Constructing the 'citizen' in citizenship education

Maryam Nabavi

University of British Columbia
mnabavi@interchange.ubc.ca

Abstract

In the field of education, the discourses of 'citizenship education' are—more than at any other period of Canadian history—centre stage. As public schooling strives to offer citizenship education amenable to the needs of varied identities, the ideological premises, concepts, and goals of citizenship education must be interrogated. Critically synthesizing the developments of citizenship education since the Multiculturalism Policy of 1971, the gaps in citizenship education will be explored by discussing policy and pedagogical approaches. This article will conclude by offering pedagogical and conceptual alternatives to citizenship education, which can serve to address the outlined gaps in learning for citizenship for diverse learners.

Introduction

In 1965, John Porter's analysis of Canada as a *vertical mosaic* served, across social science disciplines, as a launching pad to interrogate the complex and nuanced facets of socio-political inclusion and exclusion for Canadians. Forty-five years later, the very issues that Porter brought to the forefront are further complicated as the composition of the Canadian mosaic continues to change. Factors such as increased migration from non-European countries (Statistics Canada, 2006a), the economic dimensions of the transnational flow of goods and people, and socio-political realities which affect diasporic and, in effect, all communities in Canada contribute to the complexities of inclusion and exclusion. As such, the notion of citizenship—as both a substantive and social concept[1]—is central to exploring the newest iterations of what Porter was calling our collective attention to.

In the field of education, the discourses of *citizenship education* are—more than at any other period of Canadian history—centre stage (Hughes & Sears, 2008). Despite the provincial mandate of public education, citizenship education, both practically and conceptually, is central to educational policy across Canada. This emphasis is informed by the longstanding view that public schooling must strive to "train citizens in the widest sense of the term" (Conoley, 1989, p. 134). Shifting demographics has resulted in renewed interest and commitment to citizenship education policy and pedagogy. Further, it has fuelled educational theorists, policy-makers, curriculum developers, and pedagogues to articulate approaches to citizenship education that respond to the social, political, and economic realities of the time. There is, however, limited shared understanding of what citizenship education should entail. Factors such as the historical context of citizenship education, the influences of the policy of multiculturalism, nationalist versus global tensions, economic influences, and the relationship between social and substantive citizenship all contribute to the gaps in citizenship education (Sears, 1996; Torney-Purta, Schwille, & Amadeo, 1999).

Canada continues to accept more immigrants in proportion to its population than any other country and immigrant youth remain one of the fastest growing populations in the country (Statistics Canada, 2006b). As such, exploring the varied experiences of immigrant youth in formal and informal contexts become increasingly important for gaining a better understanding of their changing societal and material conditions and how that informs their experiences with citizenship learning. This understanding can contribute to the paucity of empirical research on immigrant youth experiences of identity, belonging, social, and political learning. Exploring the experiences of

immigrant youth vis-à-vis formal and informal learning can provide a framework for improved citizenship education that addresses existing gaps in promoting "positive interaction among national identity, equality rights, and specific group memberships [which] influences the formation of complex identifications as Canadian" (Lee & Hebért, 2006, p. 517). A renewed commitment to citizenship education demands a new understanding of citizenship in which the Canadian vertical mosaic is explored vis-à-vis the changing global realities in the Canadian social context.

An exploration of the conceptual and practical approaches to citizenship education in Kindergarten to Grade 12 formal schooling (formal schooling from here on) necessitates unpacking its ideological premises, concepts, and goals. I will provide an overview of the ways in which the notions of *citizen* and *citizenship* inform contemporary understandings of citizenship education, in order to critically synthesize the developments of citizenship education policy in Canada. I will then contextualize the gaps in Canadian citizenship education by discussing the policy and pedagogical approaches since the Multiculturalism Policy of 1971 as well as the ways in which they are addressed. Finally, I will articulate the ways in which new spaces for considering pedagogical and conceptual alternatives to citizenship education can serve to address the outlined gaps in learning for citizenship and its broader educational significance.

Contextualizing Citizen and Citizenship Education

The most recent developments in discourses of citizenship have shifted the focus from definitions that highlight legal, civil, and political components to consider social components such as identity, virtue, civic attitudes, and knowledge. One of the earliest articulations of social citizenship is by British sociologist T.H. Marshall. In his seminal piece *Citizenship and Social Class* (1992 [1950]), he defined citizenship as a "status bestowed on those who are full members of a community" (p. 18). This definition created a rupture in contemporary Western understandings of citizenship, from substantive to social terms. For Marshall, citizenship was accorded individually, yet the collective components of civil, political, and social rights make citizenship a social phenomenon that can be contextualized within the interests of the collective.

Marshall's (1992) understanding of citizenship has led to an interrogation of the complex and dynamic relationship between social and substantive citizenship. His theory of citizenship was based on the liberal democratic tradition, which emphasizes universally held rights that negate the socio-political, economic, and cultural rights to those members of society to whom social structure offer the least. Furthermore, he demarcated different aspects of citizenship in his writing that created rigid boundaries that are not amenable to exploring the iterative nature of citizenship. His approach has been critiqued as vague, exclusionary, Anglocentric, and outdated (Dwyer, 2004). Leaving aside the post-war discourse driving Marshall's approach to citizenship, his work continues to be important for contextualizing the reciprocal relationship between social and substantive components of citizenship within the nation state (see Shafir, 1998).

There are many disciplinary points of entry for considering conceptual frameworks of citizenship in relation to the interplay between substantive and social citizenship. Gagnon and Pagé (1999) offered a framework of citizenship that includes the major components of national identity; cultural, social, and transnational belonging; a system of rights; and political, and civic participation. Sears and Hughes'(1996) *elitist* to *activist* spectrum is popularly used across academic disciplines. Elitist conceptions of citizenship maintain that elected officials are responsible for matters governing the state while activist conceptions of citizenship assume the status-quo must be disrupted to provide space for all voices. Their typology of citizenship has been instrumental in building the foundation for conceptual and practical approaches to citizenship in educational contexts in Canada.

Models of learning to become a citizen and for citizenship include citizenship education, civic literacy, civic education, political education, global education, transnational education, moral education, and charter education (Banks, 1998; Castles, 2004; Evans, 2006; Osborne, 1996; Steiner-Khamsi, 2002). The discourses that shape these models are the result of the socio-political, historical, and cultural ways in which citizenship is understood as a concept. An important outcome of learning for citizenship is learning to become a citizen, yet the process of becoming a citizen—oriented towards Sears and Hughes' (1996) activist conception—is itself a political process. The process of becoming a citizen requires working against traditional conceptions of citizenship to critically engage

in social, political, and ecological concerns both locally and globally. It further requires a commitment to challenging dominant institutions and structures and working alongside individuals to whom social structures offer the least; in a Western context, this traditionally includes individuals who are positioned outside the boundaries of Anglo-European, liberal-democratic norms and ideals. Thus, through the exercise of engaging politically to harvest an activist conception of citizenship, citizenship learning takes place. In what follows, I use the term *citizenship education* to capture different models of learning for citizenship.

In Canada, citizenship education is the term that is employed across formal schooling contexts. This term is informed by discourses of citizenship that have long been significant in notions of identity (Osborne, 2001). For example, in its earliest iterations, the concept of citizenship was used as an assimilation tool against Canada's Indigenous peoples by Anglo-European colonizers (Joshee, 2004). Later, the Citizenship Act of 1947 provided citizens an identity separate from British subjects. More recently, the concept of citizenship fuels notions of identity in the Québec separatist movement (Wall, Moll, & Froese-Germain, 2000). Thus, in the interest of promoting a positive association with the term citizenship and shifting the focus of citizenship education from a substantive to a social concept—such as moving toward multicultural citizenship (Kymlicka, 1995)—the term citizenship education is popularly employed in educational policy.

Development of Citizenship Education in Canada

The trajectory of citizenship education in Canadian formal schooling can be traced back to as early as the 1890s. Osborne (1996) posited four distinct yet overlapping periods in the delivery of Canadian citizenship education as influenced by social, economic, and political circumstances. The first of the four periods existed until the 1920s and focused on the Canadianization of students and assimilationist nationalism. The second period, until the 1950s, emphasized democratic living, the depoliticization of citizenship, and increased American progressive values. The third period, lasting until the 1980s, was a response to the perceived lack of knowledge among the populace. It involved concern for the quality of civic education and a celebrated shift from assimilation to multiculturalism. The fourth period, from the 1990s onward, moved the focus of citizenship from possessing a goal of schooling to promoting an economic agenda for preparing students to become consumers.

The periods serve as a heuristic for the developments in citizenship education and a useful point of entry for celebrating and interrogating citizenship education in Canada. I have developed a trajectory of the developments in citizenship education—from substantive to social—as informed by existing critical articulations of citizenship education in the curriculum (Joshee, 2004; Osborne, 1996; Sears, Clarke, & Hughes, 1999). In a similar vein, elitist and activist conceptions of citizenship (Sears & Hughes, 1996) tend to be positioned on extreme ends of the spectrum (Figure 1). In what follows, I will articulate the ways in which the traditional linear model of citizenship education fails to take into account the subtle and varied tensions in citizenship education. In the interest of exploring the developments in citizenship education in its relationship with social citizenship, I will focus on developments since the inception of the Multiculturalism Policy (1971).

Figure 1. Development of Canadian Citizen Education

Substantive Citizenship Elitist	→	→	Social Citizenship Activist
Informed by Confederation 1867	Informed by Citizenship Act 1947	Informed by Multiculturalism Policy 1971	Informed by social, political, economic, cultural globalization 1990s onward
Focus on nation-building	Focus on democracy	Focus on diversity (soft multiculturalism)	Focus on social cohesion (simplifies emergent tensions of diversity)

The notion of national identity has been the primary channel through which citizenship is articulated. A perceived lack of national identity has been a common issue in Canadian citizenship and literature on citizenship education (Sears et al., 1999). Longstanding criticisms that Canada is made up of hyphenated Canadians and what has been articulated as limited identities with respect to regional connections, class, ethnicity, and culture had dampened the context for citizenship education (Osborne, 1996). The conservative view that multiculturalism further fragments already limited identities and is ultimately divisive (Bissoondath, 2002) contributes to the above mentioned criticisms. However, the official policy of multiculturalism and increasing immigration from non-European countries (Statistics Canada, 2006c) has, in recent years, provided a renewed context for articulating citizenship education.

The focus on diversity and social identities as brought to bear in the Multiculturalism Policy (1971) and Multiculturalism Act (1988) has informed citizenship education. However, the political nature of citizenship within a multicultural state, such as the ways in which diverse social identities and interests are articulated, is largely absent in citizenship education. Thus, citizenship education is depoliticized insofar as the complexities of *differentiated citizenship* (Kymlicka, 1999)—in which the needs of the individual are considered vis-à-vis their group membership—are concerned.

The realities of international migration, environmental change, economic globalization, and significant political changes that increased in the 1980s provided the ground for a renewed commitment to citizenship education in Canada, particularly one informed by global education (Goldstein & Selby, 2000). Most recently, the overarching goals of citizenship education across Western nations has focused on instilling skills, attitudes, and dispositions that develop the capacities of individuals to engage critically, not only as citizens of a country, but also as global citizens (Banks, 2004a). Canadian citizenship education is conceptually aligned with the above approach. However, nation-building approaches to citizenship education that are informed by a liberal-democratic agenda of building the capacities of democratic citizens within the nation state, are at odds with more global approaches to citizenship education.

In Canada, citizenship education is closely connected with multiculturalism. Citizenship, as a social concept that is concerned with cultural rights and identity, is by and large informed by Canada's official policy of multiculturalism (Kymlicka, 1998). Social citizenship is, however, often explored in relation to the celebratory dimensions of multiculturalism. The complexities of social citizenship, such as the ways in which different populations are positioned differently, remain invisible in discourses of citizenship education (Sears & Hughes, 2006). Thus, it can be argued that discourses of citizenship and, by extension, citizenship education, are depoliticized in the shadow of multiculturalism. In effect, citizenship education serves as a platform for building moral character and emphasizing community service rather than political activism (Joshee, 2004). Lee (2002) contended that "as groups of different interest live together in a national or political entity…the need to de-emphasize difference and emphasize commonality in citizenship education is obvious" (p. 47). However, because the process of citizenship (in all of its manifestations) is political, the connection between multiculturalism and citizenship can be problematized.

Joshee (1995) put forth three areas of emphasis in policies of cultural-diversity citizenship, identity, and social justice. These areas of emphasis are, however, bound to national interests that "aim to provide every citizen regardless of origin…an equal chance to participate in all aspects of the country's collective life" (Sears et al., 1999, p. 113). Joshee further suggested that the original underpinnings of the multiculturalism policy, which emphasized national unity and human rights, supersede later developments concerned with ethnic diversity, anti-racism, and religious rights. As a result, the tenets of differentiated citizenship (Kymlicka, 1998) are not only negated, but progressive trends such as activist citizenship education and global education, become increasingly difficult to enact within a well-established, tightly-gripped liberal framework. Citizenship education researchers have suggested that the rhetoric of multiculturalism is at odds with the ubiquity of Anglo-conformity (Sears & Hughes, 1996). More recent contributions articulated these tensions but with increased concern for its implications in an increasingly diverse Canada (Blades & Richardson, 2006; Joshee, 2004; Osborne, 2004).

Conceptual and Practical Gaps in Citizenship Education

Current citizenship education policy and curricula development advocate for innovative and critical approaches to citizenship education. The rhetoric of citizenship education emphasizes the importance of the relationship between nationalism-globalization and an overall commitment to develop knowledge, skills, and dispositions. Yet there is little by way of empirical evidence suggesting this. Further, the rate at which recommendations for reform in citizenship education have shifted into practice has been dismal (Hughes & Sears, 2008; Joshee, 2004).

Canada is the only country in the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) that does not have federal presence in education. The deregulation of (citizenship) education and, in effect, provincial rather than federal funding for education has resulted in minimal importance at the provincial level. Most notably Canada withdrew from the second phase of the internationally renowned International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) initiative, giving the nation an international reputation of having a piecemeal, unaccountable, uncoordinated, and episodic approach to citizenship education (Sears, 2009). Related to the above is the dearth of research support for citizenship education. Support for citizenship education is provincially mandated and there are no indications of forthcoming federal support for citizenship education among policy makers or curriculum developers, making it near impossible to build capacity for citizenship education.

Moreover, researchers have unanimously argued that there is a misalignment between the conceptual and pedagogical approaches to citizenship education (Evans, 2006; Joshee, 2004; Osborne, 1996; Sears & Hughes, 1996). Osborne (1996) noted "there is often a considerable gap between what a department of education mandates and what actually gets done in the classrooms, so that to describe citizenship education policy is not necessarily to describe citizenship education" (p. 31). In the report of the Committee for Effective Canadian Citizenship (1994), *Educating Canada's 21st Century Citizens: Crisis and Challenge* (Evans, 2006), contributions from across the country emphasize the importance for citizenship education material to be meaningfully connected to students' lives. Such materials can promote the possibility for active citizenry whereby authentic issues facing students are central to teaching and learning for citizenship.

Although conceptually citizenship education is activist-oriented, practically, it does little to instil the skills, attitudes, and dispositions that have activist leanings. Sears and Hughes (1996) demonstrated this point in their critique that "although information from the official curricula suggests that conceptions of citizenship education in Canada may constitute leading-edge thinking, we suspect that the actual practice of citizenship education in the nation's classrooms remain closer to trailing edge" (p. 138). The rich, forward thinking recommendations in policy documents, they suggest, are add-ons to outdated forms of character education.

Ten years after the seminal study was published, the authors asserted that Canada continues to falter in its commitment to educating for citizenship nationally and internationally (Hughes & Sears, 2006). Arguably, the failure of citizenship education curricula to articulate different models of citizenship education for varied identities results in pedagogical interventions that negate the ways in which students' social identities might inform pedagogies for citizenship education. A combination of factors including the relationship between the multiculturalism policy and the conceptually progressive yet practically disjointed and patch-work approach to citizenship education has led citizenship theorists to the conclusion that development and implementation of citizenship education in Canada is cause for concern and arguably in a state of crisis (Sears & Hughes, 2006).

Federal Responses for Improving Citizenship Education

The activist conception of citizenship which seemingly widens the discourse and practice of citizenship can be seen as problematic as it is widely argued that citizenship education in Canada is designed to instil national culture (Lee & Hebért, 2006; Osborne, 2001; Sears & Hughes, 1996, 2006). The emphasis on nationalism reflects the neo-liberal model of multiculturalism in which all who contribute to making the nation diverse are benefiting. Castles (2004) called this the *controllability of difference,* where by policy approaches are used as a tool to hinder the ways in which ethnic diversity can be a source of social transformation. To this end, citizenship education, as positioned within the dominant paradigm, is based on strengthening the concept of nation rather than the individuals who are

members of the nation. This is reflected in the attempts to position citizenship education within the *social cohesion* framework—a liberal-democratic approach to citizenship.

As a project of the federal multiculturalism program, social cohesion positions diversity at its centre. At first glance, it appears that social cohesion addresses the newest conceptual visions for citizenship education—to be critical, to engage citizenship from a global perspective, and to instil a sense of agency. Yet, the social cohesion model is critiqued in so far as it is an attempt to cover up neoliberal policies and programs (Jenson, 2004 in Joshee, 2004, p. 147). Bickmore's (2006) nationally comparative study looked at students' relationship with a set of criteria that reflect democratic social cohesion. Her finding reveals that the model remains a hegemonic project of the state. She suggests that the tenets of democratic social cohesion are undermined as the curricula appears to be more assimilationist than democratic in its focus on social control, homogenization, and silencing dissenting voices. Most problematic is the fact that the complexities of citizenship are negated in this model. Diversity is centrally framed as a threat to the country and arguably, compatible with assimilation (Joshee, 2004). Diversity, as taken up in the social cohesion model, is in the absence of a social justice analysis; citizens' responsibilities to social issues are framed from a charity lens where they "must develop shared values, mutual trust, and the willingness to care for those less fortunate" (Joshee, 2004, p. 184). The above view of citizenship education places the onus of responsibility on individual citizens, independent of the broader socio-political structures that position them differently.

Notwithstanding the tension between the policy and practice of citizenship education, curriculum developers and educators continue to strive to push the boundaries of pedagogical approaches that address the complexities of citizenship education (Evans, 2006). To this end, the focus is placed on social citizenship versus substantive, legal definitions of citizenship. Included are curricula attempts to infuse justice oriented approaches in citizenship education such as multicultural and anti-racist education, ecological education, and critical explorations of globalization (Dei, 1996; Evans & Hundley, 2000; Goldstein & Selby, 2000; Joshee, 2004).

The above efforts are a response to growing concerns with policy and pedagogical approaches to citizenship education as influenced by the decentralization of education, federal interests in preserving the policy of multiculturalism, weak and at times non-existent research supports, and the social cohesion model. Canada's approach to citizenship education remains antithetical to the recommendations of significant international (Torney-Purta et al., 1999) and national studies (Sears & Hughes, 1996), independent policy recommendations (South House Exchange 2001), and theoretical contributions (see Bellagio Citizenship Education and Diversity Conference in Banks, 2004b).

These international understandings of citizenship education thrive on issues of social-justice, democracy, and human rights; they represent progressive views toward citizenship education and the view that democracy and political voice need be central to democratic citizenship (Sears & Hyslop-Margison, 2006, p. 21). However, due to the implementation of educational reforms (Sears & Hyslop-Margison, 2006), and limited understanding of students' knowledge of democratic citizenship and what types of educational programs are effective, it is necessary to increase knowledge in these areas prior to the development and implementation of educational reforms (Sears & Hyslop-Margison, 2006).

Conceptualizing Immigrant Youth Citizenship

Despite efforts to align citizenship education policies and practices in Canada, there remain limited conceptual or pedagogical interventions that address the particular needs and interests of learners, such as issues of race, ethnicity, language, and religion amongst immigrant-specific experiences. Moreover, as geo-political relations, war, economic globalization, and environmental change result in both voluntary and involuntary migration to Canada, conceptualizing citizenship learning to transcend the boundaries of formal schooling can provide a useful point of entry for considering the marked and nuanced differences of immigrant learners based on their lived experiences.

Increasing cultural diversity in urban and rural schools across the country provides a context for considering the ways in which policies of citizenship education are being manifested. Lee and Hebert's (2006) study of immigrant

and non-immigrant youths' sentiments towards being Canadian revealed that social policies inform integration. This understanding of immigrant youth and their experiences of being Canadian suggests that citizenship education plays a pivotal role in forming a "citizenry respectful of multiple identities, sharing a common sense of belonging and having full parity of rights and obligations and duties and responsibilities within Canadian society" (Lee & Hebert, 2006, p. 517).

An exploration of social identities such as multiple national, ethnic, cultural, and linguistic bonds in relation to informal sites of learning is useful in the development, implementation, and pedagogy of citizenship education. In order to broaden conceptual and pedagogical approaches to citizenship education within formal schooling contexts, it is thus useful to draw on diverse educative sites (Steiner-Khamsi, 2002) in which to learn about and practice citizenship. I draw on John Dewey's (1964) observation that not all experiences have the same pedagogical potential and "that although all genuine education comes about through experience, this does not mean that experience and education are one and the same, or that all experiences are equally educative" (Schugurensky, 2004, p. 326).

Theoretically, an exploration of informal learning for citizenship requires broadening ascribed meanings of citizenship education in a way that strives to negotiate the tension between the articulations of varied social identities within a nationalist context. Singular conceptions of citizenship (i.e. elitist/activist) are not always useful when considering complex identities as central to the ways in which citizenship is negotiated. Hall (1996a) noted that we need to understand identity

> as produced in specific historical and institutional sites within specific discursive formations and practices, by specific enunciative strategies. Moreover, they emerge within the play of specific modalities of power, and thus are more the product of the marking of difference and exclusion, than they are the sign of an identical, naturally constituted unity - an 'identity' in its traditional meaning. (p. 4)

An understanding of identity as multiple, shifting, and evolving can enable new explorations of the ways in which citizenship learning takes place. Theoretical approaches such as differentiated citizenship in multicultural contexts (Kymlicka, 1998); cultural citizenship from a sociological lens (Delanty, 2003), and diaspora studies (Hall, 1996b) can serve as a starting point for exploring the centrality of identity. For immigrant youth embedded in *New Ethnicities* (Hall, 1996b), an exploration of their experiences of locality, culture, migration, language, and social identity vis-à-vis national markers of identity can build a renewed context for citizenship education.

Pilkington and Johnson (2003) asserted that youth cultures encompass not just the local, but also the peripheral, as they negotiate their position within the power dynamics of the spaces in which they travel. Massey (1998) articulated this phenomena in that diaspora youth are in constant struggle in their pursuits to reconcile two, if not more, different cultures and build a new hybrid culture. Accordingly, as the relationship between local and global contexts become increasingly unclear and the spaces and places in which immigrant youth develop their identities, it is then necessary to consider both the national and non-national ways in which immigrant youth gain an ordered sense of their experiences. In other words, drawing on the contexts and conditions of informal learning for citizenship is useful for improving citizenship education in formal (educational) contexts.

A conceptual focus on informal learning for citizenship can help to reconcile the inherent tensions between conceptual and practical approaches to citizenship education and can serve as a starting point for developing an immigrant youth citizenship reflective of the needs of Canadian immigrant youth. Further, a conceptual focus on informal learning for citizenship can provide a space from which to interrogate the state-constructed social imaginary (Appadurai, 1996) of citizenship—culminating in formal citizenship education. An immigrant youth citizenship that is informed by the specific sites of learning for citizenship can provide the basis for developing more useful conceptual and practical approaches to citizenship education.

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Notes

[1]Substantive citizenship refers to citizenship as a status, political rights (voting), and civil rights (legal). Social citizenship considers social rights, civic duties, identity, and participation and belonging. Whereas substantive citizenship is generally referenced within the nation state, social citizenship is not necessarily limited to national boundaries.