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From Classroom to Polling Station: A Cross-Canada Analysis of High School Civics Curricula

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From Classroom to Polling Station: A Cross-Canada Analysis of High School Civics Curricula

Master's Research Paper

by

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Acknowledgements

Introduction

Public engagement, specifically in the form of voter turnout, has been a topic of discussion in political science since its inception. With recent declines in voter turnout, especially amongst young voters, some experts have begun to fear a generational shift towards political apathy; a shift that could lead to a heavily apolitical society as the generations who value politics are replaced by those who do not. With this context in mind, scholars have been trying to understand what drives turnout, why participation matters, and predict the attitude and behaviours of the Canadian electorate. Through these queries, it has been found that there is a direct link between political knowledge and likelihood to vote. Those with higher levels of political knowledge and understanding have been known to vote more frequently, and those who do not vote have reported one of their main reasons for not voting as a lack of information or understanding. This grounding knowledge has led many to question and study the role that education plays in a citizen's decision to vote. The following paper seeks to understand the role that Canadian high school civics curricula have played in shaping the likelihood to vote for the youngest voting bracket in the nation. With a research question that broadly asks, what impact does a Canadian civics curriculum have on youth voter turnout?, the following research paper will employ a qualitative document analysis to better understand the possible links between education and voting.

The remainder of this paper is divided into six sections. For the sake of context, the first section of the paper will offer a literature review on what the discipline knows so far about turnout, voting motivators, youth, and curriculum in the Canadian context. This paper will then move into a methodological section, which outlines the framework that was designed to conduct the document analysis for each of the curricula. Using the bottom-up approach to the document analysis discussed in the methodology section, this paper details each of the ten provincial civics

curricula and offers a holistic understanding of the stated intentions, format, priorities, and specifics of each version. Then, using the top-down approach, this research compares what scholars have deemed to be successful approaches to civics curriculum to the content of each provincial document. These findings have been organized by the estimated youth voter turnout in the 2019 Canadian federal election to offer an additional layer of comparison to deem the efficacy of each provincial approach. Overall, these findings suggest that there is no clear link between curriculum content, delivery, and intended goals to the expected turnout rate for young voters in Canada. Therefore, to conclude, this paper will offer recommendations for future research and other possible solutions to help strengthen the current relationship between education and voter turnout.

Literature Review

1.1 *Competing Explanations of Youth Apathy*

When faced with the question of civic education and engagement, it is important to consider the political literacy crisis that scholars have pointed to in recent findings. Since 1990, there has been a general decline in the voting population in Canada, as the nation has seen a drop of about 11% in the eligible voting population turnout between 1970 and 2008 (Elections Canada, 2019). While there has been a recent increase in voting turnout since the low point of 2008, there remains a significant gap between young and old voters. In the 2019 Canadian federal election, polling stations saw 79% of voters between 65 and 74, but only 54% of voters aged 18-24 (Elections Canada, 2019). This 25% gap between the youngest and oldest voting cohorts in Canada calls for serious inquiry into the reasons for this lack of youth engagement. Seeing as this gap is not a new phenomenon, scholars have offered various theories to explain why this gap exists.

One possible explanation that scholars have put forward is the possibility of an increase in apathy towards politics in newer generations. Anthony (2016), Barnes (2010), and Pammett and Leduc (2003), have all identified a sense of passiveness as being one of the main contributors to a lack of voting by citizens aged 18-24 years old. These findings are based on analysis of some post-election surveys (frequently Canadian Election Survey data) which asked non-voters for their reasoning. Further to this point, a finding from the 2015 National Youth Survey indicates that a lack of interest in Canadian politics was the most frequent explanation for why youth chose not to vote in Canada (Elections Canada, 2019). Beyond a general lack of interest, other respondents have also indicated that they did not vote due to personal reasons, such as lack of time or logistical confusion (i.e., an unawareness of pre-registration procedures, location of polling stations, identification requirements, etc.), or a feeling of disconnectedness from the political races in which they were eligible to vote.

Another explanation for this increase in apathy suggests that political parties have not updated the key issues they choose to focus on, meaning that older generations still feel invested in the platforms, whereas newer generations have started prioritizing different social issues. Turcotte (2015) examined data gathered in the 2013 General Social Survey and found that younger voters had stated that not liking campaign issues was a motivator for not casting their vote (p. 6). Parties often focus on issues such as the economy, foreign affairs, or healthcare, whereas issues such as environmental sustainability, anti-racist policy making, and LGBTQIA+ rights are becoming more mainstream issues of importance for younger voters. This lack of youth-relevant issues being reflected in major political party platforms has likely led to a diminished sense of belonging in political spaces – a fact that is supported by the work of Bastedo (2012) who found that symbolic representation in democracy was a statistically significant motivator for youth, but

not for older generations (p. 77). The omittance of representative policy can speak to the wider culture of youth apathy, and would create a logical link to decreased youth voter turnout.

There has been push back to the idea that youth do not vote simply because they are apathetic towards politics. There have been various publications that have explored the possibility of alternative means of participation (see Anthony, 2016 and Print, 2009), in which youth seem to be more inclined to partake in. Political science has often turned to voter turnout as the standard for measuring political engagement, however, this approach discounts other types of activity. In his study that broadly surveyed youth engagement in Canada, Anthony (2016) considered eighteen different types of engagement and concluded that youth were equally represented, if not the modal population, in these spaces. Some of these alternate actions include attending a protest, posting political information on social media, boycotting companies that are not socially conscious, signing a petition, or volunteering with non-governmental organizations. Seeing as youth are present in these spaces, Anthony calls for the scope of measuring participation to cover more than just voter turnout to ensure the claim of youth apathy is accurate.

Lastly, a possible explanation for this decline in youth voter turnout comes from authors who consider the possibility of institutional factors that would affect participation in politics. Blais and Rubenson (2013) find that there have been lower levels of sense of civic duty determined across all age groups, which is a variable that has been proven as a reliable motivator for many to go to the polling station. Further to these institutional changes, Johnston et al. (2007) conducted a study that examined turnout in Canada between 1988 and 2004, and concluded that there was a "parallel decline in electoral competitiveness" to the decline of youth voter engagement, which could explain the decrease in turnout that has been observed. Less contentious or competitive political races may exclude those whose primary motivator to vote is strategic in nature, as the

stakes may not seem as high if the party policies are similar. Scholarship on the issue of youth vote is still seeking a consensus on what is causing the generational gap. However, the sheer amount of literature which looks for a solution to this problem would suggest that scholars can agree that increasing youth engagement is an important goal to achieve.

1.2 *Justifications for Increasing Youth Involvement*

It should be stated that the arguments put forward in this paper operate off of the normative argument that an engaged citizen is an individual who votes, looks to policy to create change, and understands the value of politics. While there is merit in alternative forms of participation that happen outside of government structures, the measurements used in this analysis focus on those who participate inside the system. Therefore, while the rest of this paper will focus on youth engagement specifically, it is important to establish why engagement is important for every citizen – regardless of age. In an address to the American Political Science Association, Arend Lijphart argued that equal participation can help eradicate unequal political influence (1996), and in a similar address, Sidney Verba (1996) echoed this sentiment by stating that the ideal politician would have an equal amount of consideration given to each citizen that they represent, however this is impossible if there is not equal participation amongst all groups in their constituency. The participation of all members of a community is the key to a functioning democracy. Without it, the voices of some will fall on those in power, silencing the needs of others who are facing barriers to participation.

Without this grounding assumption outlined above, one might put forward the notion that it does not matter that youth are engaged, and to dedicate resources specifically towards removing barriers to political engagement would be illogical. Meslin (2019), author of the book *Teardown:*

Rebuilding Democracy from the Ground-Up, used participant observation in Canadian communities to validate some of the concerns that citizens have towards politics, and then used his expertise to provide a vision of the Canadian democracy that is more inclusive of everyone – particularly youth. In the chapter *Bribes, Winks, and Nods*, Meslin acknowledged that skepticism in politics is not unfounded given the poor user experience, political corruption, bias policies, and power imbalance that some lobby groups have over others. While these concerns are valid, Meslin argues that citizens should not turn away from democracy as a result, rather they should seek better inclusion as a solution. In a later chapter of the book, Meslin asserts that enabling youth at a young age with the tools to be able to give direct feedback about what is important to them can make them more diligent in their voting as they become more active members of our democracy (p. 209). If these skills are developed at a younger age, there may be less skepticism caused by the confusion that comes with political spaces the citizens do not understand.

In line with Meslin's argument, the Samara Institute for Democracy (2018), a non-partisan democratic engagement charity, states that those with increased civic literacy are "more likely to vote, have stronger and more consistent awareness of their own political interests and how to advance them, are less likely to be influenced by negative or polarizing campaigning, and are more tolerant of others which leads to more inclusive politics" (p. 6). Without raising these types of citizens described by Meslin and the Samara Institute, we risk a "generational replacement" in which old generations who typically vote are replaced by citizens that do not vote, meaning there will continue to be a decline in voter turnout (Barnes, 2010).

Another reason that scholars have encouraged the development of politically engaged citizens is due to the findings that political opinions and view, particularly for youth, are formed through acts of socialization (Anderson and Goodyear-Grant, 2008; Anderson and Stephenson,

2018). While it may be true that some political leanings are formed through news consumption or in the classroom, the Ontario Students' Assembly Survey found that conversations with peers and family members was amongst the most influential when it came to whether or not a student saw themselves as a future voter or not (Anderson and Goodyear-Grant, 2008, p. 706). Taken literally, these findings confirm that socialization and family habits regarding political behaviour influence the engagement level of a young adult. Implicitly, these findings also confirm that political opinions are often formed outside the classroom; therefore, it is crucial that the tools given through civics' classrooms equip students to think critically and independently to ensure that political engagement is not predetermined by the settings that surround them. If students are able to critically evaluate media that is presented to them, understand how different jurisdictions control different facets of society, or assert their opinions about public policies that directly affect them, then the risk of ill-informed social interactions acting as the primary influence can be mitigated.

While it may be easy to shy away from politics and lean into cynicism, these authors help justify the need to invest in robust civics education policies. With this context set, there has been no lack of scholars that have attempted to produce well-reasoned solutions for the issue at hand. Calls to lower the voting age to 16 (Patterson, 2020), social media campaigns, and the creation of youth-led non-governmental organizations (Apathy is Boring; Future Majority), have all been a part of the multiple proposed strategies to help eliminate barriers for youth entering the political scene. One other solution, which is this paper will now focus on, is formal civics education (Evans et al., 2018; Howe, 2003).

1.3 *Civics Curriculum and Engagement Levels*

Turcotte (2015) stated that "17% of youth in the 2015 Canadian federal election did not vote because they felt they were not informed on the issues" (p. 6). Further to this point, Rubenson et al. (2004) used the 2000 Canadian Election Survey data to point out that cynicism and feelings of distrust towards politics did not explain much of the gap between young and older voters, rather they found more compelling evidence pointing to a lack of political knowledge as being the key barrier for youth political involvement. This found link between knowledge and voting provides grounds for the attempt to increase civic literacy as a way to drive voter turnout (Lewis, 2014, p. 23). In other subjects that are expected to be universally understood, mandatory curriculum has become the central way of educating the population. Feitosa (2020) conducted a study that was based on a cross-country analysis of different types of civic education. He concluded that mandated civics courses had the strongest effect on fostering a sense of civic duty. This is relevant as it relates to previous findings that indicate a sense of civic duty has been proven to lead to voter turnout (Blais, 2000; Blais and Young, 1999).

Along the lines of increased knowledge leading to increased likelihood to vote, there have been multiple studies that demonstrate that those with higher levels of education are more likely to vote (Blais et al, 2004; Print, 2009; Statistics Canada, 2015). These findings do not specify that it is political education that impacts voter turnout, however, it is believed that "education develops the civic skills and knowledge that facilitate political engagement" (Tenn, 2007, p. 448). Expanding on this point, Kam and Palmer (2008) assert that high levels of formal education correlating with high voter turnout is more a matter of pre-adulthood experiences in society and less about the actual content of the classroom. The participatory opportunities that occur as one moves through the education system creates an internal awareness of what it means to be a

responsible member of a community. More literally, Hillygus (2005) finds that the increased verbal efficiency that comes with higher education has a positive relation to voter turnout. Hillygus also asserts that students who had to complete "social science credit hours" were more likely to vote in the years following graduation – a fact that supports the importance of participatory learning, which will be discussed later in this paper (p. 26). As stated before in the argument put forward by Meslin, the development of critically minded citizens (whether it be through an explicitly politically-based education or not), equips the next generation with the tools to assert the type of change they want to see produced by their democracy. With this foundation, there is the potential for politics to be treated less like a game and seen more as a legitimate means of bettering the communities to which we belong to.

Looking specifically at Canada, there is a lack of evidence that directly links civics curricula to having a positive effect on youth voter turnout. Elections Canada (2011) asserted that studies done in Canada, the US, and Australia have indicated that this positive relationship exists between civics' classrooms and youth turnout at polling stations. While this may be true for Australia and the US, Canadian scholars have found contradicting results through their research. Milner and Lewis (2011) conducted a study which observed the youth turnout rates in Ontario between the 2004 and 2006 federal elections to see if there was any increase after the introduction of the Ontario civics course in 2000. The findings concluded that the lack of change in turnout rates for youth between the two elections indicated that the curriculum did not achieve its intended effect. In the discussion section of their study, Milner and Lewis (2011) proposed that "any lasting effect of civic education upon youth political participation rests on the effectiveness of front-line implementation" (p.136). As previously stated, there is a direct link between political knowledge and voter turnout, and a study conducted through a survey of Canadian youth completed by

Llewellyn, Cook, Westheimer, Molina, and Suurtamm (2007) indicate that youth are not satisfied with their levels of political knowledge. Further, they stress that "we do not know that having students memorize facts about the workings of government or particular campaign platforms will increase rates of political participation" (p. 12). This assertion shows a certain amount of skepticism towards the delivery methods chosen by the curriculum developers, and the next section of this paper will demonstrate that this stance in not unfounded.

1.4 *Critiques of the Current Curriculum*

Civics curricula in Canada, particularly in Ontario – as it is the only province with a dedicated credit to the topic, has been subject to criticism from scholars in the education and curriculum studies fields. Lewis (2009) conducted research using a survey given to retired educators in Ontario and found that logistical concerns about the Ontario civics course were at the top of the list for complaints about the class. Some of the logistical challenges mentioned in the survey included the length of the course, as students are only given half of a semester to absorb the intended message, as well as the time at which the curriculum is implemented. The findings from Lewis' research are supported by an assertion made by a later publication by Lewis and Milner (2011) who argue that introducing the civics curriculum in Grade 10 is too far removed from the age that the students will become eligible to vote (p. 140). Furthermore, civics' classes have tended to be given to early-career educators who are new to implementing lesson plans that effectively achieve the learning goals outlined in the curriculum. This indicates that lessons of citizenship are of low priority for the school boards and administration. With the inconsistency of educators dealing specifically with civics, the opportunity to develop and improve programming based on classroom successes and

failures is lost. Additionally, this creates a situation where universality is extremely difficult to achieve, meaning that the key lessons, takeaways, and learning goals put forward in each classroom will differ.

On a broader note, scholars in the education field have conducted research to determine the most successful strategies in regard to civic education delivery – a quest that was motivated by the aforementioned critique of the technical nature of the existing curricula. A study done by Hooghe and Quinteller (2011) concluded that of three different approaches to civics curriculum delivery, students were most successful in classrooms that encouraged active participation in an exploratory manner. Sample classroom activities to create these types of classrooms include mock trials, mock parliaments, community service, and experiential learning. Llewellyn, Cook, and Molina (2010) concur with this assertion as they examined four classroom case studies in Ontario and found that the lessons focused on the technicalities of politics, rather than focusing on the participatory part of politics. This participation is perhaps the best way to increase engagement, as it allows students to interact with politics in a way that encourages curiosity rather than critical debates (Claes and Hooghe, 2009).

Along this same note of participation-based lessons, Toledo (2020) asserts that classrooms that incorporate locally and culturally relevant examples into their lesson plans were able to engage their students more successfully. This study indicates that curriculum that relates to the personal realities of the students have led to a heightened of belonging in politics, and an increase in motivation to learn and connect with the material. This finding considered in juxtaposition with the previous critique that the current curriculum is too technical proves that the existing approach in Canadian classrooms is not as effective as it could be (Bell and Lewis, 2009; Tournier, 2009).

Opening up the classroom to a space for participation, rather than memorization, has been proven to increase interest in politics and connect youth to their communities in new ways. It should also be noted that these benefits may not directly translate into votes, however, there could be a surge in unconventional forms of participation such as protests, campaigns, and petitions – which still have a positive effect on policy making processes, as they accomplish the goal of increased democratic engagement, even if it is through untraditional means.

Overall, according to the literature, effective curricula would cover themes that promoted participation, such as voting, active citizenship, or a sense of duty. On the other hand, ineffective curricula would heavily focus on technical matters such as government structure or definitions of democracy. The remainder of this research will be spent trying to understand if the content of the curricula has any effect on voting from province to province, in order to better understand the root of the gap that exists between these classrooms and the polling stations.

Methodology

2.1 *Method Overview*

My approach to this research was two-fold. The first step to trying to observe the relationship between the curriculum content and voter turnout was to get a sense of what exactly each province included in their document. Therefore, the bottom-up method was used in an inductive manner. The hope was to use the data collected from the general overview to come to conclusions about the efficacy of each provincial curriculum. However, this analysis alone was not enough given the lack of consistency between the provinces. Therefore, the top-down approach was created with a deductive vision, as it started with a theory about what themes constitute useful and not useful civics lessons to help guide the content analysis of each document. By committing to reviewing

the content from both a bottom-up and top-down perspective, this analysis has a solid understanding of the intended outcomes of each province, while having the insight as to why these outcomes are potentially not being met.

2.2 *Bottom-Up Methodology*

My first attempt to determine if there is a relationship between the curriculum put forward in each province and youth voter turnout was a bottom-up review of each document outlining the learning goals on the provincial curricula. Using the text-analysis software, NVivo, I conducted a word frequency test on each individual curricula to determine the top 5 most common words used in each document. Each province has the official curriculum guidelines available to the public through the respective ministry of education websites. The first step in collecting these documents was to look at the graduation requirements in each province to determine what the last mandatory social science/civics-based course was required for students to take. Once this had been determined for each province, the next step was to download the 10 curriculum documents. In order to avoid a bias result, I redacted the documents to only include the unit that discussed citizenship for those provinces that did not have dedicated courses (like Ontario), and this step excluded provinces that had no dedicated unit, rather just had learning goals pertaining to citizenship integrated throughout the course (Quebec).

Once each document was found and prepped, it was individually put through the NVivo "word frequency" function, with the settings set to show the top five most frequent words, and to exclude words such as "the" or "an" to ensure the results were reflective of the content, not just the writing. After one run of the word frequency test, the output provided the five most common words, but it was apparent that some of the words included were not reflective of the content,

rather the nature of the document. Therefore, the next step became filtering out prepositions, as well as obvious words to frequent this type of document, such as "student" or "lesson", to ensure that the five words that were most frequent in each provincial curriculum were determined. This bottom-up approach was used to examine what was being taught in the curricula. While no conclusion can be drawn about the impact each provincial curriculum has on turnout from the output of this analysis, the purpose was to provide a general overview of the priorities in that province which will later be used to help guide the comparison between curriculum content and delivery to the estimated youth turnout in each province.

2.3 *Top-Down Methodology*

After conducting this bottom-up approach, which determined the top five key words mentioned in each provincial curriculum, I turned to the existing literature to look at the documents from the top-down. Scholars, primarily in the education field, have provided critiques of the current curriculum, as well as provided a vision for what a robust civics classroom should look like. As mentioned in the first section of this paper, the current approach has been deemed to be too technical, labelled as low priority, and more memorization-based than action-based lesson recommendations (Lewis, 2009). Instead, research has shown that the most successful classrooms are built using local examples, experiential and exploratory teaching techniques, and create an open space for students to participate (Hooghe and Quinteller, 2011). With these notes in mind, I developed a framework of five key themes that reflect what one would expect (or hope) to see in a civics curriculum, combining themes that are both critiqued and encouraged by experts in the field. When choosing which words to use in this analysis, I referenced the bottom-up analysis results to ensure that semantics did not bias the results. For example, using the word "action" rather

than "open" to reflect themes of experiential lesson planning. Appendix A outlines each of the synonyms used when conducting this part of the analysis. With these parameters set, I conducted the document analysis in order to produce an output that could be organized by provincial turnout in hopes of finding key patterns and trends.

The five key themes that one might expect to see in an effective Canadian civics curriculum include: Duty/Citizenship, Vote/Electoral System, Participation/Action, Government Systems, and Democracy. These five words can be further divided into two camps: structure and participation. The concepts of Government and Democracy are used in this framework to reflect some of those foundational lessons that are included in the curriculum, those of which were critiqued in the literature for being too central to the lessons. This is not to imply that any mention of these technicalities is ineffective, however, if there is a high emphasis on these themes and not on the more action-based concepts that have been included, then a conclusion may be drawn that there is a lack of balance in the classroom which could negatively impact the province's youth engagement.

As mentioned in the previous section, scholars have called for more participatory based lessons to help encourage action and sense of duty in the community. Therefore, the words Duty, Vote, and Action, were added to reflect some of the suggestions that scholars have made for the curriculum. The general consensus on successful citizenship education is that it must encourage students to have a sense of identity in politics, it must open the classroom up for action-based learning and must instill the sense of duty that comes along with the right to vote; however, technical lessons focus too much on the function of parliament, and not enough on a citizen's place within it. Therefore, Duty is used to reflect lessons on the duty of a citizen, Vote/Election is used

to assess if there is any discussion of how citizens can get involved, and Action/Participation is used to determine the level of encouragement for participation in democracy.

The findings of this document analysis were then organized in line with the Elections Canada estimated voter turnout for the 18-24 year old category in the 2019 federal election. Sorting the findings in order from highest provincial turnout to lowest provincial turnout in the youth voting bracket allows us to see if there are any patterns in the themes, priorities, and delivery of the national curricula when compared to the turnout estimations. Are those provinces who prioritize technical lessons over action-based ones experiencing lower turnout? Do provinces who have more detailed suggestions for delivery of the learning goals seeing a higher turnout? These are the types of questions that can be answered through the findings discussed in the following section.

The federal election was chosen as the data to compare seeing as it eliminates any contextual factors that may influence a vote at the provincial level. For example, comparing the youth voter turnout for the 2018 Ontario election to the 2020 British Columbia election could cause skewed results, as they had different party leaders, campaign strategies, and local contexts to influence the electorate. As covered in the literature review section, the context and competitiveness in which an election takes place can greatly affect turnout rates. As Johnston et al. (2007) pointed out, the decline in youth voter turnout has followed the same trajectory as the decline in competitiveness of political races. Using the federal election data offers a snapshot in time, which captures all of the nuances of that particular race, eliminating the possibility of different contextual factors influencing turnout in the provincial election data.

<u>Findings</u>

3.1 *Cross-Canada Curriculum: Bottom-Up Approach*

In Canada, education curriculum falls under provincial jurisdiction, meaning that issues of the subjects taught, the approach used towards those subjects, as well as the timing of the lessons are left up to each province. This system has resulted in varying approaches and priorities for each province as they attempt to teach their students about politics and citizenship. The following section of this paper will begin by examining the explicit overall goal laid out in the curriculum for each province. By reviewing the stated objectives in each document, this research ensures that the policy is being judged through a fair lens that considers the intended goal of each lesson and class. Diving deeper into each document, this paper will then turn to explain the format, grade of delivery, instruction for delivery, and key words that are primarily discussed in each province. The results for Table 1 and 2, seen below, are derived from the Bottom-Up approach described in the previous section, with each province organized in order of highest estimated youth voter turnout to the lowest.

Table 1: Provincial Curriculum Goals

Province	Estimated Turnout	Intended Course Goal
Prince Edward Island	56.9%	Equip students with the knowledge to understand their community around them and to step out into the broader world around them.
Quebec	55.9%	Give students the knowledge of the history of Canada and Quebec, develop intellectual skills, and develop critical thinking skills conducive to social participation.
Nova Scotia	55.4%	Develop an understanding of civics, and is enhanced by critical inquiry

		into responsibilities, with an emphasis on active participation.
New Brunswick	55.4%	Students will demonstrate an understanding of the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.
Alberta	54.5%	Develop leadership skills by assuming specific roles and responsibilities in organizations, projects, and events within their community.
Ontario	54.2%	Help student explore the rights and responsibilities associated with being an active citizen in a democratic society.
Saskatchewan	53.8%	Develop values, knowledge, and skills that support active and responsible citizenship.
British Columbia	52.0%	Students are to know about government, identities, Canadian autonomy, and advocacy.
Manitoba	48.1%	Students should be willing to exercise their responsibilities and rights as citizens living in a democracy.
Newfoundland and Labrador	40.5%	Students are expected to demonstrate the ability to make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good as members of a democracy.

Observing the explicit goals laid out in each document, it can be stated that each province in Canada – with British Columbia acting as an exception – has stated that the goal of these courses is to encourage critical participation in democracy to some extent. While none of these mission statements cited voting as the means of participation for its students, language such as "the rights and responsibilities of a citizen" or "an active participant in democracy" were used in more than one document to describe the intended goal for students.

Some common themes that can be noted from the mission statements in each document was the reoccurring mention of Rights and Responsibilities, Knowledge and Understanding, and Active Participation. Prince Edward Island, Quebec, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Saskatchewan, and British Columbia all included Knowledge and Understanding in their mission statements, meaning that this is a stated goal for a majority of the civics curricula in Canada. Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Alberta, Ontario, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba all make mention of Right and Responsibilities being one of the central takeaways for their students, which is equal to the number of provinces that prioritized Knowledge and Understanding – however, it should be noted that the six provinces for each theme were not consistent. The last theme, and arguably the one that provides the most basis for the analysis at hand, was the mention of Active Participation. All of the provinces, except British Columbia, stated that one of the intended goals of their curriculum was to give students the tools to be active members of society.

Nova Scotia was one of two provinces to include all three key themes in their mission statements, which would lead one to expect that they have the curriculum that is most aligned with the successful approaches that scholars have recommended. The other province to state all three themes was Saskatchewan. If done correctly, Nova Scotia and Saskatchewan have promised to balance knowledge, lessons of responsibilities, and the encouragement of participation in their civics classrooms. However, organizing the findings in order to estimated youth voter turnout shows that Nova Scotia is in the top five provinces for turnout, and Saskatchewan is in the bottom half. Beyond this finding, the rest of the provinces had a mix of which two of the three themes they mentioned in their learning goals, and there were no other observable patterns. The fact that nine of the ten provinces promised active participation as one of their takeaways for students

grounds the following analysis in the assumption that these curricula were designed to drive civic

engagement from their students – a goal that is seemingly not being met in Canada.

Table 2: Canadian Civics Curricula by Province

Province	Estimated Turnout	Course/Unit Name	Grade	Size of Document	Top 5 Words	Direction for Delivery
Prince Edward Island	56.9%	Canada as a Democracy	Grade 9	7 pages	Rights Aboriginal Responsibilities Citizenship Democracy	Some suggestions on how to help students achieve learning goals at the end of each unit.
Quebec	55.9%	History of Quebec and Canada	Grade 10	73 pages	Quebec History Society Knowledge Economic	No sample lesson plans or guiding questions provided to educators.
Nova Scotia	55.4%	Citizenship	Grade 9	20 pages	Citizenship Media Rights Service Financial	Rationales, indicators, key concepts, and guiding questions for each chapter.
New Brunswick	55.4%	Canadian Identities	Grade 9	21 pages	Rights Persons Human Historical Geography	Sample videos, websites, and documents provided for each unit for educators to share with students.
Alberta	54.5%	Canada: Opportunities	Grade 9	10 pages	Rights Economic	Learning goals and

					Information Identity Impact	guiding questions provided at the end of each chapter.
Ontario	54.2%	Civics and Citizenship	Grade 10	18 pages	Rights Issues Action Citizenship System	Guiding questions offered at the end of each chapter, as well as details on how to help students develop political inquiry skills.
Saskatchewan	53.8%	Social Studies	Grade 9	39 pages	Society Inquiry Process Values Knowledge	Targeted outcomes and indicators of success at the end of each chapter.
British Columbia	52.0%	Canada and the World: 1914 to the Present	Grade 10	7 pages	World Peoples Rights Conflicts Economics	Key questions and sample activities provided at the end of each chapter.
Manitoba	48.1%	Democracy and Governance in Canada	Grade 9	60 pages	Government Justice Rights Democracy Groups	"Engaging Students in the Cluster" section at the end of each chapter that details lesson plans and activities.
Newfoundland and Labrador	40.5%	Power, Citizenship, and Change	Grade 10	21 Pages	Power Privilege Justice	Activation section in each unit that

					Change Underprivileged	describes sample lesson plans and activities.

Ontario is the only province in Canada that has a dedicated course in civics education. Every other province has embedded these lessons in social studies classes such as history, sociology, or just general social studies. The most consistent link between these different curricula is the grade in which they are introduced. Looking exclusively at high school mandatory courses, each province mandates the social studies courses in the first 2 years of high school. Once students reach Grade 11, the number of mandatory courses they have to take decreases, as they are granted more electives to help tailor their education to their interests and career aspirations. For the purpose of comparison, this research will only look at the courses that are mandatory for all students to take. While some provinces (i.e., British Columbia) offer electives in political studies for upper year students, there is no way of knowing which students in the electorate chose to take these classes.

Beginning in the East and moving West, Newfoundland and Labrador has chosen the approach of integrating their lessons of citizenship into a unit called "Power, Citizenship, and Change", which is a part of the Grade 10 Social Studies class. The suggested timeline of the unit is 10 hours, or approximately 3 weeks of lessons at the beginning of the year. The outlined learning goals for this unit include the ability to "explain how power and privilege" work in society, as well as outline "the importance of activism in promoting social justice" (Newfoundland Education, p. 101). This approach to teaching citizenship focuses more on power structures and action, which is reflected in the top 5 words that were found through document analysis. These words include Power, Privilege, Justice, Change, and Underprivileged. In terms of delivery methods provided for

teachers, Newfoundland and Labrador provided one of the more detailed plans for educators to achieve the learning goals set out in each lesson. Each unit had an "activation" section given to teachers to offer example activities for implementation. For example, unit 4 – which covers power and privilege – details an activity involving students throwing pieces of paper from different distances to garbage cans to help simulate how privilege advantages some and disadvantages others (Newfoundland and Labrador Curriculum., p. 107)

While Newfoundland and Labrador chose an active approach to their curriculum, Prince Edward Island (PEI) took more of a technical approach, while still incorporating lessons of power and authority. Their civics unit, entitled "Canada as a Democracy", is introduced in the Grade 9 Social Studies curricula. The overarching learning goal is for students to be able to, "demonstrate an understanding of the rights and responsibilities of citizenship and the origins, functions, and sources of power, authority, and governance" (PEI Curriculum, p. 48). The top 5 words identified in this curriculum include: Rights, Aboriginal, Responsibilities, Citizenship, and Democracy. The PEI curriculum also offers some guidance to educators on how they can achieve the learning goals set out in the document. Some of these strategies include group brainstorming, examination of key legislation, as well as some suggestions for local Indigenous leaders and elected official classroom visits and discussions.

Nova Scotia has a dedicated class for Grade 9 students that is mandatory in order to graduate. This class, "Citizenship", aims to teach students about engaged citizenship, belonging, financial citizenship, digital citizenship, governance, democracy, and global citizenship. This class not only focuses on citizenship in the Canadian context, but also establishes the purpose and function of global systems for students to takeaway as a lesson. The key words found in this document include Citizenship, Media, Rights, Service, and Financial. In terms of guidance for

delivery of the curriculum, the document for the province lays out a rationale, indicators, key concepts, and guiding question for each chapter. However, there are no example lesson plans, no mention of hands-on learning, and much room for the educator's interpretation on how to get these lessons across.

New Brunswick took a similar approach by combining more than just Canadian concepts into their Grade 9 Social Studies curriculum. The course is split into three main units, Canadian identities, physical and human geography, and citizenship, with the third unit being the most tailored towards what it means to be a socially responsible citizen. The key words found in this course are Rights, Persons, Human, Historical, and Geography. Similarly to Nova Scotia, New Brunswick provides sample discussion questions, but goes a step further to provide sample videos, websites, and documents for teachers to use as resources when teaching these lessons. For example, in the unit that explains the structure and operation of governance in Canada, there is a 3-minute video provided that effectively explains the different levels of government (New Brunswick Curriculum, p. 29).

Quebec is unique in the sense that there is no dedicated unit or course for citizenship. Instead, the only mandatory course for students that partially covers topics of politics and citizenship is the Grade 10 history class, titled "History of Quebec and Canada". Broadly speaking, the program is meant to give students, "knowledge of the history of Quebec and Canada, intellectual skills associated with the study of history, and critical thinking and discussion skills conducive to social participation" (p. 1). The key words identified in this text were Quebec, History, Society, Knowledge, and Economic. Out of all the provinces, Quebec offers the least amount of guidance in their curriculum when it comes to potential lesson plans, delivery, and ideas for implementation. With no guiding questions or sample resources, the Quebec document

provides content overview for the course and leaves the method of delivery up to the individual educator.

Next is Ontario, which as previously mentioned, is the only province to have a dedicated course to understanding citizenship in Canada. The course is mandatory for completion by all Grade 10 students and is one half of the credit; the other half being dedicated to career development. The four main strands of the curriculum include civic awareness, civic engagement and action, political inquiry, and the development of transferable skills. The main words identified in this course's curriculum include Rights, Issues, Action, Citizenship, and Systems. Ontario took a similar approach to Nova Scotia, by offering universal guiding questions for each unit. In the section for Political Inquiry Processes, the document also outlines ways that students can gather, organize, interpret, evaluate, and communicate the information they absorb from political spaces. Some of these recommendations include the skills of quantitative and qualitative research methods, data visualization, and oral or written presentation of facts (Ontario Curriculum, p. 145).

Manitoba followed the more traditional route, with six of the ten provinces opting for this approach, which integrated civics lessons as their own unit in the broader Grade 9 social studies class, "Canada in the Contemporary World". The class is divided into 5 different learning goals, which include good government, representation, building a just society, citizen participation, and democratic ideals in Canada. Derived from these 5 lessons, the document analysis highlighted Government, Justice, Rights, Democracy, and Groups as the most frequent words in the course. Manitoba offers the most guidance for lesson plans. At the end of each chapter in the curriculum, there is an "Engaging Students in the Cluster" section which offers a variety of tools and processes to help get the subject matter across. For example, Chapter 2.1, which focuses on Law, Order, and Good Government, suggests that students participate in a mock parliament, followed by a debrief

after the simulation is complete (Manitoba Curriculum, p. 163). There is a mix of different learning strategies in consideration throughout the various sample lesson plans provided in the document.

Saskatchewan does not have a dedicated unit or class for the subject matter, rather, it has themes woven through the different units of the Grade 9 social studies class. This class is called "The Roots of Society" and the three main goals of the class are building lifelong learners, building a sense of self and community, and building engaged citizens. This third goal is tailored to encourage students to see themselves not only as local citizens, but also national and global citizens. The five most common words in the text were Society, Inquiry, Process, Values, and Knowledge. When it comes to the method of delivery, the Saskatchewan document is vague as it only details the targeted outcomes and some indicators that can be used to demonstrate that students have successfully retained the material, but there are no suggested lesson plans provided. However, the curriculum does make a point to highlight that the concepts must go beyond just definitions, and "facilitate students' learning of the related disciplines and their understanding of the conceptual connections" (Saskatchewan Curriculum, p. 27).

Alberta also implemented these lessons of citizenship in their Grade 9 social studies course, "Canada: Opportunities and Challenges". There are two general outcomes identified as governance and rights, as well as economic systems in Canada and the United States. Each of these are situated under the broad umbrella goal of local and current affairs. The five main words from this class include Rights, Economic, Information, Identity, and Impact. Similar to other provinces, the Alberta curriculum has also chosen to provide learning goals and guiding questions but does not take the step of providing any vision for how these goals may be met or questions may be answered.

Lastly, British Columbia's final mandatory social science credit is for Grade 10 students, in a class called, "Canada and the World: 1914 to the Present". There are four big ideas that they want students to take away from the class. These ideas are sorted as global and regional conflicts, development of political institutions, worldviews and alternate perspectives, and historical and contemporary injustices. These big ideas are reflected in the five most frequent words, which are World, Peoples, Rights, Conflict, and Economics. British Columbia put forward key questions for each topic and provided sample activities for educators to consider implementing in their classroom. For example, to help teach students about key figures in Canadian politics, the document recommended students "select significant people to include in a museum display on women's suffrage" (British Columbia Curriculum, p. 2).

3.2 *Bottom-Up Analysis*

Delivery

As mentioned in the first section of this paper, education scholars have conducted studies to determine what the most successful classrooms may look like when it comes to teaching about political engagement. Some of the aforementioned approaches include the integration of local contexts, open and participatory lessons, and a move away from memorization of technical terms to a more exploratory approach to participation for students. This type of reform in the classroom is not specific to Canada. For example, Kjetil Borhaug (2008) of Norway conducted a study to see if the goals that had been set out by curriculum scholars, which resulted in a shift from technicalities to participatory learning, were being met at the classroom level. Through qualitative interviews and classroom observations, Borhaug concluded that classrooms had become more focused on helping students find their political party affiliation, and therefore, led to a more civic-

participatory minded cohort. With studies like Borhaug's, we know that classrooms that are more open, encourage participation, and focus on self-identity in politics, are more likely to produce active citizens once they graduate. However, the comparison of the document content to the estimated turnout conducted in this research paper has demonstrated that this does not seem to be presently true in Canada.

Starting with the findings from the most politically active youth populations in Canada, PEI was the only province in the top four turnout estimations to include some of the suggested successful approaches that scholars have put forward. For example, in the unit regarding Indigenous history, the document recommended that teachers invite in local Indigenous community members to speak with the classroom. While this province included some of the localizing techniques that scholars promote, the other provinces with high turnout estimations were not consistent. Quebec, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick, the next three highest turnout rates, were amongst the vaguest when it came to the amount of direction given for the delivery of the learning goals. Nova Scotia was the most detailed of the three, but the document only went so far as to include sample questions for educators to ask their students to ensure they had grasped the concept. Quebec had no formal suggestions on how to deliver the materials, rather, the document consisted of a list of learning goals for educators to achieve with their students.

On the other side of this, the bottom three provinces in turnout estimation (British Columbia, Manitoba, and Newfoundland) were the most detailed in their instructions for delivery. In terms of the open and participatory classroom setting that scholars describe to be most successful, these three provinces are some of the only ones to have included lesson plans that reflect the examples from the conducted studies. For example, Manitoba is the only province to suggest a mock parliament setting for students, and British Columbia encouraged a wide range of

lessons that considered different learning styles that may be present in the classroom. While it seems that delivery of course content is an important piece of teaching engaged citizens, the document analysis has provided no evidence – with PEI acting as an anomaly – that curriculum that explicitly plans for more open and participatory classrooms see a higher voter turnout for the youngest voting population.

Key Words

In search for patterns among the key word findings, it should be noted that seven of the ten provinces had Rights in their top five, but there was no correlation between which provinces included this and where they ranked in terms of turnout. Another notable finding is the fact that PEI was the only province to have Responsibilities rank in their top 5 most frequent words, which is interesting when compared to the fact that 60% of the provinces included Rights and Responsibilities in their curriculum mission statements. This bottom-up analysis has revealed that there seems to be greater emphasis on the rights of a citizen than the responsibilities of a citizen. A more in-depth look at the documents also exposed that, more often than not, the mentions in the text that included the concept of rights was presented in the context of global human rights – not individual voter rights. While these lessons of global rights and systems are important, they do not have any direct impact on forming a voting citizen in Canada (unless they are presented as issues of global affairs that can be impacted by vote choice and party policy, which was not the obvious case in the curriculum documents).

Another pattern that emerges was the mention of citizenship in three of the highest turnout provinces. The four provinces with the lowest expected turnout rates (Saskatewan, British Columbia, Manitoba, And Newfoundland) did not have citizenship rank in their top five most

frequent words. This could indicate that explicitly giving lessons using the word citizenship could lead to an increase in voting enagagement. Additionally, there were multiple times in this analysis that the concept of finances and economics were mentioned. In the reading of the pre-existing literature, there was no indication that the inclusion of economics or fiscal citizenship would increase voter turnout, but it should be noted that 5 of the 10 provinces have included these lessons in their top 5 key words. While this may be expected for provinces like Alberta, which has a longstanding history of Conservative provincial leadership, provinces like Nova Scotia and British Columbia also made these lessons a priority. In order to understand why this concept was brought up so frequently, I looked at each mention and determined that in all provinces that had this ranked in their top five, except for Nova Scotia, economics was used to describe fiscal government structures. This indicates that finances are another technical structure being taught in the classroom, and there was no relation to any action-based lessons that taught these lessons of economics, which could explain why the inclusion of economic lessons had no effect on the estimated turnout. However, Nova Scotia presented the theme in the context of "Financial Citizenship", which taught students about how taxation effects community and also included lessons about the local indigenous-crown fiscal relations (Nova Scotia Curriculum, p. 3). While this is more aligned with what scholars are promoting, further research would need to be conducted to see if these lessons are having any real impact on engagement. The sporadic nature of these findings makes it impossible to draw any concrete solutions about the specific terms impacts.

This bottom-up approach provides this analysis with a general overview of the priorities, delivery methods, and targeted age group that each province has chosen to employ in their mission to teach students about politics and citizenship. Without any preconceived notions of what a curriculum *should* look like, according to scholars, this analysis can clearly show that there is an

abundance of variety in subject matter and approach when it comes to each provincial approach. Therefore, this analysis will now turn to the lessons learned from the pre-existing literature to help better understand the potential efficacy of each provincial curriculum.

3.3 *Top-Down Findings*

After running the document analysis for each province, it was clear that the priorities of each curriculum varied in many ways. While this inductive approach provided a good sense of the material, the amount of extra information included in these documents made drawing concrete conclusions difficult. The top-down method, described in detail in the previous section, was used to follow-up the findings of bottom-up content review. This deductive approach to the documents was more targeted in nature, and it eliminated the extra noise that made the first step of the analysis hard to sift through. The chart below is organized from the province with the highest estimated turnout rate to the lowest and provides the ranking and number of mentions for each of the key themes included in the top-down framework.

Table 3: Ranked Themes in each Provincial Curriculum

CENTRAL THEME	PEI 56.9%	QC 55.9%	NS 55.4%	NB 55.4%	AB 54.5%	ON 54.2%	SK 53.8%	BC 52.0%	MB 48.1%	NFL 40.5%
Duty/Citizenship	1 (11)	4 (2)	1 (59)	1 (20)	1 (14)	1 (41)	1 (14)	5 (0)	4 (34)	1 (18)
Vote/Election	5 (0)	3 (10)	5 (2)	3 (6)	4 (0)	4 (10)	5 (0)	2 (2)	3 (49)	3 (2)
Action/ Participation	3 (1)	2 (18)	3 (14)	4 (4)	3 (7)	3 (14)	3 (8)	3 (2)	5 (33)	2 (8)
Government	4 (1)	1 (37)	2 (19)	2 (14)	2 (11)	2 (22)	2 (10)	1 (7)	1 (110)	4 (1)

Democracy	2 (8)	5 (1)	4 (8)	5 (4)	5 (0)	5 (1)	4 (2)	4 (2)	2 (85)	5 (0)

Beginning with the province with the highest estimated youth voter turnout, PEI had the most mentions of Citizenship/Duty and had no mentions of Vote/Election. Participation/Action and Government were mentioned but only a few times, compared to Democracy which was ranked second. Based on this analysis, it seems as though PEI has a good balance between lessons about Duty and lessons about Democracy. The province with the lowest estimated youth voter turnout, Newfoundland and Labrador, also had Citizenship/Duty as their top ranked theme, but unlike PEI, there was no mention of democracy. Instead, Newfoundland and Labrador had a higher emphasis placed on the Participation key word and a few mentions of Vote/Elections and Government.

There was only one case of two provinces having the same rankings. Nova Scotia and Saskatchewan both had Duty, Government, Action, Democracy, and Vote as their ranking, but it should be noted that there is an approximate 2% difference in estimated youth voter turnout, with Saskatchewan being the lower of the two. Some other general themes that can be pulled from this analysis are that Vote/Election and Democracy consistently ranked the lowest across the nation, which signifies a lack of discussion about formal participation in the classrooms. Government was also consistently ranked in the middle of the rankings, which could signify an emphasis on structure over participation. As stated before, there is no clear pattern in the ranking of these themes, meaning that any concrete conclusions about how content effects turnout are difficult to make without further evidence of the relationship.

3.4 *Top-Down Analysis*

Theme Frequencies

As mentioned in the methodology section of this paper, the top-down framework that was designed to test the potential efficacy of the curriculum documents was based on themes that one may expect to find in the curriculum based off of critiques mentioned in the literature, but also themes that should be included in an effective curriculum according to education and political science scholars. From this top-down analysis, we can see that Duty/Citizenship was the most prioritized theme in the majority of cases. On the other hand, Vote/Election and Democracy tended to be the lowest in the rankings, with Vote/Election never ranking higher than 3rd in 9 of the 10 provinces, and Democracy never ranking higher than 4th in 8 of the provinces. Given that Vote/Election and Democracy were two of the words used in the framework to test the efficacy of the curriculum, as they highlighted an increase in participatory political knowledge that the literature called for, the finding that they are rarely being taught in Canadian classrooms aligns with the low estimated voter turnout. However, Duty/Citizenship was also a theme predicted to increase voter turnout, and it has been prioritized in the classroom in most cases. Studies conducted to determine motivating factors for voters have shown that a sense of duty and the responsibility of being an engaged citizen is present in the Canadian electorate (Gidengil et al., 2003, p. 13). So, if these lessons are being instilled in Canadian youth, why aren't the voter turnout numbers reflective of these lessons? The next, and final, section of this paper will outline potential explanations for this missing relationship and offer suggestions for research that may be able to reach a different conclusion.

<u>Discussion: Implications and Future Research</u>

4.1 *Scholars' Solutions*

The lack of clear connections between curriculum content and youth voter turnout has left this research puzzle unsolved. Some reasons why this link is not as clear as may have been anticipated includes the existence, but lack of consideration given to different forms of participation aside from voting, or as this research deals with more pertinently, issues with the delivery methods of the intended learning goals. Using the findings from the top-down approach, this research is unable to draw a concrete solution on which themes encourage more participation among Canadian youth; however, the scattered nature of the themes in relation to the estimated youth voter turnout does make a case for further research that deals with the delivery and formatting of citizenship education in Canada. If it is true that curriculum has no impact on voter turnout, then there are various solutions that have been put forward by scholars to help change this reality. Some of these suggestions include greater collaboration between socially relevant NGOs (Apathy is Boring, Future Majority, CIVIX) and the government to help reach a wider audience (Lewis, 2009) or complete reform at the policy level to make these types of changes more accessible and feasible to accomplish (Pinto, 2014). Furthermore, programs have been put in place that go beyond the classroom but stay in the schools, such as CIVIX "Student Vote" program. This initiative brings ballot boxes to elementary and high schools to allow students to cast their vote on election day. While these votes do not actually impact the results of the election, it gives young citizens the chance to see what logistically goes into casting their ballot.

4.2 *Future Research*

With the evidence presented in this research, it is clear that no real conclusion can be drawn about the relationship between content and delivery and youth voter turnout in each province. Given what we know from curriculum scholars, it seems as though provinces who prioritize action-based and open classroom settings have higher success rates when it comes to educating engaged citizens. However, based on the document analysis of each province, it seems as though provinces that do include explicit lesson plans for these types of classrooms (Newfoundland and Labrador) are experiencing low voter turnout; whereas provinces that include no discussion of democracy, voting, or provide educators with participatory lesson suggestions (Quebec) are experiencing much higher youth voter turnout in federal elections. Therefore, there is no clear link that can be drawn from this analysis.

There is potential that the lack of concrete findings from this analysis is due to a missing relationship between curriculum and voting intention; however, it should be acknowledged that the research design employed by this paper is not adequate in determining what exactly the relationship between curriculum and turnout is. Each of the studies cited from curriculum scholars relied on primarily qualitative methods – interviews with curriculum developers, civics' educators, and classroom observations – to determine the best way to structure these classrooms. Therefore, comparing a document analysis to projected voting turnout is missing the nuance of what actually happens in the classroom. In other words, just because the curriculum recommends (or does not recommend) a certain approach to the learning goals, it does not mean that educators are implementing those suggestions or adding their own approach outside of what the curriculum

instructs; however, there is no way of knowing this by simply reading the guidelines they are provided.

Unfortunately, the scope of this current research project is too narrow to appropriately address these contextual concerns and shortcomings; therefore, more research needs to be conducted in order to help Canadian civics classrooms achieve their objectives, with BC acting as an anomaly for this specific layer of the analysis. A different approach to this research question could include field research in each province, or perhaps an experimental approach that gives one group of students a participatory-based curriculum, and the other a technical-based lesson and see if this impacts their intention to vote. This experiment would allow for conclusions to be drawn strictly from results, as it eliminates any changes between local contexts or educator preferences. If one class of students was given an action-based curriculum, with different lesson plans that encouraged participation, and the other was given technical definitions and asked to memorize terms, the survey results of who states they will vote in future elections would give a clear picture of how content impacts the motivation to vote. Theoretically, there is a causal link between how students are taught about politics, and how they choose to interact with politics as they age. Unfortunately, uncovering the exact relationship is a difficult task.

Conclusion

Overall, this critical document analysis has been unable to find any evidence of a relationship between the goals and delivery of provincial civics curriculum and estimated youth voter turnout at the federal level. Scholars who have dealt with this question in the past have indicated that the assumption that youth are apathetic or uninterested in politics may not be completely accurate.

Political knowledge and education play a large role in motivating a voter to get to the polling station, and therefore, formal civics education for students is an important factor for scholars to examine and develop. Past qualitative studies in Canada and abroad have concluded that locally significant, participatory, and open classroom settings have proven to be the most effective in educating an engaged citizen. With these findings in mind, many Canadian curricula have come under critique for being unengaging as they emphasize structure and political technicalities over a citizen's role in our national democracy.

While both the top-down and bottom-up text analysis of each provincial curriculum can confirm that there is a lack of guidance given to educators when it comes to participatory lesson planning, and that more often than not themes of structure and definitions of citizenship overpower conversations of voting and action, there does not seem to be any direct link between the curriculum taught and the amount of youth that come out to vote. Therefore, further research is needed to address the contextual nuances between each province that may be impacting the relationship. If it is true that there is currently no connection between what is taught in the classroom and what happens at the polling station, then there needs to be a serious review of the existing curricula to ensure that the impact is as present and sustainable as possible, especially given the intended goals to which each province has committed. If citizens are better educated on political processes, empowered to act as conscious citizens, and can understand how their individual views translates in political spaces, we might see a more engaged and politically literate young generation in Canada.

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Appendix A – Variations of Key Word Search for Top-Down Approach

Central Theme	Variations Used in NVivo Search
Duty/Citizenship	- Duty - Citizenship - Citizen - Citizens
Vote/Election	- Vote - Voter - Voting - Election - Elections - Electoral
Action/ Participation	- Action - Active - Activation - Participation - Participant - Participate
Government	- Government - Government System - Government Structure
Democracy	- Democracy - Democratic