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21st Century Pedagogies and Citizenship Education: Enacting Elementary School Curriculum Using Critical Inquiry-Based Learning

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Abstract

How elementary teachers address citizenship is important in 21st century teaching and learning. Situating citizenship education within the varied global contexts of schooling and connecting content to pedagogical approach is a complex task. Even so, citizenship education can be the philosophical underpinning, or vision, for a teaching pedagogy that engages students in active, creative, and critical ways. This chapter illustrates key features and priorities for citizenship education by exploring the concepts of perspective taking, inquiry pedagogy and critical pedagogy and how they work together using the example of elementary school Social Studies in a Canadian context. Using examples from previous studies and narratives from elementary school teachers, this chapter includes portraits of classroom teachers' work using a critical inquiry-based approach. The chapter illustrates how resources can be used in teachers' planning to design learning that is nestled in citizenship education. Government curriculum documents as well as scholarly literature and teaching resources can support critical-inquiry for citizenship education. This teaching can lead to active, engaged citizens. There are many approaches to citizenship education; drawing awareness to perspectives and pedagogical possibilities is essential in teacher development. Teacher education is the ideal place for introducing and connecting foundations of education to best practice.

Keywords: inquiry pedagogy, critical pedagogy, citizenship education, perspective taking, preservice teachers, teacher education, elementary schooling

1. Introduction

What is citizenship education? Why teach it? How to teach it? These are common questions teacher candidates in my teacher education program wonder as they prepare to become elementary school teachers. Teacher education is where preservice teachers are introduced to curriculum subjects (content knowledge) and methods for those subjects (pedagogical content knowledge). And so, what of elementary school subjects and citizenship education? Unlike literacy, science, and mathematics, citizenship education is not a traditional subject area. Traditionally, citizenship

education may be nestled inside of standard subject areas like social studies; yet, depending on how social studies is taught, citizenship education may not exist at all. Teacher education is the ideal place for introducing and connecting foundations of education to practice; that is, inspiring and demonstrating the power of rationale development for teaching subject areas and reflecting on how and why to teach what is required.

Citizenship education can be the philosophical underpinning or vision for teaching in the elementary school classroom. This chapter explores how citizenship education may be developed as a perspective and pedagogical approach to teaching. By developing a vision or perspective for citizenship education teachers can incorporate contemporary approaches like critical inquiry-based pedagogy to teach citizenship in all subject areas. Social Studies will be used to demonstrate how content can be used to activate strong understanding and engagement with citizenship. The first part of the chapter explores perspective taking and the contemporary pedagogical concepts of inquiry and critical pedagogy and how they work together. Drawing examples from previous studies of elementary school teachers, this chapter includes portraits of classroom teachers' work using a critical inquiry-based approach. The second part of the chapter shows how resources can be used in teachers' planning to design learning that is nestled in citizenship education. Government curriculum documents as well as teaching resources can support perspectives when applying a critical-inquiry lens to citizenship education.

2. Perspective taking for citizenship education

Preparing teachers for the world of teaching (teacher education) is an ideal place to introduce the importance of perspective taking. Perspective taking is also described as rationale development or, developing a vision in teaching. Rationale development is defined as, "the intellectual, ethical, and potentially transformative process of personal reflection through which teachers formally articulate their purposes for teaching ..." ([1], p. 417). Kosnik and Beck [2] found developing a vision for teaching is a priority in teacher education. According to Kosnik and Beck, having a "vision keeps us aware of the full range of goals and processes of teaching ...helps us see how the various aspects of teaching fit together... [and] having an explicit vision is important so teachers can explain to student the purpose of schooling and particular classroom practices" ([2], pp. 153–154). "A vision is what a teacher hopes to instill in their students beyond curricular objectives" ([3], p. 526). Having a vision allows for coherent programming and teaching, and allows for more explicit teaching of social issues. Perspective taking, rationale development, or developing a vision for teaching requires thoughtful reflection, understanding one's own practice, and broader pedagogical approaches and content. Understanding the purpose for teaching and unpacking *why* we teach what we do is essential for good teaching.

In my preservice classes, teacher candidates are asked, "what is your vision for teaching?" This question is often received with uncertainty as most candidates are not familiar with the notion of a vision for teaching. While several, if not all, teacher candidates have a perspective for teaching – for everyone is positioned with a stance – it is seldom articulated or unpacked in terms of a vision for teaching. It becomes worthwhile then to engage in opportunities for thinking about one's vision and the potential implications for teaching and learning. A clearly defined vision or perspective for teaching provides clarity in program planning. And, as we consider what it means to teach citizenship education in the 21st century, a vision for what that means needs to develop. Some 21st century perspectives for citizenship may

include international, global, critical, democratic to mention a few. This chapter focuses on developing a perspective for critical citizenship education at the elementary school level that engages an active and critical citizen.

2.1 Teaching perspective taking

Citizenship education can be an approach to teaching. To teach through the frame of citizenship education however one must first determine their perspective or vision for teaching it. Hawley and Crowe studied how teacher candidates' rationale development for social studies teaching as being fundamental to citizenship changed during their teacher education training [1]. They found that when teacher candidates were tasked with developing a vision for teaching social studies, most were able to do so. Teacher candidates were able to develop a vision that combined their own values and the values and content they encountered in the program ([1], p. 424). How one's purpose evolves and develops depends on the unique combination of the teacher candidate's experiences and values and the program's teachings. The negotiation of identities, values, ideas, understandings between one's own experiences and understandings and that of the University and governing bodies that control the school curriculum can be a challenge when the views do not coincide. Time is required to explore, discuss, and understand how one's own understandings connect with the goals of citizenship education. In order to enact citizenship education, a perspective/vision/purpose needs to be developed. Hawley and Crowe suggest, that "[w]ithout an articulate sense of purpose for teaching social studies, an understanding of what purpose means for their practice, teachers may never move beyond a focus of content knowledge and engagement as guiding principles for pedagogical decision making, and social studies teaching may remain the same for another 100 years' ([1], p. 441).

In my work with teacher candidates, a critical stance to citizenship education is used to teach how to teach social studies. Social studies is one elementary school subject that lends itself well to citizenship education. A critical stance includes the attitude, knowledge, and dispositions essential to "way[s] of knowing and being in the world of educational practice that carries across educational contexts... that links individuals to larger groups and social movements intended to challenge the inequities perpetuated by the educational status quo" ([4], p. vii). Lewison, Leland and Harste identify four qualities of a critical stance: consciously engaging; entertaining alternative ways of being; taking responsibility to inquire; and, being reflexive [5]. These qualities are cyclical and interact with experience, and involve the processes of renaming [6] and reframing [7] what it means to be in the world. Having a critical stance is a "deliberate choice made by educators" ([8], p. 136) and is a "lifelong and constant pursuit" ([4], p. 28) to becoming an active citizen. A critical stance is a perspective that encourages an active and engaged lens for citizenship education. Critical stance comes from the field of critical pedagogy and aims to position any subject or content area towards equity-based ways of viewing the world.

2.2 Activating perspective taking in practice

Teachers engage in the thoughtful application of their vision/perspective into classroom practice. Schoolwide approaches, led by administrative teams, provide clear pathways for activating school wide visions for teaching. For example, as a 5th grade classroom teacher at Maple Public School many years ago I, like all teachers at the school, followed the school vision. The principal's motto "we're all on the same bus, headed in the same direction" provided the pathway for applying a

particular vision. All teachers followed the same routines, and curriculum including a phonics-based reading program; and, all teachers used a pedagogy of care to guide their practice. When schoolwide approaches are not mandated, teachers activate their own vision for teaching in a variety of ways including reflective practice [3]. Hammerson [9, 10] asserts that a teacher’s vision should be clear and compatible with the vision of the school if their visions are to be viable. To actualize a teaching vision, particular pedagogical practices are enacted including an engaging learning environment, authentic learning tasks, and discovery learning experience (i.e., inquiry pedagogy) ([3], p. 534). Inquiry pedagogy is a 21st century approach that engages students in questioning, problem solving, experiencing, and acting. Inquiry pedagogy will be discussed later in the chapter as a key approach for developing a vision of citizenship.

School districts often mandate curricula. In some districts the curriculum guidelines offer clear perspectives for teaching. In Ontario, Canada the Social Studies curriculum uses a perspective of citizenship education that promotes active, responsible citizens and provides an process for activating perspective [11]. **Figure 1** ([11], p. 8), illustrates a process for activating perspective by beginning with a clear vision, set goals for teaching social studies, and framework for citizenship education.

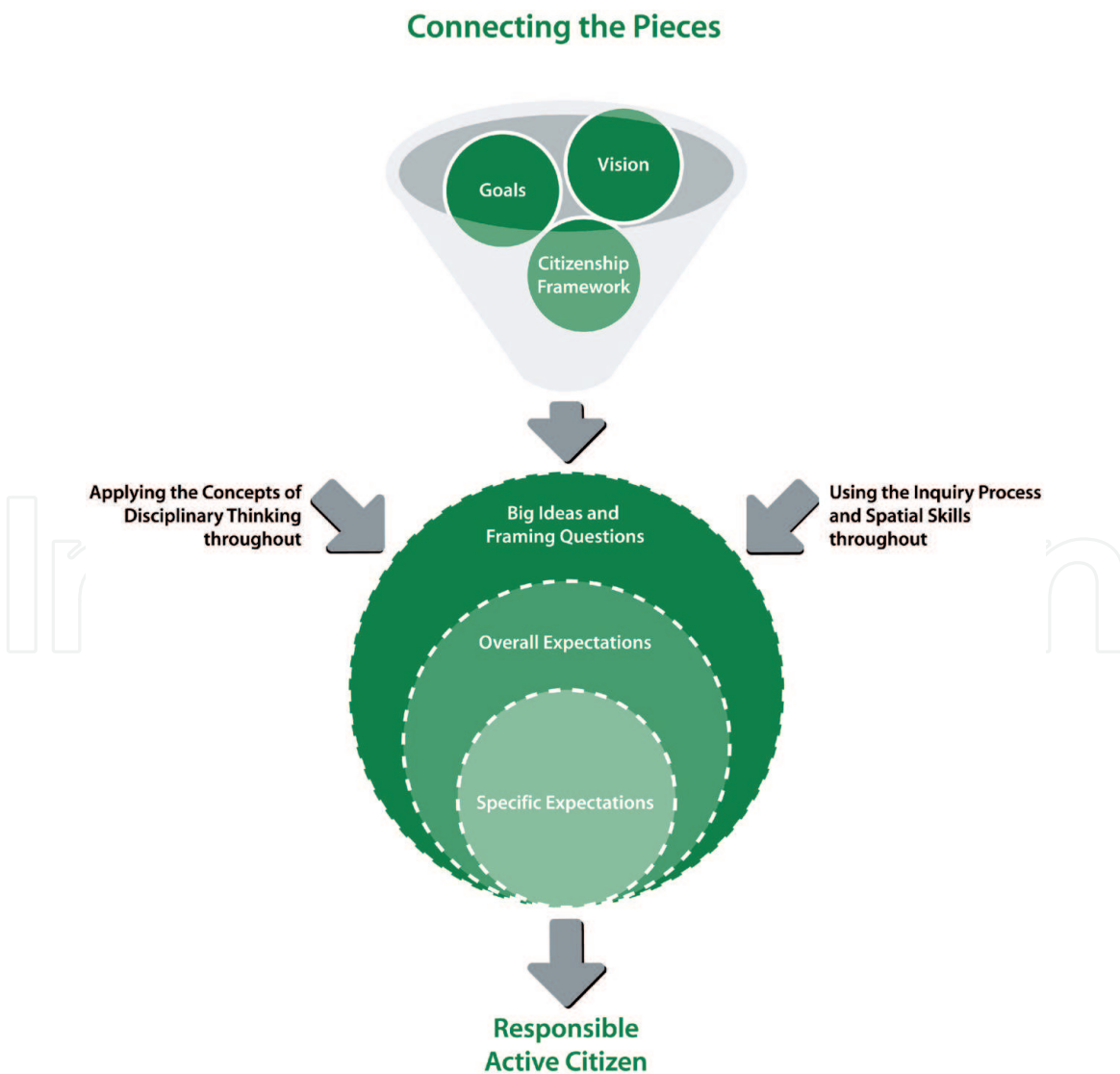


Figure 1. Activating perspective taking in practice ([11], p. 8). © Queen’s printer for Ontario, 2018. Reproduced with permission.

The vision for citizenship education outlined in the document describes how: “the social studies... programs will enable students to become responsible, active citizens within the diverse communities too which they belong. As well as becoming critically thoughtful and informed citizens who value an inclusive society...” ([11], p. 6). The goals list skills, knowledge, and dispositions required to realize the vision.

A clearly defined vision, explicit goals and framework are applied to learning expectations; big ideas (enduring understandings and key concepts) and specific expectations (content and skill-based learning expectations) are listed for each grade in the curriculum document. By using a critical inquiry-based pedagogy and disciplinary thinking students have opportunities to consider and become responsible, active citizens.

3. 21st century pedagogies for citizenship education

This chapter explores two educational pedagogies for citizenship education: inquiry-based pedagogy and critical pedagogy. Each concept is an independent framework and yet to a degree they share common philosophical elements and learning goals that work well together. The pedagogies are presented below. First, inquiry-based learning is explained and then a critical lens, adopted from critical pedagogy is described.

3.1 Inquiry-based learning

Derived from Dewey's theories [12] of experience and education, and constructivist traditions, inquiry-based pedagogy is generally understood as a student-driven, experiential approach to learning [13, 14]. Children collaborate as they question and explore a common goal or interest [15]. Inquiry-based pedagogy values “building on students' prior knowledge, scaffolding new experiences and the students' construction of knowledge” ([16], p. 281). Inquiry-based learning has been described in a number of ways including guided inquiry [17], knowledge building [18], and open inquiry [19] to name a few. While each of these approaches emphasize slightly different components of inquiry-based learning, they all encourage children to investigate their own curiosities about the world. Children's questions are at the centre of the learning experience and their questions drive the learning experience forward [18].

The teacher's role is to guide the children through careful planning and ongoing reflective practice as they explore their questions and queries. Children's voices and ideas are at the centre of the learning. Self-directed learning and student-centered learning are foundational to the process. Throughout this student-centered approach to learning, the teacher is responsible for teaching children the required skills to engage in student-directed learning (reading and writing skills, research skills, analyzing information, and collaborating with peers). “teachers need to demonstrate the skills needed for reflection and provide opportunities for students to practice them, while encouraging students to continually reflect on their work” ([11], p. 24).

As children listen, share, experience, research, and explore, they work alongside their teacher to develop new understandings and come up with new theories about what they are learning [20]. Inquiry-based learning repeats and reviews process. Children share their points of view, ask more questions, explore and experience the world, and read a variety of texts in order to gather more information. In an inquiry-based classroom, children are expected to share misconceptions, and misguided theories and through experience and experimentation sort out their

understandings. Inquiry-based learning does not yield a “right answer”. Instead, the approach is used to assess the effectiveness of investigations or learning and students learn the ability to reflect on their work ([11], p. 24).

An inquiry-based approach is in keeping with a vision for developing responsible active citizenship. Taking interest in events or issues, having ownership of one’s learning, and, working with others to solve problems or answer questions are undertakings of active citizens. The Ontario Ministry of Education provides a process for engaging in inquiry learning in its Social Studies curriculum. **Figure 2** illustrates a model for inquiry-based learning that includes five components that students use to investigate events, solve problems, and share findings.

The five components include: formulating questions, gathering and organizing information, interpreting and analyzing information, evaluating information and/or evidence, and communicating findings ([11], p. 23). The figure provides several



Figure 2.
The inquiry process ([11], p. 24) © Queen’s printer for Ontario, 2018. Reproduced with permission.

suggestions for ways to enact inquiry through the components. There is no particular order or entry point for the process to occur; and, not all learning experiences use all five components. It is entirely acceptable and expected for some elements to be used for a variety of lessons within an unit of study.

Inquiry-based pedagogy brings learning to life. Children have opportunity to question, explore, examine, interrogate, rethink, and communicate ideas and challenge truths. With inquiry-based learning, children invest in their learning; they own it and develop a sense of care for the issues and topics they explore. When using an inquiry-based approach, students not only learn about subject matter; by experiencing, exploring, debating, and collaborating with others, they learn about themselves, communities, and the world.

Like inquiry-based pedagogy, critical pedagogy uses many strategies for learning including questioning, discussing, exploring multiple perspectives, and communicating ideas. What differs is the involvement of an ideology that advocates for social justice.

3.2 Critical inquiry based learning

A critical inquiry-based environment includes critical pedagogy. Critical pedagogy provides an avenue for examining social justice issues in local and global contexts. It has roots in Freire's theories of critical dialog and pedagogy for liberation [21]. Education is used as a vehicle for mobilizing the oppressed by teaching language and literacy and the movement towards understanding power and patterns of inequalities. An enlightenment through education encourages mobilization and change for those in poverty. In classrooms around the world today, critical pedagogy is also for the privileged; to unearth privilege and encourage action towards equity. In Delpit's earlier writings on cultural capital she explains "those with power are frequently least aware of – or at least willing to acknowledge – its existence." ([22], p. 282). Applying a lens of critical pedagogy to all classrooms allows for developing awareness, critical thinking, and activism towards equity and justice.

What is required first is a shift in thinking from traditional, colonialist, capitalist views. Kumashiro proposes four strategies for framing classroom practice: 1. Doing homework, 2. Inverting and exceeding binaries, 3. Juxtaposing different texts, and 4. Promoting action and change [23, 24]. Doing homework refers to rethinking assumptions and beliefs and to reconsider notions of privilege and mainstreaming [23]. Critical pedagogy also requires self-reflexive practice; that is, creating space for students and teachers too have opportunities to reflect on their reading practices as they critique and transform their own understandings and investments and imagine new possibilities for bringing about change ([23], p. 153). Inverting and exceeding binaries suggests moving beyond our standard norms for identities (e.g., boys and girls). Juxtaposing different texts refers to exploring multiple perspectives through a variety of texts. These four teaching strategies complement inquiry pedagogy.

Critical literacy branches from critical pedagogy and is an approach that aims to achieve the goals of critical pedagogy through the use of texts, language and literacy and is commonly applied to inquiry-based pedagogy. Lewison, Flint, and Sluys [25] use four dimensions to describe critical literacy. The following dimensions are applied to texts and to class discussions: 1. Disrupting the common place, 2. Interrogating multiple viewpoints 3. Focusing on sociopolitical issues 4. Taking action and promoting social justice ([25], p. 382). While seemingly self-explanatory and common sensical, these dimensions are still somewhat radical in many classrooms and school communities. To explore texts through multiple

lenses, and to question and disrupt common ideas is against traditional educational practices. Including and exploring multiple viewpoints is also thought to be more 21st century thinking, “the ‘testing and right answer’ heritage of schooling stands in direct opposition to examining conflicting perspectives - a process that usually does not produce neat and tidy conclusions” ([25], p. 383). These processes are directly linked to inquiry-pedagogy. Critical pedagogy adds dimensions three and four to the process. Critical inquiry pedagogy is about uprooting what is comfortable, making the known unknown and creating new understandings and possibilities using the lens of social justice.

A critical inquiry-based classroom combines critical pedagogy with inquiry based pedagogy and “[s]uch a pedagogy encourages teachers to take an inquiry stance on their classrooms so that students and teachers become an interpretive community that examine and reflect on both course content and pedagogy” ([26], p. 195).

Teachers and students enter into a process of social construction of knowledge that encourages, critique, diversity, rigor, and meaning making [26]. In these classrooms, children are urged to question the world around them as well as to think deeply and reflect on their own ideas and beliefs. They consider issues of social justice and the impact of power and circumstances on their lives and the lives of others. A critical inquiry-based pedagogy therefore is one that enables students and teachers to make sense of the world through text and experience [27].

Research has been conducted that illustrates critical inquiry-based pedagogy in schools. In secondary schools, listening to students, providing multiple opportunities for discussion, using conversations to guide planning, establishing a safe space, and reaching out to community are ways that support deeper engagement in “explorations of topics [students] find authentic and meaningful” ([28], p. 55). Engagement may foster a sense of care and activism. Literature on critical literacy and inquiry at the secondary level has also emphasized the importance of students becoming aware of the role language plays in their lives [29]. When secondary students become active learners by raising questions about language used in texts and how power plays into the texts, they develop a sense of agency to pursue questions that satisfy their questions ([29], p. 388). They become immersed in their learning and construct meaning in order to deepen their understanding of themselves. Morrell also discusses how the pursuit of “addressing a real problem in [students’] community” can lead to authentic classroom-based inquiry ([30], p. 7).

There are fewer studies of classroom practices for critical inquiry-based pedagogy at the elementary level yet young learners engage in such learning. Cleovoulou and Beach have studied elementary school teachers and documented their work using critical inquiry-based pedagogy [31–33]. Seven principles were determined to frame teachers’ work for critical inquiry: 1. Encouraging student dialog of critical issues through purposeful text and media selection 2. Connecting text and media to students’ lives through ongoing reflective practice 3. Empowering student voice 4. Use of open-ended questions to develop deeper connections 5. Sharing multiple perspectives through knowledge building circles 6. Use of misconceptions to guide the learning 7. Affirming identities and encouraging advocacy [31]. Children’s natural curiosities about the world and the desire to deepen their understanding about the world are significant elements to both concepts, inquiry and critical pedagogy. As children inquire about the world and pose relevant questions and theories about issues that are important to them, the teacher incorporates social dimensions and considerations of power relationships into the learning. Collectively the class explores misconceptions and respond to possibilities for change. The seven principles for teaching critical literacy within an inquiry-based approach demonstrate how two twenty-first century educational concepts can work together to

form powerful pedagogy. Critical inquiry-based pedagogy is a useful approach for citizenship education.

4. Citizenship education using 21st century pedagogies

In keeping with 21st century pedagogies, schools today are working towards developing individuals who are creative problem solvers and critical thinkers. The global pandemic of 2020 provides a compelling example of how awareness of local and global communities is necessary for understanding society and implications for living well. Questions such as: Where did the virus come from? How did it spread? What was/is being done to prevent the spread? Who/What communities are most impacted by the pandemic? Why? What could be done now to protect ourselves, loved ones, and communities? How can we share information about ways to protect against the pandemic? What might life be like afterward the pandemic? To engage with these questions, students require the skills taught in critical inquiry. Likewise, these questions connect with citizenship education.

Citizenship education, ranges in purpose and perspective. From obedient citizens to activators of change [34, 35], how citizenship education is taught depends on the desired outcome. As previously noted in this chapter, in my work with teacher candidates, a critical stance to citizenship education is used to teach how to teach social studies. In doing so I begin by exploring rationale development or building a vision for teaching citizenship education. Foundational readings from critical scholars [21–25, 36, 37] ignite the journey to planning for citizenship education. Teacher candidates are encouraged to reflect on and analyze their positionality and consider what it means for classroom teaching. They are also encouraged to think about their positionality in relation to critical theory. As we work through developing a vision for teaching, I introduce students to social studies as a subject area; and, within social studies they are introduced to citizenship education. Critical theory, social studies, and citizenship education are presented as associated. Once theory is introduced, more time is spent engaging with practice. Examining mandated curriculum assists beginning teachers understand the expectations for teaching content areas. For example, in Ontario, Canada, the Ministry of Education clearly outlines the goals, perspective, and processes for teaching citizenship education in social studies. For what a citizen is, the document states: “The responsible, active citizen participates in their community for the common good.” ([11], p. 9).

The “common good” is a significant theory to unpack in and of itself. How the notion of “common good” works inside of both democratic and capitalist nation states, like Canada, all while contemplating critical theories is a significant task for beginning teachers. In following inquiry-based pedagogy, teacher candidates are encouraged to explore these theories and notions *with* their students, recognizing that becoming an active citizen is a process that is personal, contextual, and experiential. Building on perspective and process, the Ministry document explains, “students are given opportunities to learn about what it means to be a responsible, active citizen in the community of the classroom and the diverse communities to which they belong within and outside the school. It is important for students to understand that they belong to many communities and that, ultimately, they are all citizens of the global community” ([11], p. 9). To reach that understanding teachers must engage in citizenship education through critical inquiry pedagogy.

In the Ontario context, each grade of elementary school (grades 1 thru 8) is assigned two topics in Social Studies (one topic in each of the two strands), see **Figure 3**. The topics are well suited to critical inquiry-based pedagogy for active and responsible

The topics treated in the two strands for Grades 1 to 6 are listed below.

A. Heritage and Identity

Grade 1: Our Changing Roles and Responsibilities

Grade 2: Changing Family and Community Traditions

Grade 3: Communities in Canada, 1780–1850

Grade 4: Early Societies to 1500 CE

Grade 5: Interactions of Indigenous Peoples and Europeans prior to 1713,
in What Would Eventually Become Canada

Grade 6: Communities in Canada, Past and Present

B. People and Environments

Grade 1: The Local Community

Grade 2: Global Communities

Grade 3: Living and Working in Ontario

Grade 4: Political and Physical Regions of Canada

Grade 5: The Role of Government and Responsible Citizenship

Grade 6: Canada's Interactions with the Global Community

Figure 3.

Topics in the social studies curriculum ([11], p. 22). © Queen's printer for Ontario, 2018. Reproduced with permission.

citizenship. It is worthwhile to note the topics outlined in the curriculum are broad based, open for multiple perspectives to engage in the inquiry. The concept of change in the Heritage and Identity strand acknowledges that over time and place there is change and difference in what we understand to be roles, families, traditions, in a community. Binaries are gone and broad explorations of the past, present, and future as well as local and global, and Indigenous peoples, government and settlers are included.

The Ministry provides a detailed framework for citizenship education, see **Figure 4** ([11], p. 10). Applying a critical lens, the framework lends itself well to achieving the goals for active citizenship education: structures, active participation, attributes, and identity. These elements represent areas for addressing issues of equity and considerations for the “common good” in society. “Structures” address the institutional elements of society and how those work for against individuals and groups at present and over time. “Attributes” address the cultural understandings, values, and ways of being that support or hinder equity. “Identity” addresses the individual and how one experience power or oppression based on their identity and history in the context. And, “active participation” engages the other elements in activism for the “common good”. The second layer outlines the knowledge, skills, and attitudes students should develop and ways for developing them for the goals of citizenship. The inner layer of the framework explores potential topic areas. The topic areas listed are broad in nature and complement the “strand” or topics/themes provided in the curriculum.

While there are no universal models or standard for teaching citizenship education through critical inquiry, how educators design and use the tools and philosophies of such a pedagogy depends upon students and teachers' everyday relations of power, their lived challenges, and experiences. The ideas and priorities will play out differently in different classroom communities. The framework shared here (**Figure 4**) is one example of how teachers may frame their practice to allow for student voice and experience using critical inquiry-based pedagogy to lead the way towards responsible, active citizenship.

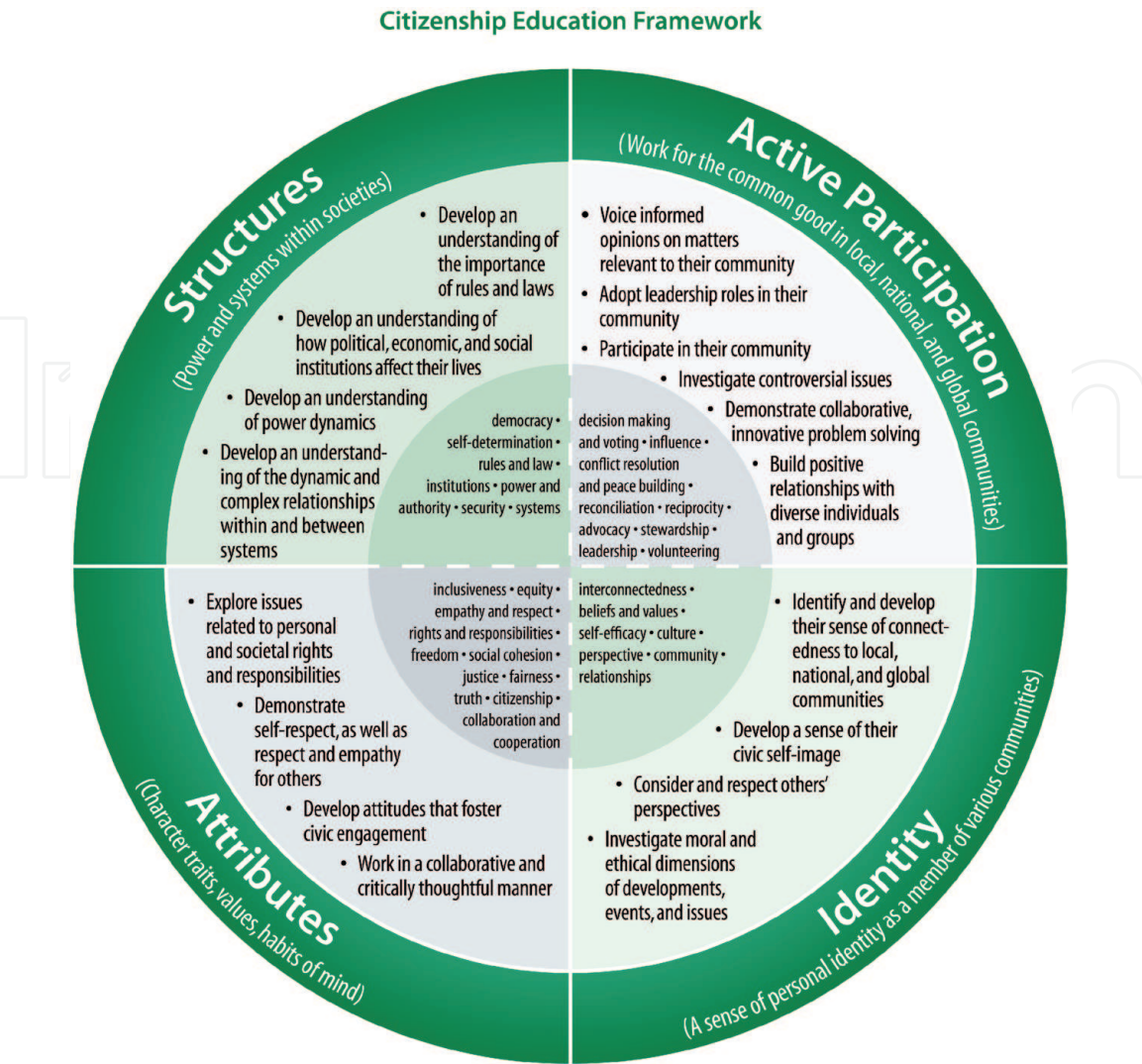


Figure 4.
Citizenship education framework ([11], p. 10). © Queen's printer for Ontario, 2018. Reproduced with permission.

5. Portraits of elementary teachers work for citizenship education

Teachers approach citizenship education in a number of ways. Even when using the same frameworks, practices may look different depending on the priorities and needs of the classroom and school communities. The following two portraits illustrate elementary teachers' work using critical inquiry-based pedagogy for citizenship education.

5.1 Portrait one: 2nd grade class explores identity

Beach and Cleovoulou' study of critical inquiry-based classrooms share the details of a second-grade urban classroom of students who were curious about race [33]. The teacher overheard the children chatting over several days about skin color and they began to express interest in their identities based on their skin. The teacher took notice of the conversations and took the opportunity to extend the discussions to anti-racism through an exploration of identity [33]. Using a picture book to start the discussion, students asked, "What is race?" "What is racism?" "Who am I and what about it?". These lofty questions coming from seven-year old children framed the learning. For this type of learning, the teacher was clear about her vision for teaching:

“I love involving children in the stories and children being able to make a change or enacting a change...I find what I want children to do is have a deeper exploration and connection to themselves, to Canada, their culture, to their race and others, to biases that maybe they hear express or express themselves...so there are two parts to that—there’s finding the beautiful books with the beautiful stories and what happens in those books we can look at critically.” ([33], p. 169).

The children explored their identities and their thoughts about race, and with the support of their teacher, framed their work in affirmation and appreciation for identities ([33], pp. 161–162). At the end of the unit the class invited their families to the classroom to celebrate everyone’s unique identity. A key learning in the process was that everyone’s unique identity within the collective space of the classroom community was important. Each student was special and it was important to recognize and affirm each person as a unique part of the class. Cleovoulou and Beach’s seven principles from critical inquiry-based pedagogy [31] were demonstrated in this approach to citizenship education.

A shared reading of *Let us Talk about Race*, a story by Julius Lester [38], explores ideas of race, self-respect and acceptance of others, launched a study of identity in the second-grade classroom. By selecting this text, the teacher set up the discourse of race and anti-racism in a way that she was able to probe and address the issues from several angles; through a narrator, a story with several entry points for explorations, and visual cues from the text. The text remained on the chalkboard ledge for the duration of the year for students and teacher to refer back when needing to highlight key learnings about identity and community. Encouraging student dialog through purposeful text selection led to the development of autobiographic work to explore citizenship.

The learning for responsible, active citizenship took shape around the development of an autobiographic book the teacher named a “Selfology”. Throughout the unit, children engaged in a variety of experiences where they were encouraged to gather data about themselves and their family history and represent the information in creative ways. Each student created their own selfology text. To create the selfology, students connected the stories of unique identity in the Lester text to their lives through ongoing reflective practice ([33], p. 169). The opening lines of Lester’s [38] book, “I am a story, so are you, so is everyone” gave students “in” to tell their own story in the form of an autobiography. Information was gathered and knowledge developed through texts, class and group discussions, interviews with family, and reflective practice.

Student voice was encouraged through the teacher’s use of asking open ended questions as a means to develop deeper connection to identity and sense of belonging. ([33], p. 173). Open questions such as “so who can be in a family?” ([33], p. 172) invited students to bring multiple perspectives to the discussion and also allowed for misconceptions to be brought forward. The ongoing discussions that took place in knowledge building circles ([33], p. 173) (forums of discussion where children are seated in a circle and ideas are shared with children responding and building, analyzing, refuting them) allowed for misconceptions to be guided along and reconsidered.

The unit emphasized empowering student voice both in the public sharing of information and the personal reflective practice and artwork that made their final product (see **Figure 5**).

Pages of each student’s Selfology were compiled and the end product was an appreciation and celebration for each student’s identity and place in the community. Pages included a “family flower” was created that placed the child at the centre of the image and layers of petals included photos of people who contributed and were important people in the child’s life (blood relative and otherwise) were glued to the petals. The teacher noted that creating a family history with the child at the centre, “allowed child to determine who was significant in their life, who played a role in their life.” ([33], p. 178). This re-design of the traditional family tree offers



Figure 5.
A Selfology cover ([33], p. 171).

an explicit critical re-reading of who is in a family. Other pages in the Selfology included an interview with a relative, a timeline highlighting significant life events, and a self-portrait (see **Figure 6**).

The purpose of the self-portrait was to build affirmation of identity in young children; to have children recognize that each person is different and unique and that everyone is special. Furthermore, students were guided to discuss that in Canada all people, unless they are First Nations, Métis, or Inuit, come from another country. A sense of the self and the Other was central to the learning and to the process of developing an understanding of identity central the development of responsible, active citizenship. Ultimately, the six-week unit of study brought forward a high degree of



Figure 6.
The self-portrait page of the Selfology ([33], p. 173).

affirmation and recognition of the value of identity and created a sense of belonging for children within their classroom community. This unit of study was, as most inquiry-based learning, takes on an integrated approach and combined language, literacy, visual arts, and social studies. The Grade 2 Social Studies topic, Changing Family and Community Traditions (see **Figure 3**) is highlighted here.

5.2 Portrait two: 6th grade class explores their relationship to nature

Natural Curiosity [18] is a teacher resource that looks at critical inquiry-based pedagogy through the lens of environmental reciprocity. Environmental reciprocity, the connection and responsible care for the environment, is an act of responsible, active citizenship. Natural Curiosity shares stories of teachers' work; one story in particular illustrates 6th graders' transformation to responsible, active citizenship using an integrated approach to curriculum. The teacher introduced the topic of climate change. Discussions, idea sharing, questioning, and outdoor exploration ensued and activism emerged from the students themselves ([18], p. 263).

Students participated in knowledge building, a process where they not only share their own ideas but students build on each other's ideas and theories using a computer database ([33], pp. 264–265). It was only by immersion, gathering and organizing information, and time to process that students began to invest in the ideas related to climate change. Eventually, students asked the question, "Shouldn't we be trying to do something about this?" ([18], p. 265) and from there activism set in. Critical pedagogy, the desire to take action towards justice, is integral to authentic responsible, active citizenship. The teacher reflected on the process and explained, "by giving them time to understand the mission, letting them pursue their own areas of inquiry, the "action" part came naturally from them and it was much more impactful" ([18], p. 265).

The next step involved brainstorming ideas for different types of actions. Knowledge building circles continued the inquiry where students brainstormed and collaborated to come up with viable ideas for change. Through student-led discussions, where student voice was prioritized, the idea of bringing a guest speaker to class arose. The teacher's willingness to pause and follow the students' lead led to student investment. The teacher's role was to support student ideas and bring the suggested guest to the classroom. The teacher reflects on the learning, "I really believe that [the guest speaker] was the moment the class moved away from being engaged to being empowered. It left the students with a sense that anything was possible". Through critical inquiry, the students were experiencing active citizenship.

Active citizenship then led to a sense of responsibility. Empowered with knowledge and a feeling that they could induce change, students chose to write to their members government. A member of parliament came to visit and the class also received a letter acknowledging their good work. The teacher confirmed, the responses from the government were "such a validating experience for the students, who strongly believed they were tackling a 'real' issue and were being taken seriously" ([18], p. 267).

Field trips and ongoing critical inquiry-based pedagogy ensued. The students spent a lot of time outdoors, planted trees around their school and to culminate the unit, students held a "Climate Expo" for their school mates. This event gave students a forum to share their work and actions for addressing climate change. In the end, the critical inquiry-based pedagogy that began as an exploration of their relationship to nature yielded the following outcomes from their responsible, active citizenship:

1. The school made a commitment to becoming an Eco School
2. We inspired other classes to explore the problem of climate change

3. Our custodian has made it a priority for the school to switch to energy efficient lights
4. We are going to try and implement “lightless” lunches where each class turns off their lights during the lunch hour
5. We are going to monitor our waste
6. We share our mission with thousands of people on social media
7. We inspired other teachers to try a different pedagogical approach ([18], p. 270).

Ultimately, this unit of study emphasized several elements of both critical pedagogy and inquiry-based learning. Among them, questioning, collaborating, data gathering and organizing, communicating, were prominent. From the high degree of student-driven learning, which led to an investment in the learning, students developed a sense of responsibility which sparked activism. The teacher reflected on the experience:

“Realizing the freedom [the students] had during this inquiry, the students became much more engaged in the process. They eagerly sought answers to their questions, and felt free to ask more. It also became very apparent to the students that with freedom comes responsibility, and they took on this responsibility by being accountable to each other and to the inquiry process. They realized how important their mission was, and with that realization, our classroom environment changed: it looked, felt, and sounded different as we made the shift from engagement to empowerment...They knew and talked about the importance of this empowerment and its impact on their ability to make decisions in the future. If students feel like they are in control of their lives, even at a young age, it will grow with them. I believe that a student who has a sense of empowerment will be unstoppable” ([18], pp. 269–270).

This unit of study took an integrated approach and explored areas of science, language, and social studies. The Grade 6 Social Studies topic Canada’s Interactions with the Global Community (see **Figure 3**) is highlighted here.

What we see in the two portraits are elements of critical inquiry-based pedagogy for citizenship education that aim for responsible, active citizenship. In portrait one, second graders explore issues of race, racism, and diversity through a reflexive inquiry; that is, students engaged in artful and thoughtful autobiographic work of their own identities and celebrated with their class as part of building an inclusive community. In portrait two, sixth graders explore issues of climate change and active citizenship whereby students learned about climate change and then participated in advocacy by writing to their government and sharing information with their school community. Both portraits have dimensions of critical pedagogy including examining sociopolitical issues and advocacy. Both portraits use an inquiry-based pedagogy with students’ questions guiding the learning process (see **Figure 2**). It is through the pedagogical approach of critical inquiry that responsible, active citizenship is fostered.

6. Conclusion

This chapter explores citizenship education as the philosophical underpinning or vision for teaching in the elementary school classroom. Beginning in preservice teacher education, citizenship education may be developed as a perspective and

pedagogical approach to teaching by emphasizing the importance of developing a vision for teaching that is critical and inquiry-based in nature. By developing a vision or perspective for citizenship education that includes critical inquiry-based pedagogy, teachers can incorporate contemporary teaching and learning to all subject areas. Social Studies is the subject area that was used in this chapter to demonstrate how content and pedagogy can be used to activate strong understanding and engagement with responsible, active citizenship.

Government documents that reflect 21st century pedagogies for curriculum provide beginning teachers, as well as seasoned teachers, with helpful resources and guidance as they adapt mandated requirements to their school and classroom context and communities. By offering resources that are in keeping with contemporary modes of thinking and practice, teachers have opportunities to plan and teach in ways that are consistent with school districts across regions while addressing the needs of their students. Scholarly resources and teacher resources that provide examples of enactments of teaching for responsible, active citizenship are also helpful for illustrating the varied ways in which teachers can engage with elementary school curriculum using 21st century pedagogies.

Conflict of interest

“The author declares no conflict of interest.”

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