

Textbooks for Multicultural Citizenship Education in Canada: Human Rights, Diversity and Inclusive Learning

Hafiz Mahardika¹, Miko Nugroho²,

¹Sekolah Menengah Pertama Negeri 1 Penukal, South Sumatra, Indonesia

²Sekolah Menengah Pertama Negeri 1 Penukal, South Sumatra, Indonesia

Corresponding author: alhafizhmahardika@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

In education, textbooks and teaching materials are crucial. Teachers, acting as executors, use teaching materials and textbooks to impart knowledge to students, helping them achieve the learning objectives outlined in the relevant curriculum. The government, through the ministry of education, has implemented a curriculum that books must align with. Canada is among the countries that embrace the concept of multiculturalism, as it serves as a destination for individuals from around the world seeking employment or seeking asylum. Citizenship education in Canada places a strong emphasis on multicultural education and human rights, aiming to cultivate citizens who exhibit tolerance towards others and refrain from discriminating against minorities. Textbooks in Canada include materials that encourage students to think critically and embrace a diverse lifestyle. All levels of schools in Canada, including universities, use textbooks. In Canada, textbooks must be approved by the local state institution or ministry of education before being compiled.

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Corresponding Author: Hafiz Mahardika, alhafizhmahardika@gmail.com

1. INTRODUCTION

Civics education is one of the disciplines that has uniqueness in each country. Each country has its own unique curriculum and nomenclature ([Knowles et al., 2018](#); [Knowles & Clark, 2018](#)). In England, civics is referred to as education for citizenship; in Australia, it's called human society and environment; in Japan, it's called social studies, history, geography, and civics and moral education; in Korea, it's called social studies and moral education; and in Canada, it's called social studies along with history, law, political sciences, economics, and humanities ([Ainley et al., 2013](#); [Muleya, 2019](#)). The teaching and learning process, a system that intertwines with other components, reveals the success and quality of civics education in it. Learning resources are one of the components that determine the process's quality and results.

Teachers can use learning resources, either directly or indirectly, in part or in full, to support student learning and teaching. Learning resources are learning experiences that include the physical environment, such as learning places, materials and tools that can be used, and personal, such as teachers, librarians, reports, and anyone who has an influence, either directly or indirectly, for success in learning instances [Dick & Carey \(2006\)](#) defined instructional materials as all forms of learning, including instructions for instructors, student modules, overhead transparencies (OHP), video tapes, computer-based multimedia formats, and web pages for distance education. Teachers can utilize these learning resources to instruct students in citizenship education, enabling them to meet the established learning objectives.

Teaching materials are "subject matter." At that time, people often referred to teaching materials as "subject matter," defined as complete knowledge systematically arranged from subject matter units ([Bayrhuber & Frederking, 2024](#)). Therefore, the objective and systematic arrangement of knowledge in teaching materials is crucial to equip students with high-quality and coherent knowledge, rather than relying on the subjective understanding of the authorities ([Mohd Nawi et al., 2024](#); [Wang, 2024](#)). Canada claims to be a country that has implemented inclusive policies ([Beaman, 2024](#); [Gay, 2024](#)). This can be seen in the state's policies and laws, one of which regulates "multiculturalism." Civics in Canada transforms the existing diversity into something positive. The proper application of civics shapes individuals capable of mutual respect and appreciation, free from any form of discrimination ([Beaman, 2024](#); [Hamilton, 2024](#)).

Given the similarities in their diverse societies between Indonesia and Canada, the author is keenly interested in examining the textbooks and teaching materials utilized in each country for citizenship education. Canada's diversity stems from the influx of asylum seekers from conflict-ridden countries and job seekers from diverse regions across the nation. Canada also offers the opportunity for citizens from other countries to become Canadian citizens. Canada has the highest naturalization rate of any country in the world, with more than 80% of the total number of Canadian citizens who immigrate successfully obtaining Canadian citizenship ([Hou & Picot, 2024](#); [Winter, 2024](#)). The nation of Canada also

harbors an indigenous tribe, the Aborigines, whose population is steadily diminishing due to the country's rapid development and population growth. The government employs civic education as a tool to promote multiculturalism. However, despite the promise of inclusive citizenship, the country's diverse society still faces a deep-rooted pattern of discrimination, known as systemic discrimination. Researchers are interested in discovering the causes—factors that have not disappeared—of discrimination in countries that promote multicultural education. Are textbooks and other teaching materials unable to shape the character of Canadian society? Is the lack of seriousness from Canadian authorities regarding education a contributing factor?

Even in Canada there is a phenomenon known as "cultural genocide" in Canada, where a few cultures dominate the country ([Kempf & Watts, 2024](#); [Ruiz, 2024](#)). The indigenous people of Canada, known as Aborigines, appear to have no place in their own country, as evidenced by the widespread use of English and French. f discrimination in Canadian citizenship practices has also been deeply rooted, including factors based on the division of groups/classes, abilities, gender, language, and ethnicity ([Drożdżowicz & Peled, 2024](#); [Poppel, 2024](#)). The occurrence of this phenomenon significantly impacted Canada's indigenous population (Monture-Angus 1995; Canada RCAP 1996), including the substantial black population (McKittrick 2006; McKittrick and Woods 2007; Walker 2010). Additionally, racial issues proliferated, particularly in the aftermath of September 11, 2001 (9/11), which many attributed to Islam or Arab heritage (Abu-Laban and Dhamoon 2009).

Many non-European ethnic groups, including Aborigines, faced discrimination and disappeared in Canada, a predominantly white European country. For instance, in the early 1860s, Canada brought in the Chinese to work on the construction of the railway. Despite their significant sacrifices in building various infrastructures for the country, they were unable to bring their own families to Canada or even receive citizenship. Every Chinese individual entering Canada after the completion of the Canadian Pacific Railway in 1885 faced a head tax. This tax was intended to prevent Chinese people from moving to Canada. With the various problems in Canada concerning the citizenship of its people, the author wants to see how the government's efforts in regulating educational policies compile teaching materials and civics textbooks in order to realise a multicultural society and eliminate discrimination that occurs in their country. How are textbooks used as teaching materials and references for teachers to deliver to students? What is the main source for teaching civics in Canada? How far do textbooks and other resources influence the multicultural approach in Canada?

2. METHOD

Depending on their goals, we can divide literature review approaches into four distinct categories: 1) summarisation of knowledge, 2) data aggregation (of empirical studies), 3) explanation building, or 4) critical assessment of extant literature ([Zupic & Čater, 2015](#)). Whereas the first type of review (including narrative, descriptive, or scoping reviews) attempts to broadly map and describe a body of literature, data aggregation approaches attempt to aggregate results in a field, particularly between specific sets of variables. The explanation-building approach attempts to build theory without a descriptive study of the field it reports on, and the critical assessment approach attempts to primarily poke holes in existent literature. Given the goal of this review, we adopt a knowledge summarisation approach.

3. RESULTS

When it comes to the issue of multiculturalism in Canada, it is undeniable that everyone wants citizens on the periphery to receive equal rights in education, health care, and at every level of society. It is undeniable that all people want citizens on the periphery to receive equal and equal rights in the realm of education, health care, and at every level of society. Ensuring that these rights are fulfilled is a clear imperative. Fully implementing and practicing them may take longer in schools, hospitals, and other religious and political institutions. However, the question remains whether citizenship education in Canada can justify the neglect and exclusion of certain individuals. The concept of citizenship exists in various categories, ranging from foreigners to illegal/undocumented migrants who are at the bottom of society as refugees or temporary workers. While If we imagine a pyramid, the top represents permanent residents. The Canadian scholars who authored the citizenship guide posed a similar question: Can we enhance the equity of Canadian citizenship? Should we work to challenge the idea of the state, borders, and citizenship and build global alliances?

The issues raised above have sparked much discussion among Canadian citizenship scholars. Ryerson is a prominent Canadian university ([Ifeonu, 2024](#)). Ryerson (2010) understands the commitment to public education for settlers' children and the advocacy for residential schools for indigenous children as two sides of the colonial project. Schools have therefore been sites of contention, particularly since the 1960s and 1970s, with teachers, students, parents, and religious leaders mobilizing for increased access and equity for diverse communities, as well as for redress and measures to reduce discrimination patterns ([Banks, 2015](#); [Banks & Banks, 2019](#); [Chen, 2024](#)). Ryerson University is committed and proactive in creating respectful Aboriginal relationships, both within and outside of Ryerson University, as well as continuing to build and maintain a campus environment that welcomes and respects Aboriginal people ([Ruel & Tajmel, 2024](#); [Wayne, 2024](#))

As discussed above, Canada was the first country to adopt an official multicultural policy in the 1970s, and Indigenous groups have the rights to self-government and protections found in only a few other countries in the world.

At the same time, students in British Columbia (BC) can graduate from high school without taking a course in Canadian history. It appears that the government does not consider Canadian history when shaping the character of Canadian citizenship. In a complex social context, the question of what it means to be “Canadian” and how to balance diversity with national unity is one of increasing concern to citizens, religious leaders, educators, and policymakers ([Joshee, 2004](#); [Kymlicka, 2007](#)).

Content of citizenship education and textbooks in Canada to investigate the incorporation of human rights and multiculturalism principles into notions of national identity. Her study conducted a systematic content analysis of seventeen textbooks used in required high school social studies courses in the SM Textbook Analysis, providing insight into the relationships between students, other citizens, and the state. Textbooks serve as vehicles or tools for disseminating and reinforcing dominant cultural norms by conveying an understanding “of society's rules and the norms by which people live with others” ([Bickmore, 2014](#); [Bromley, 2011](#); [Joshee, 2004](#))

All core textbooks for grade 11 and one-quarter for grades 8–10 discuss human rights. Most textbooks frame human rights as integral components of contemporary Canadian national society. Fifty-three percent of the books sampled (i.e., textbook 9) discuss human rights as derived from Canadian law or social traditions. Five of these also present international law as integral to human rights, but four textbooks emphasise a purely national perspective. For example, a Grade 11 Social Studies textbook takes a national view of human rights states ([Bromley, 2011](#)).

In other words, while “all human beings” hold human rights, national governments possess the legal authority to extend these rights to Canadian citizens. Similarly, a Grade 11 social studies textbook asks students to complete a series of questions explaining how the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms protects human rights. The latest edition of the textbook also includes a section titled “Federal and Provincial Human Rights Acts” that provides students with extensive details about national human rights ([Bromley, 2011](#)).

The above example nationalizes human rights in the Canadian context as a whole and, interestingly, explicitly states that the B.C. Human Rights Code protects “citizens” (rather than a universal notion of protecting all people). In this case, the line between citizenship rights and human rights is very blurred. Citizenship education clearly incorporates human rights as a national issue. This strategy requires a careful balance between the national and international aspects of human rights, a task that the textbooks also address, including discussions of the global dimensions of human rights. Focussing too much on national formulations can diminish the universal character of human rights. Canadian national values also emphasise multiculturalism as an integral element. For example, about 80% of grade 11 textbooks discuss the rights of Indigenous groups, Francophones, and other racial or ethnic minorities, and about 40% of grade 8-10 textbooks have similar discussions. Human rights textbooks tend to convey only a thin form of multiculturalism, indicating membership in the state, but lacking the emotional dimension of the relationship between diverse groups and the ‘nation’, similar to the thin form of cosmopolitan citizenship in ([Kymlicka, 2007, 2011, 2017, 2021](#)). But the multicultural emphasis in BC also goes far beyond the “rights” lens. For example, when asked to characterise the relationship between national identity and ethnicity, more than three-quarters of the time (for 13 of the 17 textbooks), researchers selected the following option: The textbooks discuss more than two national ethnicities, such as Anglo-Saxon, French, other European cultures, Indigenous, Indian, and Chinese, all of which are considered important parts of Canadian national identity and culture. Textbooks also tend to emphasise Canada’s official multiculturalism policy as a valued part of the national society. Existing research on Canadian citizenship education ([Berry, 2013](#); [Joshee, 2004](#); [Kobayashi, 1993](#)), along with Canada's participation in Phase I of the IEA Citizenship Education Project ([Hughes & Sears, 2008](#); [Kerr, 1999](#); [Schulz et al., 2023](#)) documents a trend that this finding echoes. For example, in the Grade 11 text, multiculturalism is defined as “the policy of encouraging the cultural expression of the many ethnic groups that make up a country's population” and states ([Schulz et al., 2023](#)).

Textbooks also tend to emphasise Canada's official multiculturalism policy as a valued part of national society. Existing research on Canadian citizenship education along with Canada's participation in Phase I of the IEA Citizenship Education Project (Sears et al., 1999), documents a trend that this finding echoes ([Joshee, 2004](#)). A Grade 11 text, for instance, defines multiculturalism as “a policy of encouraging cultural expression of the many ethnic groups that make up a country's population” and notes that Prime Minister Trudeau introduced an official policy of multiculturalism in 1971. The policy will... “support and encourage the diverse cultural and ethnic groups that give structure and vitality to our society. We will encourage them to share their cultural expressions and values with other Canadians, thereby contributing to a rich life for all of us. The House of Commons (Cranny and Moles 2001, pp. 204-205) provides an example of this.

In a slightly different example, the national identity still enshrines the broader principle of multiculturalism, while acknowledging the tensions between minority and majority cultures. The 2010 version of a Grade 11 textbook describes a controversial case in which a religious practice, carrying a Sikh ceremonial dagger, came into conflict with safety regulations at a Montreal high school (shown in Figure 1). The text describes an extensive legal battle that ended up in the Supreme Court of Canada. The conclusion and lesson for students is that religious freedom is a central value of Canadian society. It tells a story like this:



FIGURE 10-8 Gurbaj was 17 when the Supreme Court made its ruling. In the meantime, he had transferred to a private school for his education. Do you think his family should be compensated for the cost of his private schooling? Explain.

Religious Freedom in a Multicultural Society

In 2001, when he was 12, Gurbaj Singh Multani's ceremonial dagger, his kirpan, fell out of its cloth holder in the schoolyard. The school board in Montréal banned Gurbaj from bringing his kirpan to school because it was considered a weapon. Gurbaj argued that it was not a weapon but a religious symbol, which he as an orthodox Sikh was required to wear at all times. After numerous court cases, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled unanimously that the ban on kirpans was a violation of Gurbaj's religious freedom as guaranteed by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. "Religious tolerance is a very important value of Canadian society," wrote Justice Louise Charron. The decision, however, does allow school boards to impose restrictions on how kirpans can be worn to protect the safety of students.

Figure 1: Upholding religious rights of minority groups

Source: Social Studies 11. Cranny 2010, p. 332

The textbook presents a person carrying a ceremonial dagger in a school classroom as an example, illustrating that the integration of human rights and diversity as elements of national identity is not unproblematic or free from conflict. A number of textbooks examine the tensions between majority and minority cultures. However, the point is that textbooks repeatedly frame multiculturalism as a national value, despite these controversies. The goal is for students to become more sensitive and aware of their surroundings so they see them as beautiful rather than threats. In the example above, the substantive content of the textbook explicitly links human rights and multiculturalism to Canadian national identity. Another way to support this integration is through pedagogical practices that implicitly promote the principles of multiculturalism and human rights for nation-building. Often, presenting one historical narrative as the "true" story of the nation excludes the experiences and contributions of diverse minority cultural groups.

Conversely, when we tell stories of the past or social events from the perspectives of diverse individuals and teach students to scrutinize historical narratives critically, we legitimize diverse experiences as integral parts of the national experience. In the past, Canadian schools used traditional narrative history textbooks that presented students with unproblematic facts to learn and remember. In contrast, contemporary textbooks emphasise teaching students to respect the views of others, to form their own opinions about historical events, and contain many open-ended questions to which there are no clear right or wrong answers. This trend has led to an emphasis on student-centred pedagogies. Human rights and diversity can help to support and deepen this trend. The emergence of progressive pedagogies has long been associated with it, and textbooks from countries around the world increasingly reflect this trend ([Bromley et al. 2009](#)).

Multiculturalism in Canada is one of the effects of globalization, which has spread throughout the world. George Cappelle, Gary Crippin, and Ulla Lundgren (2011) conducted research on citizenship education in the global era in three countries: India, Canada, and South Africa. Their findings revealed that in this global era, teachers must select citizenship textbooks that align with the objectives of multicultural learning in the Canadian student environment. This includes instructional strategies, assessment approaches, and the formation of a classroom climate.

The goal of global citizenship education is to revolutionize the way teachers instruct and elucidate the educational resources found in citizenship education texts. The 11th grade social studies text serves as an example of student-centered pedagogies that encourage multiple interpretations of historical events. It contains an entire chapter on historical inquiry and urges students to see history more strongly as a social construction. Like most people, you probably accept the history you read as fact—a true representation of what happened in the past. But history is not just a series of facts; it is also a story. This text's history may not be acceptable to everyone. The downside to a national story is that it may not be everyone's story. This is especially true in a country like Canada, with its many groups of people and perspectives. (Fielding and Evans 2001, p. 11).

Encouraging students to make decisions about historical knowledge and highlighting multiple perspectives empowers individuals and legitimizes diversity. In this way, 'regular' and culturally diverse people, rather than a dominant ethnocultural elite, have a greater say in the national story. We expect textbooks to enhance learners' pedagogical practices, fostering critical thinking, problem-based questioning and analysis, cross-cultural experiences, conflict management, exploration of societal values, belief and behavior in support of global issues, provision of experiential learning opportunities, and community engagement to combat various forms of injustice.

The intended textbook is one that encourages students to think critically when dealing with multicultural issues in their environment. We also accept participatory learning forms that actively engage young people and encourage them to participate in social activities, thereby fostering sensitivity to real public issues. This has received a lot of attention in Canadian education. According to George Cappelle, Gary Crippin, & Ulla Lundgren (2011), active learning strategies vary widely and include opportunities to deepen conceptual understanding, personal and interpersonal understanding, investigation of public issues from local to global, building critical inquiry skills and practitioner research, and responsible involvement in community questions and problems.

To create a young generation that can face the challenges of the 21st century in a multicultural framework, textbooks should contain real material and encourage interactive and participatory learning for students. Participatory learning will encourage students to be more sensitive and critical of the problems in their environment. George Cappelle, Gary Crippin, and Ulla Lundgren (2011) identify various forms of participatory learning, including case analysis, public issue research projects, city council models, peacebuilding programs, community participation activities, public information exhibitions, international online relations, and youth forums.

Several provinces in Canada have expanded formal citizenship education in this context. An emphasis on the uniformity of Canadian national identity disrupts the common ideals of social justice, diversity, and inclusion in educational curricula ([Davidson, 2024](#); [Tsang & Eizadirad, 2024](#)). Many Canadians want ideas about diversity, constitutional rights, and freedoms to challenge the reality of inequality. This expectation has increased among diverse communities of Canadian citizens for the enforcement of these expectations, including for Indigenous peoples, Blacks, and racialised minorities. The adoption of official multiculturalist policies in the 1970s and the expansion of constitutional rights in the 1980s were significant landmarks in the realization of social movements for accountability. Such advocacy, both inside and outside the classroom, and among multiple constituencies, including students, teachers, parents, activists, and scholars,

serves as the foundation for effective social justice education that advances citizenship rights in Canada. In countries with formal approval systems, the process involves a thorough examination of the national curriculum. In France, the cover or title page of textbooks must clearly indicate their intended grade and level. The Ministry, comprising universities and school teachers, receives textbook recommendations from the Textbook Authorisation and Research Council in Japan. Korean textbooks fall into three types: those produced by the Ministry, authorised textbooks (approved by the Ministry), and recognised textbooks (approved by regional supervisors in each metropolitan area or province), and thus provide an interesting example of coexistence. In Spain, instructional materials must be consistent with the objectives, content, teaching methods, and assessment criteria in the relevant legislation. Additionally, they must specify the intended level, stage, cycle, or academic year. Provincially produced materials in Canada typically undergo piloting before gaining official sanction. Private materials are typically subject to a Ministry approval process. The trend here is moving away from a single textbook and toward a variety of options. The general trend is for books to be part of a series, with one book per year or grade level. The government's curriculum must also align with the textbooks used. Reynolds University has created a guide for educators teaching global citizenship in a constantly evolving world. In addition to Reynolds University, the Kielburgers' Take Action: Guide to Active Citizenship has themes including the history and philosophy of comparative education, the right to education, teacher formation, alternative pedagogies, testing, multiculturalism, gender, conflict resolution, and global citizenship.

According to [Kerr \(1999, 2005, 2011\)](#) textbooks are one source for civic education. In most countries, textbooks are the primary source for teaching civic education. They play an important role in determining the teacher's approach and shaping the curriculum of civic education for students. Given the importance of teaching materials in the form of textbooks, it is not surprising to find differences between countries regarding the mechanisms for the approval and production of textbooks and other learning resources. Whether national or local government (education) ministries produce textbooks or require their approval varies across countries. In the UK, Italy, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Australia, and Sweden, there is no system for official approval of textbooks. Countries that require approval are France, Japan, Korea, Singapore, most Canadian provinces, Germany, most Swiss Cantons, and 21 of the 50 states in the United States. Hungary generally approves textbooks, though this situation is currently under review, while the Ministry supervises their production in Spain ([Davidson, 2024](#); [Hughes & Sears, 2008](#); [Kobayashi, 1993](#); [Schulz et al., 2023](#)).

4. DISCUSSION

Interpret the findings rather than merely restating them. Explain how the results relate to relevant theories and previous research; identify agreements, contradictions, extensions, or refinements of existing knowledge; and discuss plausible alternative interpretations where appropriate. The discussion should make the manuscript's contribution to sustainability education explicit and proportionate to the evidence.

Address theoretical, educational, policy, institutional, or practical implications where justified. State important limitations transparently and avoid overgeneralization, causal claims unsupported by the design, or recommendations that exceed the evidence.

5. CONCLUSION

Provide a concise synthesis of the principal contribution. Explain what the study adds to existing knowledge, why it

This paper concludes that in Canada, the creation or acquisition of textbooks, including those for citizenship education, must go through state institutions or ministries. Canada's high level of plurality makes the country vulnerable to discriminatory behaviour against minorities or groups that lack power. As a result, there is an emphasis on human rights and multiculturalism in textbook preparation. However, when preparing the material, it remains unclear where to draw the boundaries between discussing human rights and multiculturalism. There is still significant room for improvement in emphasizing human rights and diversity at lower grade levels, as well as in limiting one's opinion during the preparation of this book, particularly in the discourse section.

Furthermore, Canadian textbooks demonstrate a lack of full reference to the principles of multiculturalism and human rights in practical practice. However, B.C. textbooks demonstrate the integration of human rights and multiculturalism into national character building. The 'national' technique celebrates human rights and diversity, with a particular emphasis on pedagogies that promote multiple perspectives and empower individual citizens. Simultaneously, we generally steer clear of ethno-cultural discussions that concentrate on a single group, directing our national pride towards social and scientific achievements that are comparatively devoid of deep cultural associations. As an additional source of legitimacy, textbooks in BC strongly emphasise Canada's contributions to the international arena, and the country draws validation from international participation. These findings suggest that rather than a transition from an older national model of citizenship education to a new global model, there is a blending and integration of conceptions of national identity, multiculturalism, and human rights.

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Author Contributions

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