qualitative assessments of classroom practice, the motivations that drive them, and the ways they are experienced by teachers and students.”
- Always a gap between what is espoused and what is put into practice (enacted)
- Need to understand better the experiences of teachers and students, if for no reason other than to account for what is or is not occurring in classrooms
- By looking into classrooms, we may develop a better sense of the most viable instances of citizenship education

Currently what do we know?

Established DCE frameworks, insights, theorizations...a few examples:

- 3 Kinds of Citizens: Personally Responsible, Participatory, Social-Justice Oriented

Westheimer, J. (2015). *What kind of citizen? Educating our children for the common good*. New York and London: Teachers College Press.

Westheimer, J., & Kahne, J. (2004). What kind of citizen? The politics of educating for democracy. *American Educational Research Journal*, 41, 237-269.

- Teaching controversial issues in the classroom

Hess, D. (2009). *Controversy in the classroom: The democratic power of discussion*. New York: Routledge.

Hess, D., & McAvoy, P. (2015). *The political classroom: Ethics and evidence in democratic education*. New York: Routledge.

Currently what do we know?

Established DCE frameworks, insights, theorizations...a few examples:

- Strong Democracy, Enlightened Political Engagement, and AP Government and Politics Course

Parker, W. C. *Teaching Democracy: Unity and Diversity in Public Life*. New York: Teachers College Press, 2003.

Parker, W. C., & Lo, J. C. (forthcoming). From design to deed: simulating government and politics on the AP platform. In C. Wright-Maley (Ed.), *Simulations in the social studies* Charlotte, NC: Information Age Press.

- Teaching history for democratic citizenship

Barton, K. C., & Levstik, L. S. (2015). *Doing history: Investigating with children in elementary and middle schools*. Fifth edition. New York: Routledge.

Barton, K. C., & Levstik, L. S. (2004). *Teaching history for the common good*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Currently what do we know?

Established DCE frameworks, insights, theorizations...a few examples:

- Teacher as curricular-instructional gatekeeper

Thornton, S. J. (1991). Teacher as curricular-instructional gatekeeper in social studies. In J. P. Shaver (Ed.), *Handbook of research on social studies teaching and learning*. New York: Macmillan.

Thornton, S. J. (2005). *Teaching social studies that matters: Curriculum for active learning*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Citizenship education in comparative settings

- Hahn, C. L. (1998). *Becoming Political. Comparative Perspectives on. Citizenship Education*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Asian/ASEAN gap

- Asian and ASEAN gap in democratic citizenship education research
- Paucity of research published in international peer reviewed journals, other than those from Hong Kong (e.g. Fairbrother, Kennedy, Law, Lee, Leung, Xu, Zhen) and Singapore (e.g. Baildon, Ho, Sim)
- Few Asian and ASEAN countries participate in the International Civics and Citizenship Study 2009, 2016
- Consequently, we know little about how young people are educated for democratic citizenship, or not in the Asian and ASEAN contexts

Problematizing western perspective

- Tendency to use Western citizenship concepts / frameworks e.g.:

Sim, J. B.-Y., Chua, S., & Krishnasamy, M. (2017). "Riding the citizenship wagon": Citizenship conceptions of social studies teachers in Singapore. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 63, 92-102.

Ho, L. (2012). Sorting citizens: Differentiated citizenship education in Singapore. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*. 44, 403-428.

- Presumption that all democracies must be liberal
 - Difficult for most political thinkers in the West to imagine what a 'non-liberal' democracy could look like
 - Any argument for such a democracy is likely to be immediately labeled as 'illiberal' and anything but 'democratic'
 - But concept of democracy is contested
 - Variants of democracy: communitarian, civic republican, Asian etc

Problematizing western perspective

- Applying Western concepts / frameworks can limit understanding of / in context, and fail to draw out the nuances
- Need to challenge and problematize rather than confine and conform

An example: Citizenship

- Citizenship in the Western tradition:

T. H. Marshall (1950, pp. 28-29)

“a status bestowed on those who are full members of a community. All who possess the status are equal with respect to the rights and duties with which the status is endowed.”

- Citizenship in the Asian tradition:

Lee, W. O. (2012). Citizenship education in Asia. In J. A. Banks (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of diversity in education, Volume 1* (pp. 369-374). Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, Inc.

- Citizenship in the Western tradition is fundamentally political, characterized by the state-individual relationship, and concerned with rights and responsibilities.
- Whereas, citizenship in the Asian tradition is fundamentally relational, concerned with self-cultivation, and harmonious relationships between the self, others, state, and nature
- Unlike the Western conception, the good person is a priori to good citizenship, in the same way that citizenship education in Asia foregrounds morality over politics

Application 1

- Personally responsible citizen (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004)

Personally responsible citizens act responsibly in their community, engaging in activities such as recycling programs and volunteer work. They believe that citizens should be honest, law-abiding, and responsible.

- Minimal / thin conception of citizenship (MacLaughlin, 1992)
- Good citizen
- Relatively passive
- Not enough
- U. S. studies: **Patterson, Doppen, and Misco (2012); Marri, Michael-Luna, Cormier, and Keegan (2014)** – majority of teachers subscribed to a personally responsible conception of citizenship
- Hong Kong study: **Leung, Yuen, and Ngai (2014)** used the framework to analyze policy documents in Hong Kong, and found that civic education policy favors personally responsible and participatory citizenship

Application 1

- Singapore study: Sim, Chua, & Krishnasamy (2017)
- 9 out of 14 teachers subscribed to a character-driven conception of citizenship similar personally responsible citizenship plus a sense of nationalist feelings
- How can we make sense of this?
 - That teachers in Asia are generally ‘good citizens’ and passive? The focus is on character ...
 - If we use an Asian / Confucian citizenship lens, we will read it differently ...
 - Understanding it as self-cultivation, relational self

Application 1

"Ultimately, I would think responsibilities are more important than your rights...we must be responsible not to cross that line, and jeopardize the situation...because it's your responsibility as a citizen to maintain and uphold harmony in the society."

"Responsibility is more important. If you insist on your rights all the time, you'll only break up society. A society cannot exist unless people work together."

Seen from a Western perspective, this might demarcate a passive citizen who had submitted to the system. From a Confucian perspective however, this surfaces the sensitivity and affection one has for one's relational context, which does not preclude one from being "differentially remonstrative" or "respectfully corrective" of authority (Kim, 2011); emphasis is here placed upon the continuation of a relationship for further dialogue and exchange, or "harmonization."

Application 2

- Social-justice oriented conception of citizenship (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004)
 - Role of the social-justice oriented teacher is to challenge inequality and work towards a more democratic society (Doster, 2008; Freire, 1970; Lipman, 2004; McDonald, 2007)
 - Cochran-Smith et al. (2009): ‘..teaching for social justice [is] an activity with political dimensions in which all educators are responsible for challenging inequities in the social order and working with others to establish a more just society’ (p. 352).
 - But how to teach for social justice in an Asian context that prioritizes consensus not confrontation, where teachers are civil servants bound by rules

Application 2

- Sim, Chua & Krishnasamy (2017): Critically-reflective conception of citizenship
 - Teachers who subscribed to a critically-reflexive citizenship were aware of social injustices and hegemonic values in the system
 - Believed in instilling skepticism so that students learn to question
 - Focused on fostering a climate of critical inquiry and of taking multiple perspectives in their classrooms
 - In lessons, the teachers showed students that the textual world was inherently a construction that reflected a particular worldview and served a particular interest group. They problematized classroom and public texts, and encouraged students to be skeptical about official forms of knowledge

Application 2

- Stopped short of taking action to promote social justice in their lessons, perhaps afraid of dismantling existing conventions
- Critical-reflexivity among teachers in Singapore was manifested in the guise of teachers' internal struggles, fraught with dilemmas, questions, and sometimes, even helplessness. A teacher shared:

“My profile is similar to the students'. I appreciate that I am lucky and privileged. You ask me if I really know how the underprivileged or the people who suffered injustices feel, the truth is I don't. If giving them more means taking something away from me, I struggle to reconcile that.”

- Questions: Can you call this social justice? Who defines what is social justice? Does context matter? Is there alternative to confrontation?
- Need to understand phenomenon in context, in a variety of settings

Concluding remarks

- Emerging interest: How East and West conceptualize citizenship (in Philosophy e.g. Confucianism)
 - notions of individuals and community
 - ideals of equality and freedom
 - justifiable limits of government
 - how schools and education systems can develop such forms of citizenship
- When referring to democratic citizenship education, important to note that democracy remains a site of struggle
- Democracy in practice is anything but neat conceptual categories, and more needs to be understood especially in classroom practice, in developing democratic citizens

Implications for the Asian context

- A need to develop contextualized notions of democratic citizenship in the Asian / ASEAN context
 - Understanding citizenship in context
- Developing an Asian / ASEAN community of scholars concerned about democratic citizenship education
 - Through regular scholarly forums to share and discuss ground up concepts and practices
- More research on democratic citizenship education in practice, single country and comparative settings
 - Collaborative research projects among various countries
- Possibly a centre specializing in the study of Asian / ASEAN citizenship in future

A pitch for ASEAN

- A gap in the study of citizenship in the context / with reference to ASEAN
 - Increasingly important region that must be studied, and imperative to understand how young people are educated as citizens in this region
 - Mahbubani, K. & Sng, J. (2017): The ASEAN Miracle: A Catalyst for Peace. Singapore: Ridge Books, National University of Singapore Press.
1. ASEAN has delivered in parallelled economic growth to the Southeast Asian populace, lifting millions from poverty in a short span of time.
 2. ASEAN has cultivated the culture of peace and harmony in a socially diverse region.
 3. While the rest of the world remains pessimistic, ASEA continues to bubble with cultural, economic and geo-political optimism

Thank you!