

From Invisible to Visible: The Portrayal of The Indigenous Peoples and The Development of Multiculturalism in Taiwanese Citizenship Education

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Abstract

This article aims to investigate how indigenous peoples have been portrayed in citizenship education in Taiwan since the downfall of the authoritarian regime in 1987. With the onset of democratisation, the Chinese-centric curriculum was amended to reflect the diversity in society. The trajectory of the citizenship curriculum development elucidates how the attitudes towards cultural citizenship, collective rights and multiculturalism came into play to form the narratives we find in schools. In this research, four versions of the official curriculum from 1983, 1999, 2010 to 2019 and the textbooks authorised for use with each curriculum are examined and interviews with the curriculum developers are also included to hear the voices behind the written words. It is discovered that Taiwanese citizenship education has evolved along the conservative, liberal, pluralistic and critical multicultural constructs and portrayals of the indigenous population have swung from depicting invisible, archaic and mythical figures to showing visible modern faces. The latest curriculum has adopted 'question-based' and 'inter-curricular communication' strategies in line with the critical race theory to go beyond simplistic carnival-like multicultural celebrations and confront students with real-life stories about the minorities' and counter-narratives. This Taiwanese case also exemplifies to young democracies how a critical framework can be incorporated into the curriculum-making process.

Keywords: indigenous education, citizenship education, multiculturalism, cultural citizenship, critical race theory