

Portrayals of Indigenous Peoples in Taiwanese Citizenship Education

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Abstract

This article investigates how Indigenous peoples have been portrayed in citizenship education in Taiwan since the downfall of the authoritarian regime in 1987. The trajectory of citizenship curriculum development elucidates how attitudes towards cultural citizenship, collective rights and multiculturalism came into play to form the narratives we find in schools. Four versions of the official curriculum from 1983, 1999, 2010 and 2019 and the textbooks authorised for use with each are examined. It is discovered that Taiwanese citizenship education has evolved along conservative, liberal, pluralistic and critical multicultural constructs, and that 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 to go beyond simplistic carnival-like multicultural celebrations. These thought-provoking and counter-narrative features aim to bring out critical perspectives in class though, as will be seen, the latest curriculum still has room for improvement in terms of its subtlety of intersectionality and its action-oriented design. This Taiwanese case can be an example to young democracies in how a critical framework can be incorporated into the curriculum-making process.

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