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A Comparison of the Portrayal of Visible Minorities in Textbooks in Canada and China

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Abstract:

Canada and China are both multiethnic countries and have articulated a strong commitment to multicultural education. However, in the process of curricula control, decision makers, drawn from the mainstream culture, develop, implement, and interpret the formal curriculum. Consequently, the ethnic content included in the mainstream curriculum could be biased, fragmented, or with important omissions. This paper evaluates the portrayal of selected visible minorities in some currently used social studies (history) textbooks in Alberta and China, to reveal how knowledge of ethnic cultures is filtered through the dominant perspectives and to explore ways to educate all students to be responsible citizens. The analysis and discussions are situated within the conceptual framework of identity construction and critical pedagogy. Data are collected by observation, informal conversations and textbook analysis.

Résumé:

Le Canada et la Chine sont tous les deux des pays multiethniques et ont formulé un engagement ferme pour une éducation multiculturelle. Cependant, durant le processus de contrôle des curricula, le curriculum formel a été développé, établi, et interprété par des responsables qui sont influencés par la culture du groupe dominant. Par conséquent, le contenu ethnique du curriculum pourrait être biaisé, fragmenté, ou marqué d'omissions importantes. L'intention de cet article est d'évaluer la représentation des minorités visibles, choisie dans quelques livres scolaires en usage dans les sciences humaines (histoire) en Alberta et en Chine, pour révéler comment la connaissance des cultures ethniques a été filtrée à travers les perspectives dominantes et pour explorer des directions afin d'éduquer tous les élèves à devenir des citoyens responsables. L'analyse et les discussions sont situées dans le cadre conceptuel de la construction d'identité et de la pédagogie critique. Les données ont été recueillies par des observations, des conversations informelles et de l'analyse des livres scolaires.

Early reading is believing.
(Klein, 1985, p.24)

Introduction of the Research Problem

The issue of textbooks has been highly controversial issue in modern times. Recently Japan has revised history textbooks to whitewash Japanese atrocities during the Second World War, an action that has incurred widespread international criticism from many Asian countries which suffered under the

Japanese occupation (Apple & Christian-Smith, 1991; p.6). The Hong Kong government has also been criticized for revising content on the Cultural Revolution in their textbooks to please China (McKay, 1998, p.36). As this paper is being written, German and French governments have reached an agreement that they will jointly develop a common history textbook acceptable by both sides.

There is no influence in schools which does more to determine what is taught to pupils than textbooks. Textbooks are often the first, sometimes, the only books children read; they represent a sanctioned version of knowledge. Since children lack critical skills, they may well accept textbook knowledge as the truth. Textbooks play a major role in the socialization of the younger generation therefore, what knowledge should be included in the formal curriculum has been a salient issue in every society, on which fierce battles are waged. Especially, in a multiethnic country, the question becomes: "*Whose knowledge should be included?*"

Schools and other educational agencies employ the curriculum as their main strategy for ordering the selection of knowledge for which they are responsible. Among the many aspects of the curriculum the knowledge selection process is crucial. Educational agencies through textbooks become "the gatekeepers of knowledge" (De Pass, 1993) or "the knowledge managers" (Bullivant, 1986) arriving at value-based decisions about the type of society which the educational system serves. All decisions include control over the definition of "the most worthwhile knowledge," the type of knowledge to be transmitted, and under what conditions. In a culturally pluralist society the way is open for knowledge managers to control the life chances of children from ethnic minority groups through the educational system. This is a form of ethnic hegemony.

Canada and China are both multiethnic countries and both governments have expressed a strong commitment to multicultural education as a means to enhance ethnic cultural rights and equality. As a result, ethnic content has been included in the formal curricula. However, in the process of curricular control drawn from the mainstream culture, gatekeepers of knowledge develop, implement, and interpret the formal curriculum. Consequently, the ethnic content included in the mainstream curriculum could be biased, fragmented, or with important omissions. Curriculum like this cannot achieve the end of empowerment and transformation.

The major questions discussed in this paper are how ethnic minorities, especially visible minorities, are portrayed in the textbooks, how the ethnic content in the curriculum is selected from the mainstream point of view, and what are the dynamic processes by which the dominant groups legitimate their social control in both countries.

This paper attempts to evaluate some social studies (or history) textbooks as currently used in Canada and China to reveal how, in spite of efforts to integrate ethnic content, knowledge of ethnic cultures is filtered, knowingly or unknowingly, through the dominant perspectives, and to explore ways to educate all students not only through knowledge transmission but also through perspective transformation.

Literature Review on Textbook Evaluation

Textbook evaluation has been a long-term international effort, whose work began under the auspices of the League of Nations after the First World War. Then, many bilateral agreements between governments and educational organizations were concluded for the reciprocal study and revision of textbooks and educational materials. The purpose was to ensure that they were accurate, up-to-date and unprejudiced, and that they would enhance mutual knowledge and understanding among different peoples. After World War II, UNESCO took up the task again by convening the first seminars on textbook revision in 1950. In the 1960s, two experimental projects were carried out by UNESCO and the Georg-Eckert-Institute to explore how to further develop international agreements by which textbooks might be exchanged between countries for critical review and how to improve history and geography textbooks by multilateral consultation. Canada was one of the participating countries (Mertineit, 1977).

After the Cold War, with the disappearance of the former socialist states and the reunification of Germany, textbooks in the new democratic states were revised to include the socialist history between 1945 and 1990 but the inclusion has been problematic and criticized for being fragmented and biased (Helmedach, 2004; Matzing, 2004; Dimou, 2004; Benthin, 2004). The collapse of Communism in Russia led to the rewriting of history textbooks, which had been dominated by Marxist-Leninist interpretations of historical events. The evaluation of the new textbooks has focused on the models presented for Russian identity, the redefinition of legitimate culture for students, and multiple perspectives on history (Zajda & Zajda, 2003).

The strongest voices criticizing textbook bias and omissions have been heard recently from indigenous groups who find their own histories distorted or left out in formal curricula. Bradford (2001) examined representations of Australia's indigenous peoples in texts for children and demonstrated how these varying representations had helped to color the attitudes, beliefs and assumptions of different generations of Australians. The aboriginal groups in Alberta, Canada, argued that aboriginal (Indian) education was characterized by non-Aboriginal people using non-Aboriginal methods to administer the education of Aboriginal peoples and that far too few Aboriginal people had been involved with the education of their youth, either as teachers, administrators or scholars. They also made specific suggestions for integrating Aboriginal views, promoting tolerance and respect, helping nurture a personal positive image, and developing the skills of critical thinking (Alberta Learning, 1999; Steckley, 2003).

In recent decades, a salient issue in textbook evaluation has been how to promote cultural diversity by exposing ethnocentric points of view and racism in the subject of social studies (history) and so far most work in this regard has been done in North America. Critics documented textbooks that included negative racial information or omitted positive racial information. During the civil rights era, many of these biases were eliminated. However, political liberals castigated the revised textbooks for failing to prepare students to deal with real-life

inequalities. Their conservative opponents were also displeased with the revised materials, which they thought had been “dumbed down” to accommodate liberal ideology (Giordano, 2003).

A large part of the literature on textbook evaluation for the purpose of exposure and elimination of racism focuses on evaluation theories and guidelines. Joyce & Ryan (1977) made a special distinction between textbook *evaluation* and *selection* and argued that textbooks selected cannot be regarded as “having been evaluated”. Evaluation must have some clearly defined criteria, which are in turn derived from the philosophy and goals. The content and learning activities provided in the textbook should be consistent with the goals. They developed the criteria for evaluation focusing on two components: the *knowledge component* and the *intellectual component*. The former included four criteria: *social issues*, *interdisciplinary conceptual organization*, *recency*, and *bias*. The latter focused on higher level thinking skills, which also focused on four criteria: *analytic mode*, *higher-level questions*, *decision making*, and *direct relationship with the learner*.

The Council on Interracial Books for Children (1980) developed a strategy to expose racial and sexist bias in textbooks and described the five textbook areas to examine for racism, coupled with many questions to ponder: *characterization*, *language and terminology*, *historical accuracy*, *cultural authenticity*, and *illustrations*. Alberta Learning (2003) developed the guidelines for recognizing diversity and promoting respect. Its general criteria were centered around such concepts as *tolerance and respect*, *positive images*, *ethnic achievements*, *content and strategies*, and *critical thinking skills*. In a similar vein, Grant & Sleeter (1989) proposed five areas for textbook analysis: *pictures*, *“people to study,”* *anthology*, *storyline*, and *miscellaneous analyses*.

In addition to evaluation theories and guidelines, the literature also documents results of specific textbook analysis and suggestions for improvement (Werner, et al., 1980; Britton & Lumpkin, 1977; Bradford, 2000; Butterfield, et al., 1979; Maier, 2004).

Conceptual Framework and Methodology

Education and difference

It is argued that schools play an important role, knowingly or unknowingly, in maintaining and perpetuating the characteristics of the dominant society by omission and commission. Various forms of racism and prejudice abound in educational practice, such as stereotyping of ethnic minorities, exclusion of their experiences from the formal curriculum, and domination by legitimizing dominant values. Racism preconditions students to credulity by stifling their critical thinking abilities. But the actual question is how the historical and social constructions of the social norms and differences are learned and if the students are given opportunities to deconstruct these misconceptions. Pedagogically, teachers should be aware of the process and effect of conceptualization of difference and provide a positive learning environment.

Identity construction and multiple perspective approach

Positive self-concept in visible minority children is closely linked to their academic performances, and in turn, their life chances in society. For visible minority students, the distinction of culture produces a sense of discomfort and forces them to define themselves. This self-definition produces conflict in identity formation when their cultures are reconstructed through fragmentation. Identity crisis is a common problem that arises when ethnic identity and national identity are treated as conflicting.

It is crucial in multicultural education to focus on identity development. Identities are not fixed categories and their formation is a complex, dynamic process, inseparable from the construction of the world around us and influenced by social experiences including curriculum and role models, perceptions, and acceptance by others in school and society. Ghosh and Abdi (2004) identify a three-stage progression in identity construction, that is, *unexamined ethnic identity*, *exploration and perplexing period*, and *achievement of ethnic identity*. The first and second stages, where ethnic students may prefer the dominant culture or a view of ethnicity based on others' opinions, or alternatively, develop a personal understanding of ethnicity, are especially crucial for schools and teachers. The multiple-perspectives approach in these stages may help them in their identity construction.

Critical pedagogy and empowerment

Since its inception, multicultural education has lacked consensus in aims and approaches and has been criticized from the left and the right. However, the main criticism against it is its ineffectiveness in practice in providing equity-based quality education as reflected in the festival approach, which produces only a bandwagon effect (Moodley, 1999). Therefore, many educators have proposed a more radical approach which links multicultural education to equity issues and power structures and advocate critical pedagogy. For example, Kincheloe & Steinberg (1997) use the term "critical multiculturalism", while Grant & Sleeter (2003) suggest "education that is multicultural and social reconstructionist."

Critical pedagogy enables an analysis of the dialectics of consciousness and cultural domination by race, class, and gender and a view of students who are different in a new light. Critical pedagogy demands a reformulation of theories of knowledge that focus on the relationship between knowledge and subjectivity. A central assumption is that knowledge is not produced only by experts. The deconstruction of boundaries between traditional knowledge and power has raised new questions that suggest different ways of knowledge construction representing different worldviews.

Critical pedagogy aims to empower students both as a means to academic performance and an educational end. To effectively empower students from all backgrounds in today's multicultural settings, teachers should affirm and acknowledge the students' cultural backgrounds, help them to develop positive self-images, and facilitate their ability to construct their own meaning from what they read and write (Irvine, 2003; Crawford, 1996). Empowerment suggests

learning as a process of inquiry and discovery and perceives the curriculum as one that gives full expression to multiple voices, and to development as personal growth. Dominant groups need also to be taught to challenge oppression, especially because their privileged position tends to make it difficult for them to see the world critically (Kalantzis & Cope, 1999).

Methodology

The issues discussed in this paper are presented within the conceptual framework of identity construction and critical pedagogy as proposed by multicultural education scholars (Ghosh & Abdi, 2004; May, 1999; Sleeter, 1995), which provide a vantage point from which racism and prejudice in curricular decisions could be exposed. Data collection methods include classroom observation, informal conversations with teachers and students, and textbook evaluation. The observation and informal conversations were conducted in three primary schools in Calgary and Edmonton and a Mongolian school in China in 2005. The textbook evaluation method is adapted from several widely used methods to expose racism and dominant ethnocentric views in Canada and USA (Alberta Learning, 2003; Council on Interracial Books for Children, 1980; Klein, 1985; Steckley, 2003; Werner, et al., 1980) in such a way as to suit different social contexts in Canada and China. This specific method focuses on the following three themes:

- (1) common themes and general patterns of the texts: focusing on the analysis of overarching themes and ideologies;
- (2) dominant perspectives and significant omissions: focusing on heroes, ethnic contributions, and accuracy of historical facts, etc.;
- (3) language and illustrations: focusing on frequently used terms, loaded modifiers, and cultural symbols and occupations of characters in pictures, etc..

The focus of evaluation of Canadian textbooks is on the portrayal of Chinese people and culture in the Alberta Grade Six Textbooks entitled *Life in Changing China* (BonBernard, 1987) and *China* (BonBernard, 1998) and the *Teacher's Resource Package for China* (Arnold, 1999). The evaluation of Chinese textbooks focuses on three visible minorities (Mongols, Uighurs, and Tibetans) as portrayed in the centrally designated history textbooks entitled *Chinese History (Books I-IV)* (History Section of People's Education Press, 1992-1995).

Analysis of Canadian Textbooks

Alberta Education states that the intended goal of social studies is "responsible citizenship." Through social studies, the student will learn that responsible citizenship includes: understanding the role, rights, and responsibilities of a citizen in a democratic society, and of a citizen in the global community: participating constructively in the democratic process by making rational decisions and respecting the dignity and worth of self and others. (Bradford, 2000, p.5).

Alberta Learning's (2003) *Guidelines for Recognizing Diversity and Promoting Respect* requires that the program documents and supporting materials help each student to nurture a personal positive self-image by taking an essentially positive approach to human similarities and differences, [and] implicitly and

explicitly promote the skills of critical thinking and their application in judging people and their actions. (p.1, p.2)

It is based on these goals and principles that the following analysis is made:

(1) Common themes and general patterns of the texts:

The Grade-Six student textbook *Life in Changing China* (hereafter “the 1987 book”) “is organized as a North American student’s (called Heather) journal of her trip to China.” (p. iii). Thus, the point of view of the narrator is established – a North American student traveling to China. The book “also describes how life in China has changed since 1979.” (p. iii) So, the point of time is set up for comparison: between the Cultural Revolution (1966-76) and the opening and reform (since 1979). In the new textbook *China* (hereafter “the 1998 book”), the scenes have changed, but the tourist’s perspective is maintained.

The organization of the textbooks, the tourist’s point of view of the narrators, and the use of Cultural Revolution as the background for comparison facilitate the author’s purpose – to make a broad, superficial depiction of the diverse country. This (tourist) approach tends to provide a fragmented understanding of a country while ignoring the complexities of its history and culture. A major problem with this view is to turn a blind eye to the adverse consequences of Western colonization and “to blame the victims,” which is well documented in multicultural education literature (Nieto, 1999; Banks, 1994, 2002).

China as depicted in the two textbooks is basically rural, starting to change but still poor, full of problems in many ways, such as food, housing, population, transportation, the political system, and pollution, and so on. Most people presented throughout the books are peasants and small peddlers. By far the majority of the illustrations seem to show rural scenes and uneducated people and readers can hardly find professional people like professors, doctors, scientists, and entrepreneurs. Most places seem to be backward, even Beijing and Shanghai.

China is depicted as a country with a long history and civilization, with great inventions and achievements which were made over a thousand years ago. When it comes to contemporary China, little could be seen that Chinese people really feel proud of. Clearly, the main theme is China’s backwardness and problems, with her modern achievements left out or understated. The overall image of China is isolated from the international community. Readers cannot see the growing important role she is playing in the international affairs.

It should be admitted that the 1998 book has improved compared with the 1987 book, in terms of the quality of the pictures, language use, content, and so on. For instance, in the 1987 book, China is geographically divided into three parts arbitrarily: North China, South China, and Outer China. The term “Outer China,” which refers to Xinjiang and Tibet, may have a very negative meaning to the Chinese. In the 1998 book, the author has made some changes. However, the main themes, the general pattern and the perspective remain the same.

(2) Significant omissions and the dominant perspective:

In learning history, the students should be provided with a holistic, balanced view of other cultures and some events and themes should be approached from multiple perspectives.

One important omission is a major historical event. The 1998 book makes a superficial chronological list of major events and historical periods but singles out the year 1979 as the frame of reference in discussing problems and change in China. Actually, the biggest change in Chinese history is the Opium Wars in the mid-19th century, which reduced China from one of the most prosperous countries in the world to an extremely poor country and many problems of contemporary China can be traced to that event. Students would not understand China or the Chinese ethos without knowledge of the Western colonization.

Another important omission is modern achievements. When Chinese inventions and achievements are mentioned, they tend to be those made a long time ago, such as gun powder, paper making, kites, silk, and so on. The undertone is that they have only a glorious past to be proud of. Those facts that had existed by the 1990s and that the Chinese people should really feel proud of, such as the achievements in sports and space technology, the return of Hong Kong, the role as a standing member in the UN security council, and so on, are missing or only very briefly mentioned. By the 1990s, China had started to launch satellites for foreign countries, but the 1998 book says "North American, European, and Asian companies already sell satellites, telephones, and fax equipment here [in China]." (p.118) In addition, in the 1990s, the majority of the tens of thousands of immigrants coming from China each year belonged to the technical category and they made great contributions to the Canadian economy. But unfortunately, this important fact is missing in the book, which only mentions that "many of the Chinese in North America come from South China and cook Cantonese style food" (p. 113).

The observation of classes and conversations with Canadian teachers revealed that nearly all of them had not been to China or knew much about China and her history. It is not difficult to imagine that with these major omissions in the textbooks, teachers cannot affirm students' cultural background or help students to develop a positive self-image.

In addition to significant omissions, the Eurocentric perspective is evident in constructing the image of China. The 1998 book arbitrarily divides China into three regions with a particular focus on each one – the North China section focuses on the capital city Beijing and history, the South China section on rural China, and the West China section on minority nationalities. This division serves well the author's purposes: to portray China as ancient and rural, and romanticize West China as exotic by focusing on "Tibetans in the mountains, Uighurs in the deserts, and the Mongols in the grasslands." This is the typical Eurocentric view in perceiving oriental cultures but it cannot provide in-depth understanding of modern China.

In addition, the author's ignorance and biased view about Chinese traditional medicine can be seen from the comments in the 1998 book: "Each year millions of animals around the world are killed and body parts are sent to China. Many of the animals hunted are endangered species." (p. 81) Here, the global problem of over-hunting is directly attributed to Chinese medicine.

(3) Language and illustrations:

China is a large, diverse country with many contrasts. But the image as shown in the illustrations in the two books is typically rural, without much difference between urban and rural areas. The eight pictures in 1987 book (pp. 10-11) of Beijing mainly concentrate on backward modes of transportation (bicycles, horse-drawn carts, wheelbarrows, etc.). Modern transportation systems in Beijing are not visible here. Some pictures show dirty, shabby places. The most distorted pictures are those of Suzhou. The Teacher's Manual (p. 5) says "Suzhou is considered one of China's oldest and most beautiful cities," the "Venice of the East," and "an ideal setting for gardens." But the illustrations depict a totally different Suzhou with very dirty rivers.

Although the illustrations in the 1998 book have improved, the basic problem remains, with the focus on backward scenes and uneducated people or with negative captions. For example, Picture 14 shows a policeman at an intersection controlling traffic with arm signals, with the caption: "Traffic lights are not common" (p.16). Picture 10 shows a computer store, saying: "Only very well-off families can afford to buy a computer for their home" (p.87). A good way to indicate how illustrations in a textbook strengthen stereotyping is using a picture tally focusing on occupations of characters to see if they represent diversity (Grant & Sleeter, 1989), but it is not necessary for the two books because anyone who would thumb through them will readily find nearly all of the people are peasants and small peddlers.

Though stark racist or stereotypic language no longer has a market nowadays, due to the dominant perspective, a few "loaded" words still ring through the silent texts. A lesson in the 1987 book implicitly depicts Chinese people as ignorant. The lesson entitled "The Foreign Guests" (pp. 72-73) tells the story about the villagers' curiosity about the first visit by white guests after the open door policy. The following are the words used to characterize the Chinese and the foreigners.

Chinese Villagers' Curiosity

cried
anxiously
scared
nervous
stood waiting
excited village crowd following the visitors
fear gripped Zong Chen
stared in amazement

Foreign Guests

very, very tall
curly and red hair
very long (hair)
said quietly
with smiling blue eyes

tongue seemed too big for his mouth
the crowd

The author's perspective in the 1998 book could be sensed through some of the "neutral" terms and statements regarding the Western invasion of China. For example:

European sailing ships [italics added] reached China (1700-1900).

Foreign traders [italics added] allowed to dock at only one port (1757).

Chinese people tried to force *the foreigners* out [italics added] (1850-1912).

Foreign traders [italics added] fought for more trading ports (1839-1900s). (p. 23)

Here, the warships become "sailing ships" and the invaders "traders." These problems with language and pictures not only tend to precondition the innocent students to the Eurocentric perspective, but also reinforce the stereotypic views of the mainstream students.

In addition, the 1998 book contains quite a few factual mistakes which may have negative effect. Here are only a few examples:

A footnote says "22% of China's adult population cannot read or write." (p.76)

The figure is much exaggerated. The actual figure should be 12% according to the 2000 census. An interviewee says: "One-child families are also allowed to buy a better quality of rice and meat." (p.106) Actually, this is not true and implicitly criticizes the one-child policy. Another interview says: "Because there is a shortage of jobs in China, women are sometimes encouraged to give up their jobs and stay home. This makes more jobs available for men." (p.92) This is not true, either, and may imply that China is a sexist country.

Analysis of Chinese Textbooks

The purpose of *Chinese History* (1995) reads as follows:

This textbook is intended to raise students' academic excellence, particularly through teaching China's modern and contemporary history, as well as the basic state of China, to educate students to love the motherland, love the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), love socialism. (Front page)

Undoubtedly the purpose of the history course has clearly articulated political and ideological dimensions for ethnic integration.

(1) Common themes and general patterns of the texts:

The history textbook evaluation indicates that knowledge, ideas, and experiences included in the history books in China are selected from the mainstream perspectives, i.e., the Han Chinese perspectives. For the purpose of instilling the socialist ideology as quoted above, China's history is conceptualized in a meta-narrative as having undergone three general historical periods.

The first is known as ancient China (up to 1840s) with its brilliant culture and ever expanding territories, which is depicted as a process of general unification broken by occasional periods of division, and of continuous ethnic integration into the Chinese nation. The second is modern China (1840s-1919), delineated as a period when China was transformed from an independent feudal

state into a semi-colonial state without sovereignty. The third is known as contemporary China (since 1919) with the emergence of the CCP and socialism, a period of awakening of the Chinese people. This three-period division serves to show that only socialism can save China from Western subjugation and protect national sovereignty.

It may be illuminating to quote a senior history teacher to see how she understood China's history and the purpose of the course:

Young people, without the knowledge of thousands of years' history of the Chinese civilization, will not have profound patriotism and national self-esteem aroused in their hearts. Without the knowledge of the past one hundred years' history of China, they will not get to know the truth that only socialism can save China.

Evidently, the function of history courses is to instill all students from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds with the socialist ideology.

The history textbooks explain ethnic relations in a "family analogy," which compares ethnic relations to a big family. The state is the parent and the Han the big brother while other ethnic groups, such as the Mongols, Tibetans, and Uighurs, are younger brothers who depend on the parent and the big brother for survival and common prosperity. The common destiny, which is identified as the socialist road, is emphasized.

(2) Dominant perspectives and significant omissions:

China's history in the textbooks is basically the history of the Han. The history of minorities is included selectively to reinforce the "commonalities" among ethnic groups and the integration towards "the Chinese nation." The cultural symbols used to represent the Chinese nation all come from the Han culture. Such symbols include the Yellow River for the Chinese civilization, the Yellow Emperor for common ancestry, the Great Wall for a unified state, and the Tiananmen Gate for socialism. The conversation with the same history teacher may show how importance is attached to teaching "commonalities" in history courses:

Learning history endows people with wisdom. History is the source of patriotism. Our Chinese nation has had a time-honored history. The Yellow River Valley is the cradle of the civilization of the Chinese nation. The Yellow Emperor is the ancestor of our Chinese nation. The descendant of the Yellow Emperor has created the unified multiethnic country only after arduous tortuous effort....

The history books fail to present holistic views of ethnic groups. Knowledge about ethnic minority groups is fragmented and minority cultures are marginalized. Territorial integrity is an important focus in selecting ethnic content. Consequently, the books stress "friendly periods" in ethnic relations, while leaving out "hostile periods." This strengthens the idea that the ethnic groups have belonged to the Chinese nation for millennia. One case in point is the relations between the Tang and Tibet. Over the past thousand years, the relations between Tibet and China proper have taken a tortuous course, punctuated by periods of alternating friendliness and hostility. What is depicted as representative of the

relationship is the friendliest period, that is, the royal marriage in the Tang Dynasty (AD 618-907) of a Tang princess to a Tibetan king.

The texts on ethnic groups focus on the fact that China has long been a unified multiethnic state with periods of division, when ethnic regions broke away from China temporarily, but those periods were always followed by unification through military conquest. An example is General Zuo Zong Tang leading an expedition to Xinjiang Uighur Region in the 1870s. So, inclusion and exclusion of ethnic content hinges upon whether it contributes to the territorial integrity of China.

While minorities' unsuccessful attempts to fight China are described as rebellious, their efforts to gain independence are always associated with the unpatriotic clique within the upper strata of the ethnic groups and "foreign subversion." A typical example is the independence of the Outer Mongolia in the 1920s.

The evaluation shows that ethnic cultural and traditional values are missing in the history curriculum. The Mongol people, Uighurs and Tibetans have distinctive, rich cultures, which include values that have been proven valuable in the past and may also be so for a sustainable future. History taught to students should include these ethnic values as an integral part of the history curriculum. But when knowledge is selected from the mainstream points of view, minority cultures are marginalised. Contributions made by them are likely to be trivialized, and minority heroes are normally left out. Occasionally minority heroes are selected according to their contribution to the Chinese nation as a whole, rather than in accordance with their contribution to their own ethnic group. The analysis shows that nearly all heroes included are Han people, and almost all the great contribution and achievements mentioned are those made by the Han. Only in a couple of cases, are ethnic minorities' contributions briefly mentioned, such as a beautiful folklore of Xianbei (an ethnic group) in the fourth century and the contribution made by Li (an ethnic group) in textile techniques in the thirteenth century. Besides these examples, minorities' contributions are not visible. Even in chapters about the Mongol Yuan Dynasty, Mongol contributions are not mentioned. Conversely, what is included is the Mongol emperor's willingness to assimilate to the Han culture.

Multicultural curriculum should include study of social problems, some ethnic group members' experience, and examine the diversity within each group's experience.

The evaluation of the social problems in contemporary China presented in the history books reveals the problem of omission and minimization of major historical events that have adversely affected ethnic minorities and the Chinese society as a whole. Such big events like the Big Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution are briefly mentioned and labeled as "grave mistakes." (p. 170)

(3) Language and illustrations:

Illustrations in Chinese history textbooks serve the mainstream perspective of conceptualizing China as an ever-expanding, unified country since the Qin

Dynasty (221 BC) with maps of China of various glorious periods. The portraits of the Han and ethnic heroes who contributed to the unification, territorial expansion, and anti-foreign invasion of the Chinese Nation such as emperors, generals, and ethnic kings who chose to keep friendly ties with China, make up a large proportion of the illustrations. In addition to maps and heroes, many pictures show the cultural symbols of the Chinese nation such as the Great Wall, the Tiananmen Gate, the Yellow Emperor, etc.

An analysis of the language used in the textbooks reveals the intention of indoctrinating the meta-narrative of the Chinese nation and the socialist ideology to legitimize the dominant control. The most frequently used terms are “the Chinese nation” and “our motherland,” which may show the importance attached to the construction of the national identity in history teaching. The analysis also reveals the tone of paternalism by finding the two frequently used words in dealing with ethnic minorities - “help” and “concern,” showing how the government and the state “help” ethnic groups to improve their living conditions and are “concerned” for their wellbeing.

Comparison

The foregoing analysis indicates some similarities in the portrayal of visible minorities in China and Canada, where multicultural education serves to legitimize dominant control by manipulating pluralism and providing superficial programs. In both countries, through the knowledge selection process, ethnic content is included but selected, organized, and interpreted from the dominant perspectives and as a result, ethnic cultures included are fragmented, stereotyped, and marginalized. Ethnic inclusion in both countries is intended as a sop to ethnic grievances and does not go beyond “the additive approach” (Banks, 1994), unable to transform the perspectives of diverse students and enhance their self-respect or respect of others.

Although ethnic inclusion in both countries serves dominant control, the specific ways to achieve the purpose seem to be quite different. The Canadian textbooks evaluated legitimize dominant control by commission and omission. They imply self-superiority of the (author’s) dominant culture by providing fragmented information about other (ethnic) cultures. The focus in presenting the images of ethnic groups is on poverty, backwardness, and problems, which cannot enhance respect of self and others.

An important distinction must be made between lifestyle and life chances of students. If multicultural education only enhances the former while ignoring the latter, it cannot achieve its stated goals of educational equality. The textbook analysis shows that ethnic content in social studies in Alberta focuses on ethnic lifestyle and teaches “diversity for diversity’s sake,” without considering how to enhance the self-worth of diverse students, which may greatly affect their life chances.

Since China is taught as a separate unit and, teaching about China and Chinese culture is basically unrelated to Canada and Canadian society (with a big population of Chinese-Canadians), it seems that Canadian identity is not

emphasized in social studies course. The goals of social studies as stated by Alberta Education (2003, p.2) is “responsible citizenship,” which includes “respecting the dignity and worth of self and others.” It is evident that the perspectives and attitudes as reflected in the social studies textbooks are inconsistent with the stated goals. As Ghosh and Abdi (2004) say, the Canadian decentralized educational system is not effective in implementing the federal multiculturalism policy.

Darder’s. (1991) words may serve as a summary of the Canadian case: “But democracy, by definition, cannot mean merely that an unskilled worker can become skilled. It must mean that every ‘citizen’ can ‘govern’ and that society places him [or her] in a general condition to achieve this.” (p.99)

In China, on the contrary, the centrally designed and approved history textbooks have a strong political intention. The textbook evaluation shows that the textbooks use a meta-narrative of the Chinese nation to strengthen “commonalities,” to forge the national identity, and indoctrinate socialist ideology and patriotism. According to the grand theory, in the modern time China was weakened by Western colonization and regained her sovereignty only under the leadership of the CCP.

It is evident that the ethnic content included in the curriculum is selected from the dominant point of view based on the meta-narrative. The purpose is to integrate ethnic groups towards the Chinese nation, with the result of fragmentation and marginalization of ethnic cultures. Apparently, the friendly periods in ethnic relations, ethnic heroes who died for the Chinese nation, the consequences of Western colonization, commonalities, and the national identity are emphasized.

An essential part of history teaching in China is territorial integrity, which is viewed as vital for indoctrinating patriotism against ethnic separatism. The evaluation finds that a large part of the illustrations are maps of China of various dynasties, portraits of the great emperors, generals, and ethnic kings who contributed to the territorial integrity of the Chinese nation, and the Han cultural symbols standing for the common identity.

The paternalistic attitude towards ethnic groups serves to legitimize the dominant control, implying that they must depend on the dominant Han group and the state for common prosperity. When the national identity and ethnic identities are viewed as contradictory and ethnic content is included to legitimize the dominant control, the self-image of ethnic students will be damaged and consequently, so will their life chances.

Conclusion

It can be concluded that knowledge selection is a crucial part in the curriculum process and in multiethnic countries ethnic content included in the formal curriculum can be selected and explained from the dominant point of view. This is an important form of ethnic hegemony in education. The analysis and discussions in this paper indicate that pluralism can be manipulated in various ways in

different social contexts. The Canadian version of ethnic content inclusion as reflected in social studies course emphasizes diverse students' lifestyle, instead of their life chance, their ethnic identities instead of the national identity, thus teaching diversity for diversity's sake. On the other hand, the Chinese version of ethnic content inclusion as reflected in history course has clearly articulated political purposes and is intended to forge common values and the national identity, thus teaching diversity for integration's sake. The two different versions of multicultural education are intended for similar effect – to marginalizing ethnic cultures and legitimizing the dominant control.

Based on the foregoing analysis, the following suggestions can be made:

Establishment of textbook selection and consultation mechanisms:

Selection and evaluation of social studies (history) textbooks should involve experts from relevant ethnic groups. Writers from the dominant group writing ethnic content must have the experience of living in the target culture for at least several years. Some mechanisms should be established for internal, external, even international consultation on textbook issues before publication.

Knowledge construction and deconstruction:

Teachers and students should be aware that textbooks are based on particular perspectives and that knowledge is not created by experts or authorities only, but can be constructed by students themselves. Textbooks can be used as only one of the sources, which may also include primary information collected by students. In teaching, a teacher may ask the question "from whose perspective is the specific knowledge constructed?" Students should be helped to approach specific historical events from multiple perspectives.

Critical thinking and life chances:

The essence of multicultural education is to enhance ethnic students' life chances, i.e., competitiveness in future job markets and the skills to survive in modern society, but many programs in practice emphasize only their lifestyles. Teachers should realize that teaching critical thinking plays a central role in moving away from inequality and towards cultural pluralism. Based on their own values and philosophy in education, teachers can make the important decision to emphasize critical thinking strategies. Preparation for critical thinking begins with selecting materials and planning lessons. Mainstream students also need to critically reflect on oppression, domination, and racism.

Discussion on one's own social problems:

Ethnocentric textbooks tend to focus on discussing social problems of other countries or the subordinate groups, or blaming the victims, while leaving out or understating the problems of the dominant group or the mainstream society. To achieve social equality, students should be given an opportunity to discuss social problems of their own countries or problems caused by oppression, racism, and colonization.

Currently used ethnocentric textbooks:

Teachers usually do not have an opportunity to influence textbook selections. But in the classroom a teacher can go beyond the texts to pursue critical thinking, cooperative learning, and a transformative pedagogy. The most important curriculum reform is for the teacher to help students succeed with whatever materials are used. Imaginative teachers can design their curriculum around the life experiences of the students, using newspapers, magazines, literature, and other sources to supplement the textbooks.

Teacher teams select empowering themes that bridge across the disciplines. For example, in the study of discrimination, students can use reading skills to learn the history of discrimination and math skills to calculate and demonstrate income inequalities. Teachers can work in teams to share planning and read samples of students' work in other classes. Teachers, not textbooks or curriculum, establish high expectation levels.

Beyond the text:

Teachers can help students to study the texts for what they are – a particular point of view of history, literature, and language. One good way is to analyze and compare two or more texts on the same issue. Teachers and students can bring in current news reports from multiple perspectives and compare them with the texts. After acquiring critical thinking skills, students can analyze these textbook presentations. Using texts as critical thinking subjects demystifies the textbooks. Students interact actively with books rather than read and repeat the ideas of others.

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