

Citizenship and Civic Education in Costa Rica, Myanmar, and the United States

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Abstract

Educators everywhere consider how best to prepare students with the knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviors to be informed, engaged, and caring 21st century citizens. This article provides a report of an ethnographic transnational field study examining how 30 educators located in Costa Rica, Myanmar, and the United States, conceive of citizenship and civic education based on textbook use, classroom materials, pedagogical practices, and instructional strategies. Data sources included field logs, debriefing sessions, one-to-one interviews, focus group discussions, classroom observations, textbook evaluations, and review of media documents. Participants in the United States network emphasized multiple perspectives applied as a lens to the study of contemporary global issues. Costa Rican participants mirrored this description but with emphasis on nationalistic goals to equip students with skills to work for tangible improvements in the lives of Costa Rican citizens. In the Myanmar context, participants relied almost exclusively on textbooks; in this case, context and culture informed the aims and approaches of civic and citizenship education. Implications contribute to transnational discourse addressing the practice of civic and citizenship education globally. This study expands dominant definitions and the importance of an ethnographic transnational framework to examine citizenship and civic education between diverse systems.

Keywords: Civic education, citizenship education, curriculum, 21-century citizens, transnational field study

Introduction

On a global scale citizenship and civics K-12 education is a core component of public schooling. Scholars and practitioners argue that one of the primary responsibilities of public education is to mentor students with knowledge, values, and skills in preparation for social, economic, and political opportunities inherent on local, national, and global levels. Yet the traditional notion of citizenship as a legal status conferred by individual nations for those residing within the respective borders has shifted to conceptions of citizenship as unfixed and changeable in response to events occurring everywhere —often beyond national borders. If the notion of citizenship is shifting, it follows that traditional definitions of civic and citizenship education are also in flux. Many countries have

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responded with a deeper emphasis of civic and citizenship education in school programs but a standard approach internationally is nonexistent. That said, scholars note the importance of a global lens as the world's economies, politics, cultures, and environments are increasingly interconnected (Banks et al., 2005; Giddens, 2002; Held & McGrew, 2003).

In response this article details transnational field research contributing to understanding of citizenship and civic education in Costa Rica, Myanmar, and the United States. Beginning research questions included:

1. How do educators perceive the role of preparing students for civic and citizenship education?
2. What do educators consider as the challenges and opportunities of citizenship and civic education?

The research was centered on transnational alliances to examine how educators conceive of citizenship and civic education based on school materials, textbooks, teaching practices, and accepted classroom strategies. Selection of research sites was based in part on varying characteristics of the respective national political systems; the aim was to examine citizenship and civic education in different cultural and national contexts through the voices of educators on local levels; this was accomplished by engaging with individuals in the respective nations who self-identified as teachers with experience in public schools and with development, implementation, or evaluation of education programs.

Field Site Descriptions

On the surface it may appear that Costa Rica, Myanmar, and the United States have little in common. The respective cultures, languages, histories, and political debates are diverse; as well the colonial histories and postcolonial realities of each nation are unique with distinct physical, political, economic, and cultural markers. To begin, Costa Rica has a history of democracy, along with commitment to environmental protection and human rights that serve as a global model to examine practices of democracy and citizenship education. The Spanish name *Costa Rica* translates in English to *rich coast*. In 1502 Christopher Columbus and Spanish colonizers donned this name, which led to Costa Rica's first Spanish colony founded in 1524.

In 1949, the Costa Rican constitution abolished its military and reallocated funding to health and education (Palmer, Palmer, Jimenez & Molina, 2004); public schooling has since become a government priority with investment of 20 percent of the national budget (World Bank, 2017). Themes of peace and respect represent the hallmark of the education system. All levels of schooling are shaped by national goals to develop civic competencies, including a love of country, recognition of the duties, rights and liberties of citizenship, and care for the environment. Education reform in the 1980s made the study of environmental education a priority (Ministerio de Educacion Publica, 2001). Years later Costa Rica was recognized as a global leader in biodiversity and conservation education (Gamez, 1991) and green policies that promote grass roots responsibility and pride for the natural environment (Martin, 2004). Criticism of the public school system stems from overreliance on national standards for testing that encourages rote memorization and direct instruction at all grade levels.

The East Asia country, Myanmar, is emerging from a long history of colonization, isolation, natural disaster, civil conflict, and classification as one of the world's poorest nations. In 2015 the National League for Democracy party won national elections that initiated transition from military rule to a parliamentary democracy. As a nation Myanmar is represented by distinct ethnic groups, religions, and languages. Myanmar grapples with human rights violations and citizenship issues that stem in part from ethnic and religious conflict. The Rohingya, a Muslim minority group from Rakhine State Myanmar is a case in point; the Rohingya have endured discrimination and persecution, violence, denial of citizenship, and restrictions by the Myanmar government. Other ethnic minorities located in various regions have also been denied citizenship under Myanmar law.

Myanmar government restrictions are also evident in the education arena. The education system is centralized; mandatory government education curriculum is required in all public education. Myanmar students remain accustomed to teacher-centered classrooms with limited participation. Educators are required to implement and rely on government curricula due to strict high school and university entrance exams based on government textbooks. Recently there has been tremendous effort for reform of the public education system; learner-centered approaches have been introduced but challenges such as large

class size, limited materials, and strict expectations for curriculum coverage inhibit teachers' capacity to transition away from traditional teacher-centered pedagogy.

The educational system of the United States (US) emerged as the country was colonized in 1607. Historically schools were the vehicle for *Americanization*; immigrant children attending public schools acquired the English language, traditions, and beliefs reflective of white Anglo-Saxon Protestants. In the contemporary era there is much debate about the culture of violence that directly impacts children, schools, families, and communities. The safety and education of students is challenged as conditions in the national landscape increasingly permeate schools in all areas of the US.

Unlike Costa Rica and Myanmar, the US does not follow a centralized education system. As such there are significant differences between schools in the various parts of the country but nationwide the education of children provokes conflicting debate. The Every Student Succeeds Act, a US law passed in 2015 governs K–12 public education policy. It replaced the No Child Left Behind Act but retained mandatory standardized testing. The 2015 legislation purports that all students need high-quality, effective teachers and curriculum standards to progress optimally and to demonstrate achievement through test scores. The Wyoming State school districts follow National Common Core Standards for English Language Arts and Math. These standards outline learning expectations for teachers and district leaders to develop curricula. They represent academic expectations for all students with intent to improve achievement and college readiness. Critics argue that expectation for all states to share one set of standards is unrealistic and undermines teachers' creativity to tailor instruction.

Review of Literature

School Programs

Citizenship and civic curricula were defined with awareness for national and international interest in 21-century education (Schulz, Ainley, Fraillo, Kerr, & Losito, 2010). Educators worldwide meld the notion of 21st century education with student opportunities to develop the skills, knowledge and mindset (Davies, 2006) for understanding of world interdependency, cultural diversity, multiple perspectives, and access to resources (Bruce, North, & FitzPatrick, 2019). In close alignment, the National Council for the Social

Studies' Position Statement on Global Education (2016, p. 1) encourages K-12 teachers to “develop the skills, knowledge, and attitudes needed for responsible participation in a democratic society and in a global community in the twenty-first century.” This statement recognizes education that integrates traditional school subjects with interdisciplinary strands of civics, global awareness, financial literacy, health literacy, and environmental literacy.

The study of civic and citizenship education varies across nations given that school programs are developed around local histories, societal characteristics, and cultural contexts. Civic education can be defined as the study of history, traditions, and culture along with the national form of government processes (Etzioni, Berkowitz, & Wilcox, 1995). Citizenship education encompasses the skills, attitudes, beliefs, and values that encourage students' disposition toward participation and engagement in their communities, nation, and the world. Citizenship education embodies a set of understandings, based on civic knowledge, along with opportunities to practice civic competencies (Hahn, 1998; Schulz et al., 2010).

School subjects such as math, science, and language arts are often organized as core areas with defined units of instruction. Variation is common with subjects such as history, geography, social studies, physical education, the arts, and health education. In many school systems civic education is a component of the social studies curriculum with topics such as government, law, and citizenship. At secondary levels separate courses in civics and government are often required for graduation.

Inclusion of citizenship and civic education as either stand-alone courses or strands embedded across school programs fosters global perspectives (Held & McGrew, 2003) and provides context for the study of global dilemmas and challenges (Banks et al., 2005). Civic and citizenship education can be a policy initiated by a government, a school program, a lesson taught by a teacher or student activities. The point of commonality across all examples is alignment with goals to educate students as engaged citizens in a world profoundly different from previous generations. As such civic and citizenship education is interdependent, providing students with core knowledge, attitudes, values, experiences and practice defined by societal goals and values (Banks, 2007).

Kennedy (2008) outlined 4 approaches for inclusion of civic education in school programs: (1) as a single subject; (2) integrated with specific subjects such as history and geography; (3) as a strand embedded in all core subjects; or (4) as an extra curricular activity. Fairbrother and Kennedy (2012) suggest that single subject civic education courses produce the highest results in terms of student achievement. They reported that outcome measures of single subject civic education courses were statistically stronger compared to the other approaches.

A group of researchers representing, the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA), conducted the 30-nation Civic Education Study (Torney-Purta, Lehmann, Oswald, & Schulz, 2001) and the 38-nation International Civic and Citizenship Study (ICCS) (Schulz et al., 2010). This research provided comparatives of students in homes, schools, and communities as encased in wider social and political environments. Researchers explained that the foundation of civics was based on students' interactions with peers, family members, teachers, and processes of socialization, such as the media, to construct meaning of social, political, and economic concepts. Researchers of the ICCS (Schulz et al., 2010) reported that eighty percent of the 38 participating nations identified civic education topics that were national in scope. Less than 30 percent of nations selected leading topics with a global focus.

The Civic Mission of Schools report (2003) outlined civic knowledge as an essential component of civic education, but noted that instructional processes are as much a part of civic education as content knowledge. Students encouraged to discuss public issues in open classroom environments were more likely to have higher levels of civic knowledge, political efficacy, political interest, sense of civic duty, and expectations for voting (Hahn 1998; Torney-Purta et al., 2001). In the US students exposed to interactive discussion-based civic education had the highest scores on measures of twenty-first century competencies, including economic knowledge, skill in interpreting media, and positive attitudes toward diverse groups (Torney-Purta & Wilkenfeld, 2009).

Teacher Roles, Perceptions, and Goals

The roles of teachers as they shape opportunities for students to interact with civic and citizenship education were included in the IEA studies. When asked 4 questions about

organization of civic and citizenship education, teachers endorsed integration with social sciences. A few exceptions included teachers in the Czech Republic, Romania, and the Slovak Republic who reported preference for civic education as a separate subject. Across all participating nations teachers noted the need for better quality materials, additional training in associated content areas, and extended instructional time.

The IEA researchers examined teacher perceptions regarding goals for civic education. Across countries, teachers noted that students should value knowledge of national history and respect laws (Losito & Mintrop, 2001). Protecting the environment and promoting human rights were the next most frequently cited goals. Danish and English teachers were less likely to report using textbooks, recitation, and lectures for civic instruction. Danish teachers used group work and projects and were more likely to report that knowledge development and critical thinking were emphasized in the civic education curricula. All groups agreed civic education lacked emphasis in school curriculum.

Lee and Fouts (2005) conducted a cross-national study of teachers' conception of citizenship education in Australia, England, the United States, Russia, and China. They noted that teachers did not rate the political roles of citizens as important, particularly as compared to social roles of students as future adult citizens. Drawing on survey and interview data researchers noted that across countries teachers emphasized the social dimensions of citizenship over the intellectual and political dimensions with emphasis on concepts such as morality and sense of duty. Teachers rated skills to help students negotiate world issues and dilemmas as a priority. Zong (2009) noted that the call to prepare teachers with a foundation for 21st education is well-supported; there is limited research examining best practices for global citizenship education yet scholars stress the importance of teacher knowledge for current issues and dilemmas along with pedagogical skill to provide opportunities for student engagement (Duckworth, Levy, & Levy, 2005; Yamashita, 2006).

Methods

Research Design and Theoretical framework

Transnational research is conceptualized within a range of approaches and disciplines. Brown and Gaventa (2009) suggest that various combinations of methodologies, strategies, and methods should be equally considered. In this study transnational research

in education was defined as studies that systematically utilize field data from two or more nations. A multi-sited ethnographic design was used with multi-perspective methods to gain understanding of teachers' pedagogical practices (Simon, 1992) and classroom practices in terms of social visions and power structures.

The stance of critical pedagogy shaped by education theorists, Freire (1990), Giroux (1992), Grant and Sleeter (2011), and McLaren (1989) was used as a theoretical framework. These scholars emphasize issues of power in developing critical pedagogies as well as the everyday life experiences of communities and institutions. Researchers considered the political and economic issues and dilemmas in each field site to explore the intertwined connection between social visions and supported pedagogical practices. This also included attention to the ways in which the wider societies (local, national, and global) might impact classroom practices and the relationships and activities of classrooms. Consideration of critical perspectives in diverse field sites meant that researchers relied on critical pedagogy to investigate ways that social relationships unfolded within boundaries of formal learning.

The work of Freire (1990) was used to construct and inform the research process. Freire rejected traditionally defined objects of investigation. He involved participants as partners in the research process. Moreover Freire was committed to understanding and being immersed in the ways of *knowing* shared by participants. He encouraged participants to ponder their own thinking. In this study participants were included in the process of investigation, examination, criticism, and reinvestigation. Researchers and participants considered ways of knowing as a practice constructed by how participants understood themselves, their social spaces, histories, and future possibilities.

The framework policy as practice (Sutton & Levinson, 2001) was also used as a lens to examine how and why participants interacted with curriculum in specific ways (Levinson, Sutton, & Winstead, 2009). In educational settings the concept *policy* is associated with formal mandates, rules, and documents. Sutton and Levinson explain that the formal conception of policy should include the taken for granted patterns and principles representative of decision-making processes in classrooms and schools. The policy-as-practice lens spotlights the automatic and routine norms, practices, and choices that are endorsed without consideration of formal mandates, rules, and documents. The agency of

teachers and legitimacy for their patterns of engagement and interpretation, as well as resistance of standard policies was considered. The policy as practice lens offered a glimpse of the how and why participants engaged with citizenship and civic education curricula within defined structures (Sutton & Levinson, 2001).

Participants

Volunteer participants were identified using the snowball strategy (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981) emanating from professional and social network contacts as well as collaborative education projects. Participant selection included 30 educators ranging in age from 25 to 59 with varying teaching experience from 1 to 21 years. All participants shared a commitment to teaching and learning about various concepts, values, skills, and knowledge associated with civics and citizenship education.

Data Collection

The organization of each research site as a network was a strategy for data collection and analysis (Maxwell & Stone, 2005). Convenience sampling was used to develop networks labeled as: Jaco Costa Rica, Mandalay Myanmar, and Laramie Wyoming. The intent was to facilitate understanding of the cultural dynamics of civic and citizenship education in each site as well as across networks. Organization by network provided a reference to operate from a common platform with mutual influence for data collection and analysis (Wenger, McDermott & Snyder, 2002).

A cornerstone of the transnational connections was inclusion of collaborating investigators (CIs) to negotiate geographic, cultural, and political borders inherent to field research. The CIs were individuals in the Costa Rican and Myanmar networks; they spoke English as a second language and self-identified as teachers in their respective communities. The underlying premise was that CIs were located in the field sites and could accomplish more than principal researchers working independently.

Primary data sources included upkeep of a field log, ongoing debriefing sessions, transcriptions of one-to-one interviews, some focus group sessions, multiple classroom observations, textbook evaluations, and ongoing review of media documents along with weekly summaries of local and national current events. Interviews were the central data

source across networks that represented standardization. Classroom observations by outsiders were not allowed in the Myanmar school system and textbook evaluation was not an option in the Laramie Wyoming network because teachers did not use them.

Data Collection Tools

Development of the interview guide followed the funnel approach (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990). Unstructured, open-ended questions were ordered from general to specific as a strategy to engage interest of participants. This protocol contained 4 broad questions designed to encourage general discussions as well as those related to civic and citizenship education. The use of non-leading questions was a validity technique; participants were given flexibility for topics to discuss and selection of experiences to share. Member checks were used to help ensure validity of interview data. This consisted of sharing emerging themes with participants in the later stages of data collection. Prepared interview questions included:

- 1) Tell me about yourself.
- 2) What is it like to be a teacher in _____?
- 3) Please describe a typical day in school.
- 4) What and how do/did you teach about citizenship and civics education?
Describe as much as possible, including resources and others involved in classroom processes.

The intent was to avoid leading the interviews in a specific direction and to allow researchers to be viewed as facilitators, encouraging participants to share experiences and opinions in their own words. The interviews were defined as ethnographic because participants explored the culture of schooling. Participants shared their lives and schooling experiences in great detail with a narrative quality.

The interview setting was created as a comfortable and safe space for participants. Researchers positioned themselves as learners who valued and respected participant knowledge and ideas. The majority of the interviews were conducted in English and transcribed in English. In the case of Myanmar participants, a bilingual CI facilitated some interviews; she gave participants the option of using English or Burmese but transcribed all interviews in English. One of the principal investigators in the Myanmar network often

suggested that participants invite another participant to be close by during interviews to provide support with vocabulary and/or to help clarify ideas in English. A similar framework was used with the Costa Rica network. Important to note that in the Myanmar and Costa Rica networks English was considered a language of instruction and subject of mandatory testing; teachers were expected to have a foundation of English.

Data Analysis

The Patton (2002) categorization style of case data was used for analysis. To begin a case record was established for each network. Maintaining individual case records was a strategy to compare and cross reference themes between cases. This approach limited the loss of potential contributions of each case (Stenhouse, 1988). Primary themes were determined after all data were transcribed as case records. Topics and emerging themes were recorded and a master list was generated. A reexamination of case records was completed followed by member checks.

Findings

This section is organized as 3 case scenarios, beginning with the Jaco Costa Rica network followed with case scenarios representing the Mandalay Myanmar and Laramie Wyoming networks. Each case scenario represents a detailed analysis of individual case records. The case scenarios are written as first person accounts to represent the voices of participants. Each scenario can be viewed as the themes within each network rather than the model by which all educators in a particular national jurisdiction are understood.

Case Scenario One: Teaching for the Greatest Country in the World

The most important theme for us is that Costa Rica is connected to the world with a patriotic history and popular image as a democratic and peaceful nation without an army. Teaching about citizenship and democratic values is an important part of our social studies curriculum. The purpose of textbooks is to unify students with patriotism, loyalty and the belief that Costa Rica is the greatest country in the world. We teach students that the Costa Rican government is a result of the peacefulness of the nation and democratic system that commits money to education not weapons.

In my community these themes and images are easily extended beyond the classroom as demonstrated by government funding for the first Costa Rican Civic Center for Peace. Our new Civic Center opened in 2014 and is part of a national project by the Ministry of Peace. The goal of the Civic Center is to symbolize that peace is worth keeping and also worth teaching. I tell my students, next time at the Civic Center, think about what it represents for us. I always hope that students will come back to the classroom after thinking deeply about and asking adults the purpose of the new Civic Center. Many share ideas about the Civic Center as a symbol of a peaceful way of living. Because it's a place for families they understand that it means peace starts in the family.

We study patriotism through national symbols such as the flag, national hymn, tree, seal, and 3 historical events: 1) the independence of Costa Rica from Spain in 1821; 2) the annexation of Costa Rica's northern province, Guanacaste, in 1824; and 3) the defeat of William Walker and the Nicaraguan army in 1856 battles.

In fifth grade we study the Crusades, the rise of mercantilism, and European exploration as events that led to the colonial period. The political and social histories of colonial Central America are examined but the key focus is the colonial period of Costa Rica. All the facts of these events are emphasized with memorization of names, dates, places, and events. An annual reenactment of the Battle of Rivas is a student-centered learning experience but mostly we rely on textbook-centered direct instruction, supplemented by questions for students to answer in workbooks.

In sixth grade we focus on protecting our democracy with historical study of events from independence to the civil war in 1948. We teach about the struggles and citizens fighting for democracy with the method of story telling. We tell the story of the November 7, 1889 event when workers armed with machetes protested the suspension of elections by President Bernardo Soto after the constitutional party's candidate José Joaquín Rodríguez won the election. Students know this story as the *Night of the Machete*.

Civics is very important. Yes of course we use the textbook for civics but we also involve students with lots of activities that extend beyond the classroom. We encourage full participation and students are committed to working together as a large group whether it's to perform a national dance, compete with football tournaments, or help with community events. These are opportunities for students to actively engage as citizens, to show

themselves, their friends, families and communities that we are all committed to and able to be part of something bigger and to improve our daily lives along the way. We teach students to embrace the rules necessary for community cohesiveness and improvements as well as for social justice. We expect students to respect and follow the rules, but we don't use much instructional time to discuss the rules or the consequence of not respecting social norms. Students know the rules from their families and communities.

I can say too that discussion of local and national events is often missing in the classroom when we study government topics in the textbooks. We mostly rely on rote memorization and testing to cover textbook material. Emphasis is on teaching for retention of facts and information. Our methods include rote memorization, recitation, and directing students to copy from the board or from social studies textbooks into their notebooks. At home students memorize the lessons copied from the board.

SUMMARY. The Jaco Costa Rica participants reported the importance of equipping students with the foundation for peace and tangible improvements in the lives of Costa Rican citizens. The cycle two textbooks (upper elementary grades) mirror this focus; they are streamlined around the study of Costa Rican nationalism. Key areas include Costa Rican care of the surrounding environment, geography, culture, and history (Table 1: Curriculum for Social Studies Cycle Two).

Table 1

Curriculum for Social Studies Cycle Two

Fourth grade	Fifth grade	Sixth grade
1) National: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Map/globe skills • Cultures • Geography • Preservation of natural resources 	1) National: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political history • Exploration and conquest • Colonization & independence • Culture 	1) National: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political history • Culture • Economics • Society
2) Evolution & Human Development	2) Citizenship	

Note: Ministerio de Educacion Publica. (2013b)

Participants did not have the freedom to develop emergent curriculum and instructional styles; nor did they deviate from the prescribed curriculum. Yet the overarching aim toward nonviolent and peace education dovetailed with citizenship and civics curricula—across all aspects of the school environment. The primary goal was to cultivate positive interactions among students and to follow respectful policies that extend beyond school environments. Participants expected this goal to permeate students' homes and local communities. Their overarching message to students was to value tranquility and respect—to model peace daily in family and community settings. While it appeared that the Costa Rica network focused most exclusively on a nationalistic curriculum, the overarching focus on a peaceful coexistence had a direct link to the importance of peace as a global issue.

Patriotism is a key concept that is both noted by participants as very important and used in the textbooks via a focus on the identification of the national symbols. The *Curriculum for Social Studies Cycle One* (primary grades) uses a story format to convey key historical events that further showcase the importance of patriotism. Participants explained that their curricula expanded sequentially, beginning with concepts that were tangible and led to abstract ideas in upper grades. Participants reported that they did not challenge textbooks in response to marginalization of minority groups. The textbook study of Costa Rican cultural heritage emphasizes pluralism and the melting pot to study a variety of cultures within Costa Rica, including the history and plight of indigenous cultures. These cultures are cited as contributing diversity while the Spanish are credited with contributing language and customs.

In sum, an overarching idea conveyed by all participants was the reference of “exceptional” to describe Costa Rica as a remarkable nation and one that is committed to teaching civics and citizenship at the primary and elementary levels. This stance promoted the personal identities of participants as educators responsible for teaching and modeling the national values of Costa Rica as a peaceful and democratic nation.

Case Scenario Two: Learning from the Heart

Nowadays we teachers have good discussions about civic education, which previously did not have much awareness in Myanmar. Apart from global current events, most Myanmar

citizens, sometimes-even teachers, are not aware of basic issues and ethics of how to proceed in community settings. It's new for us. We really do not have the names or labels for ideas such as multiculturalism, civics, and globalization but these ideas are embedded as part of our teaching.

In the Myanmar system, learning from the heart, meaning rote memorization of facts is important, much more than methods of critical and reflective thinking.

Wherever we are, home, school, work or in the community the emphasis is on happiness, harmony, tolerance and kindness. So we are guided by the Confucian ways of operating from peace, understanding and tranquility. I think this can be contrasted with the US system of creativity and critical thinking. Besides, in the classroom, the common ratio of 1 teacher to 100 students makes interactive critical reflective learning difficult.

In the classroom we use the authorized textbooks and bring them to life. Accepted topics of civic education in other systems—such as political literacy and critical pedagogy do not exist anywhere in our textbooks. However, coming together we teachers are drawn to citizenship and civics and are encouraged to reflect on our practices. Together we are teaching ourselves to think critically, to analyze situations and to be careful to do no harm. We follow a moral education curriculum with textbooks that very briefly address components of civic education such as multicultural education and historical literacy. But we do not specifically teach students about human rights, how to critique power structures and tools of critical thinking.

Yes of course our students represent different ethnic nationalities but cultural awareness and respect for inclusion of personal learning are not emphasized. As a country we cannot identify ourselves as Buddhist, Christian, and Chinese, rich, poor, and so forth—we are Myanmar people. This means we follow the moral concepts in the textbooks: (1) respect to elders, (2) responsibility for our duties and (3) to live in unity with our communities. These concepts are more important than a focus on different cultures. I can say that we teachers convey these ideas using the same methods in the textbooks that prescribe learning with stories. In addition, like the textbooks, we are supposed to teach these concepts as moral absolutes that all Myanmar people must adhere to at all times, under all circumstances.

We provide students with information and skills to stay safe and we observe their ability to put this into practice in daily life. When students make mistakes we help them. We have convictions separate from the textbooks. For example we might cover a moral teaching from the textbook, such as fulfilling our duties, but we might also discourage following it in a blind, absolute way. So the point is that we want students to think carefully about when and where to follow the moral concepts in the textbooks and when not to.

The government determines the authorized policy in the textbooks and changes are not allowed. Sometimes teachers follow it exactly but commonly we use the textbooks to shape what we believe is most important for students to learn. Of course this starts with respecting elders, fulfilling duties, and living together in the community. We teach our students stories that include themes of citizenship and civics education without ever using the labels citizenship and civics. We expand the range of topics addressed in the textbooks to include topics like critical thinking and the importance of participation. We do not participate in public activities that could be internationally defined as freedom rights or human rights. The bottom line is that as teachers we are responsible for protecting students from harm. Therefore we instruct students to follow the rules.

SUMMARY. The Mandalay Myanmar network was textbook-centric; Myanmar participants reported that teaching was impossible without textbooks. At first glance this evoked the direct transmission model, noted by Freire (1990) as the banking model of education in which knowledge was deposited into the minds of passive students and could be recited instantly in original format. Yet through teaching participants were able to create and convey a sense of purpose for themselves and their students. Participants reported that the textbooks and rules of conformity represented the core curriculum; yet they were committed to fostering something more than classrooms full of passive students.

Case Scenario Three: Make Believe to Real World Teaching

I immerse students in real-life learning via collaborative research examining multiple perspectives of contemporary local and global dilemmas. When teaching this way, you trip over from a make believe world into the real world. It's not teaching like we were taught to teach—*here's my nice neat lesson plan and clear objectives*. Students are not

going to be able to thrive in their future life, work, and democratic citizenship unless they can do the things outlined in the Framework for 21st Century Learning Skills:

1. Demonstrate ability to work effectively with diverse teams;
2. Demonstrate flexibility to communicate ideas, listen actively and keep an open mind when considering different perspectives;
3. Demonstrate ability to stand firm or to compromise when necessary;
4. Demonstrate the ability to be self-directed and set tangible goals;
5. Enter collaborative discussions; Become comfortable with complexity and ambiguity of complex, convoluted issues;
6. Be willing to challenge assumptions;
7. Come to discussions prepared;
8. Engage effectively in collaborative groups;
9. Follow rules for decision making;
10. Track progress toward specific goals and deadlines.

Making the learning engaging, meaningful, authentic, and relevant to students' lives is so far away from traditional, old-fashioned social studies teaching. If you're going to do this work, it's not going to feel good all the time and it's not going to be conflict free. Your students will encounter failure, problems, and conflict, and as the teacher, you facilitate as they negotiate and manage their way through it. It's messy as hell.

The learning is engaging for students because it has a real-life connection and impact. I don't want the kids to be bored or waste their time. I do my best to design work that is worth doing. One project called *A Taxi for Farai* was fraught with conflict. On a trip to Benin, West Africa, two Laramie Wyoming middle school teachers were transported from place to place by a local taxi driver named Farai. They learned that, although Farai charged \$60 a day for his taxi service, he only got to keep \$3.00. The rest of the money went to the owner of the taxi. Farai was attempting to support his immediate and extended family on \$3.00 a day. The teachers brought this real-life scenario back to the school's students, who almost immediately expressed a desire to buy Farai his own taxi.

With his own taxi he would make \$60 a day instead of three. Through various initiatives and a lot of hard work on the part of the students over a year's time, the necessary \$12,000 was raised and a small group of teachers and middle-school students planned another trip

to Benin to gift Farai with the \$12,000 and help him acquire his own taxi. The kids were extremely excited and could not wait to see Farai's reaction when they handed him this generous check. They were extremely shocked when Farai was not happy about being given a taxi. Having his own taxi changed his status. Overnight he went from being poor and happy to being rich and less happy.

The people in this West African culture do not like to accept charity—their value system involves working hard to make a living even when it is a daily struggle. Much more important than growing his business and being financially successful is being connected with family and friends and being able to truly help others in the community. Through this experience, the students learned they did not have adequate cultural understanding of the situation to prevent this disappointing outcome. In essence, they were forcing a capitalist mindset onto a person living in a culture that is far removed from capitalism.

The kids were so disappointed; they were all exclaiming, "This whole thing is a failure!" This is awful! We should just quit!" It was mind blowing for the kids! In learning like this you cannot predict what will happen and the students learn to deal with the unexpected. This situation actually resulted in much more effective learning than teaching in a make-believe, textbook-driven manner. This is as real as it gets. Following this extremely discrepant event, I facilitated as my students analyzed Farai's unexpected response. They talked to an expert in West African culture and to a person who grew up in the culture to try to better understand the cultural perspective. As a result of this experience, these kids' ideas about what is effective international aid did 180s and so did mine. These kids now have a healthy skepticism of the efficacy of American aid in foreign countries and it will actually make them better able to serve other countries in the future.

SUMMARY. The Laramie Wyoming participants created space for students to adopt active steps towards practice that were just and equitable through a social action lens (Friere, 2000). They engaged students in real life situations based on the Framework for 21st Century Learning Skills (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, n. d.). These participants were committed to providing real-life connections and experiential learning for students. Inevitably this focus included exposure to global social inequalities through active participation with the project, *A Taxi for Farai*. As well students in this case were exposed

to a cultural perspective that was different than theirs, perhaps creating some cognitive dissonance regarding how they viewed an African nation.

CROSS NATIONAL COMPARISONS. Unlike the format of the Costa Rican textbooks, the Myanmar government issued textbooks had defined values, skills, and knowledge interwoven throughout all grade levels but never referred to the labels *civics* and *citizenship*; the Myanmar textbooks encouraged teachers to practice civic values, skills, and knowledge with full integration in daily classroom experiences. Textbook examples included in Table 2 illustrate this point.

Table 2

Values, Skills, and Knowledge Embedded in Myanmar Government Issued Textbooks

Values	Skills	Knowledge
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fulfill duties—family school community, nation • Respect elders • Peace, Unity, Harmony • Commitment • Good health/hygiene • Economic growth • Importance of knowledge • Being a good person/citizen 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team work • Remaining disciplined with all activities • Being systematic with all responsibilities • Service to family, school, community, nation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government union of Myanmar • Independence from British rule • Government leaders such as Aung San • Geography of Myanmar regions • National holidays such as “National Day” • Occupations (doctor, farmer, teacher, nurse) • Symbols

Note: Basic Education Curriculum and Textbook Committee. 2015a-c

Distinct from other systems in which civic education is taught as a stand alone subject or series of curriculum units, Myanmar civic concepts are not presented in isolation. These concepts are integrated throughout the school day and embedded in nearly all textbooks.

As such it appears that the Myanmar participants navigated within a highly structured system. They altered policy and developed modifications. Small adjustments but with tremendous implications were evident. Participants altered policy in ways that were not obvious; in reference to Sutton and Levinson's (2001) 'policy as practice' framework, the focus was on teaching students how to participate in civic life. The Myanmar civic

education policy prioritized teaching of moral education and values of discipline, obedience and loyalty. Educators were urged to teach students to memorize and accept the legitimacy of moral concepts without question. Close reliance on the textbooks suggested that students would automatically become good citizens based on memorization. In this case becoming good citizens was defined by an authoritarian setting. Yet participants served as both instigators and moderators, allowing students to contribute their own ideas. They specifically created safe and somewhat open environments to encourage students. Similar to the Costa Rica network but on a very different level, participants were committed to teaching citizenship with a balance of political and social unity.

The Laramie Wyoming participants, however, relied on a 21-century education framework to engage students with global visions. As teachers they were risk takers. At the level of the intended curriculum, diversity and global citizenship were important concepts. Participants used the concept of multiple perspectives as a lens for the study of global issues; students and participants engaged in experiential learning, authentic simulations, and problem-based learning to deliberate solutions to global dilemmas and issues endemic to developing a stance for citizenship and civics. At the classroom level planning was developed with a broad brush, allowing for maximum input and participation from both teachers and students. Unlike the Jaco Costa Rica and Mandalay Myanmar cases, the Laramie Wyoming case was not constrained by use of textbooks, thus more flexibility for teacher creativity was expected.

Discussion, Conclusion and Implications

Discussion

Current reform efforts in the education systems of Costa Rica and Myanmar aim for alignment of school programs with a 21-century education framework; at the same time, the US education system is cycling back into a more traditional, separate-discipline-approach to instruction. Although the Laramie Wyoming participants were accountable for teaching the Common Core Standards, they had autonomy with implementation of the curriculum and instruction to address standards. Important to note that K-12 teachers in Laramie Wyoming generally follow a prescribed curriculum with fidelity and are accountable to teach all subtopics related to core subjects. In this case school subjects

were taught in isolation using traditional practices. Teachers from diverse subject areas rarely collaborated to plan and teach interdisciplinary units.

Similar to the Jaco Costa Rica network, the Laramie Wyoming network mirrors Parker's (2003) notion that schools steeped in curricular and civic spaces can realize purposeful citizenship; such schools serve as genuine markers of citizenship education; amplified by their "social significance" for "community life" (Dewey, 1900, p. 14). From Western perspectives, interactive classrooms that encourage students to express, respect, and understand different sides of social issues, are viewed as beneficial for 21st century skills and competencies. The challenge-based projects illustrated in the Laramie Wyoming network provide examples of teacher-facilitated, learner-centered, authentic, and challenge-based curriculum to engage students in civic and citizenship education. Participants developed curriculum that effectively immersed students in learning about and finding solutions to real-world issues. Throughout the process there were no easy answers to local and global dilemmas. Participants reported that researching and considering multiple perspectives surrounding real-world dilemmas, and brainstorming viable solutions seemed easy and straightforward at first but fraught with multiple dilemmas.

Implications

This study does not offer a single definition of citizenship and civic education or advocate particular approaches. Rather it expands dominant definitions and provides understanding of different bodies of knowledge, values, skills, and pedagogical mindsets. Each network had distinct vocabulary and labels for overarching concepts that represent civic and citizenship education; across the 3 networks is understanding that schools have responsibility to provide the knowledge, skills, and virtues of civics and citizenship within national, regional, and local contexts. Teachers create the space for students to practice regardless of political structures. As such teachers represent the apex of change, new ideas, and the anchor for both sustainability and stability.

Scholars suggest that individuals schooled within a regime such as the emerging democracy of Myanmar do not qualify as citizens, as they have not been granted the rights commonly associated with democratic citizenship. As well Myanmar, as a democratic

system, suffers from questions of legitimacy due to the role of the state with human rights violations. Perhaps Myanmar students do not have the same models and opportunities to practice citizenship as evident in the established democratic systems of Costa Rica and the US. That said it appears that participants considered the tension between competing goals of democratic citizenship from one respect and social conformity on the other hand to be their responsibility as Myanmar educators. In response they conveyed messages of democratic citizenship as stories that included skill with decision-making. These classroom experiences provided students with opportunities to practice democratic citizenship as a component embedded with other subjects.

At first glance it seems practical to recommend that Myanmar participants work toward the model of classrooms exemplified by the Jaco Costa Rica and Laramie Wyoming networks. In this regard Costa Rica is the better model given that as a nation it has a more conventional stance of citizenship and unlike the US is not characterized as a culture of violence. Costa Rica has had problems but remains a healthy and more central referent for citizenship. Meaning that nations worldwide have different histories with various citizenship violations that influence civics and citizenship curricula. Individual nations can tailor or edit curricula for citizenship to their national contexts, but the basic contours of change are rooted in broader global patterns. If this is the case, then citizenship education throughout the world ceases to be just a national enterprise. In the case of Myanmar, national elements do not disappear, but civic education might lose some national and homogeneous boundaries. Notions of diversity and culture could become more prominent. At some future point Myanmar civic education could extend beyond national borders.

The future promise of civic and citizenship education in the Myanmar context depends in part on two provisions. First Myanmar teachers need professional development of research-based pedagogies. Myanmar participants relied on teacher directed and textbook teaching. Mandating pedagogies that are shaped by methods to actively engage students with key concepts, skills, and foundations of civic knowledge will mean very little because teachers cannot teach what they don't know. Students' foundation of civic and citizenship will continue to suffer if teachers are not trained in pedagogy and content. Rather teachers might revert to traditional methods inclusive of page-by-page reliance of textbooks as the central source of knowledge, skills, and values.

Secondly, Myanmar teachers should have active roles with reform efforts currently in progress. A recommendation for individuals and organizations involved with the current reform efforts in the Myanmar education system is to encourage a bottom up curriculum strategy. The bottom up strategy provides a common ground for teachers to reflect on their practices, to experiment with innovation and to speculate on ideas as theories of teaching. Teachers take on the role of curriculum developers, rather than curriculum users. While the first position speaks to issues of empowerment and social justice, the latter suggests issues of control and dependency. Affirmation of teachers as curriculum developers challenges the traditional hierarchical order that generally locates them at the bottom of the professional ladder. As well, the focus of control over what counts as valid educational knowledge is shifted from external agencies to the schools and teachers' classrooms. This shift encourages teachers to search for new insights in the dynamic situations they face in classrooms (Stenhouse, 1978).

The bottom-up strategy also provides insight for the impact of curricular materials on school curriculum in developing countries. Because education expenditures are often limited in developing countries, textbooks are accepted as the primary curricular material (Pinar et al, 1996). Educational stakeholders of developing nations oftentimes view textbooks as a viable option for the core school curricular material. As such the inherent dilemmas associated with the Myanmar participants' dependency on textbooks as the primary curricular material are not limited to the Myanmar case. To a lesser extent the same issues are prevalent in the Costa Rican context. Critics at both national and international levels argue that a heavy reliance on textbooks means that cultures other than those represented in textbooks are silenced. This is certainly the case in both the Jaco Costa Rica and Mandalay Myanmar networks.

Conclusion

Conducting this study afforded researchers opportunity to interpret their own national context through the perspectives of outsiders and to glimpse other countries through the eyes of insiders. In so doing researchers experienced what it means to understand the thought processes of other cultures and to consider diverse viewpoints, while also recognizing personal country contexts from the perspectives of external observers.

With this it is important to note limitations of the study. The problem of standardization across the 3 networks was underestimated. The degree of variation in meanings, practices, and contexts was not considered in the early planning stages. For example, access to Myanmar classrooms for observational purposes was not an option because the Myanmar government does not allow it. Secondly, review of required textbooks was easily available for the Jaco Costa Rica and Mandalay Myanmar networks but not for the Laramie Wyoming network. The Laramie Wyoming participants did not use textbooks, but relied on dynamic resources, guest speakers, and class trips. Lastly, completion of the field research was dependent on where researchers were physically located over a 4-year period. Challenges included meeting institutional demands that ultimately disrupted the flow of data collection. The fieldwork process was full of negotiation and compromise between fieldwork dynamics and the restraints and realities of researching across time and space.

In conclusion this study offers a reference for understanding how educators in Costa Rica, Myanmar, and the US conceive of citizenship and civic education based on educational materials, textbooks, teaching practices, and accepted classroom strategies. Overarching takeaways include understanding that while there are many different roads to the same ends, all should be considered by the extent to which they demonstrate potential for students and teachers. That said more research is needed to examine how teachers navigate cultural and political structures through their pedagogy and across national contexts. There is a strong rationale for follow up, perhaps by way of detailed interview studies for a deeper understanding of what civic and citizenship education means within diverse national histories and within a global context.

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Appendix One: List of Participants*Mandalay Myanmar*

	Pseudonym	Gender	Interview Date
1	Yamin Chit	F	July 18 2018
2	Sai Hein	M	July 15 2018
3	Myat Noe	F	July 15 2018
4	Pann	F	May 25 2018
5	Cherry	F	May 25 2018
6	Seng	F	March 16 2015
7	Yupar	F	March 15 2015
8	Moe Moe	F	March 15 2015
9	Kyu Kyu	F	March 12 2015
10	Khaing	F	March 12 2015

Jaco Costa Rica

	Pseudonym	Gender	Interview Date
1	Katia	F	August 15 2016
2	Ana	F	August 15 2016
3	Myra	F	August 1 2016
4	Gabriela	F	August 1 2016
5	Vanessa	F	July 2 2016
6	Daniela	F	July 1 2016
7	Alejandra	F	June 17 2016
8	Mercedes	F	June 16 2016
9	Juanita	F	June 15 2016
10	Cata	F	June 15 2016

Laramie Wyoming

	Pseudonym	Gender	Interview Date
1	Nancy	F	May 1 2017
2	Thomas	M	April 1 2017
3	Jane	F	April 1 2017
4	Jeff	M	March 28 2017
5	Katrina	F	March 28 2017
6	Sarah	F	February 13 2017
7	Shannon	F	February 12 2017
8	Beth	F	February 5 2017
9	Leslie	F	February 3 2017
10	Lynn	F	February 3 2017