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Classroom counternarratives as transformative multicultural citizenship education

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines pedagogical responses to James Banks's concept of *failed citizenship*, namely the structural factors that inhibit migrants and minorities from accessing fully functioning citizenship and their human rights. Banks commissioned and published 16 case studies of social studies teachers in different national contexts to illustrate and exemplify *transformative civic education*. These illustrate his theories of failed citizenship and transformative citizenship education. Analysing this dataset through the lenses of failed citizenship, human rights and counternarratives, the paper provides empirical evidence to support and illustrate the theories. These minority teachers working in hostile cultural environments are very aware of the dangers of failed citizenship for their students. They use pedagogical strategies that have been theorized in critical race theory and human rights education including countering homogenizing national official narratives and promoting students' counternarratives asserting the value of their heritage languages and cultures and asserting their rights to freedom of expression.

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Multicultural education in the huge body of work developed and inspired by James Banks has a strongly political dimension in that it aspires to transform the life experiences of marginalized individuals and groups. Multicultural education also has an important cultural dimension since it addresses the struggles by marginalized groups around the world for cultural recognition and rights. Since the early 2000s, Banks has promoted and synthesized scholarship that describes, analyses and exemplifies citizenship education in contexts of diversity and global migration. His theoretical contribution has been to develop typologies of citizenship education always with a focus on both negative models and a positive vision of transformative knowledge. This is not instead of promoting multicultural education but rather an extension of the founding principles on which it is based (Banks, 2004; J. Banks, 2006; Banks, 2008, 2009; Banks et al., 2005). His starting point is the assertion that: 'A citizen's racial, cultural, language, and religious characteristics often significantly influence whether she is viewed as a citizen within her society' (Banks, 2004, p. 5).

The switch of focus from multicultural education to citizenship education in multicultural nations and societies is exemplified in the four overview articles and 16 national

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case studies in *Citizenship Education and Global Migration: Implications for Theory, Research, and Teaching* published by the American Educational Research Association (AERA) (Banks, 2017a). However, Banks's contribution to this important collective work is essentially editorial. His own theoretical perspective, that provides the rationale for the edited collection, is expressed in a separately published study *Failed Citizenship and Transformative Civic Education* (2017b) that builds on his previous work developing a typology of citizenship (Banks, 2008).

My purpose in this paper is to engage with Banks's attention to failed citizenship in multicultural societies, and his proposed antidote of transformative civic education. I apply insights from human rights education, critical legal theory, critical race theory and cultural studies all of which encourage transformative action. A common feature of these scholarly movements is their emphasis on the importance of narrative. A strand within human rights education focuses on developing narratives as a pedagogical tool that can be deployed in the service of transformative citizenship education (Adami, 2015, 2018; Levinson, 2012; Osler, 2015; Osler & Zhu, 2011; Soysal & Schissler, 2005). Critical legal theory has a parallel development, included by Banks in the 2017 edited volume, namely the advocacy of 'respectability narratives'. Such narratives attempt to counteract the exclusionary discourses that ascribe disreputability, illegality or foreignness to minorities and migrants, thus denying them full citizenship (A. Banks, 2017b). A third development is the theorization of counternarrative strategies by scholars working in critical race theory (Gibson, 2020; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002) and cultural studies (Giroux et al., 1996). The encouragement of counternarratives provides opportunities for students to use their everyday experiences to challenge the validity of apparently common-sense ideological discourses that deny the worthiness of migrants and minorities to be accepted as full citizens. Transformative citizenship education based on human rights has been theorized and applied across the world as a process of vernacularization. In other words, the implementation of universal human rights standards has been adapted to local contexts (Merry & Levitt, 2017).

Methodology

This article first analyses and explores Banks's concept of failed citizenship. It uses a hermeneutic approach, namely a close reading of his article. It then analyses the database of 16 case studies of social studies teachers from different national contexts commissioned by Banks for his scholarly collection *Citizenship Education and Global Migration* (Banks, 2017a). This volume brings together papers developed from those presented at an invited conference in 2015. Banks has collected examples from across the world of teachers using their agency to address failed citizenship. The case studies provide empirical evidence of ways in which teachers are 'implementing citizenship education courses and programs in schools that will facilitate the *structural inclusion* of students from diverse ... groups into their nation states' (Banks, 2017a, p. x original emphasis). This, Banks argues, will occur when students develop a feeling of political efficacy.

Whereas Banks's contribution is to publish these case studies of social studies teachers and provide a theoretical framework for evaluating their work, he falls short of

undertaking this analysis himself. Consequently, I have set out to analyse this rich, though limited, data set and draw out commonalities. I examine the vignettes through the lenses of failed citizenship, human rights and counternarratives.

First, I identify common features of the contexts in which the teachers are working, noting that they and their students both frequently face hostile environments including overt and covert racism. Their human rights are not respected. Second, I note that the teachers selected are themselves often from minority backgrounds. Like their minoritised students, they may be perceived as less than full or worthy citizens. Third, I note the predominant strategy of enabling the emergence, from their students' own experiences, of counternarratives to hegemonic national discourses. This enables me to draw out a specific finding from the collected case studies namely to note that teachers use the strategy of encouraging counternarratives to promote transformative citizenship education as an antidote to failed citizenship.

The case studies themselves are an opportunity sample. Whilst Banks selected his invited scholars on the basis of nationality, wishing to demonstrate that similar preoccupations and strategies exist in different national contexts across the world, he did not expect or intend that his case studies are in any sense typical. Rather he sought examples of teachers using their imagination, agency and professional judgements in mainstream educational settings. I suggest that these examples of teachers struggling to develop classrooms where the culture escapes from the imposed structures and starts to exemplify a new transformed social order can be considered as illustrations of prefigurative practice (Fielding & Moss, 2011; McCowan, 2010). In other words, the case studies do not provide a generalizable solution to education addressing failed citizenship, but rather a number of inspirational vignettes that may encourage a degree of emulation in the tradition of Apple and Beane (1999).

Failed citizenship

Banks identifies failed citizenship as resulting from the tension within nation-states between unity and diversity and referring mainly to migrants and minorities who 'do not internalize the values and ethos of the nation-state, feel structurally excluded within it, and have highly ambivalent feeling toward it' (2017b, p. 367). This observation is suggestive of the powerful ideology of nationalism having become inadequate to accommodate the needs and perceptions of individuals and groups who, in an age of globalization and migration, have multiple identities and loyalties. When 'the values and ethos of the nation-state' are defined by a dominant group in normative terms that exclude many inhabitants, the citizenship offered to those excluded fails to provide adequately for their protection, and rights to provision of services and participation. When the offer of citizenship is denied or fails, the excluded minorities are deprived of agency and of the social and economic structures that enable and protect a dignified and fulfilled life. The promise of justice and peace, the *raison d'être* of human rights, is effectively broken.

In an extreme example, failed citizenship may be the result of the deliberate withdrawal of state protection as enacted, for instance, in Nazi Germany from 1933 when the state deprived Jewish citizens first of the protection of the courts and police and then of citizenship. This policy was replicated by the collaborationist government in France in the 1940s. A more recent example is where the government of Myanmar denied citizenship to

the Rohingya minority and excluded them from the 2014 census. This non-recognition as the responsibility of the state led to the army expelling thousands of Rohingya from the country in 2017. A widespread practice even by countries that consider themselves to be liberal and democratic is the denial of equal state protection and entitlement to belonging because of inadequate documentation. René Cassin, the Nobel Peace Prize laureate in 1968 whose citation describes him as the ‘father of the Declaration of Human Rights’, developed his theoretical understanding of the importance of human rights on the basis of his work with displaced WW1 war veterans who were unable to claim their pensions because they were no longer living in the country of their citizenship. This perspective on rights was further developed by Hannah Arendt (1968) who identified the issue of statelessness as effectively leading to rightlessness (Krause, 2011). The growing numbers of stateless persons in the world is a challenge for democracy and for education. However, failed citizenship expands this number of less protected people who are also less able to exercise agency and participate in political life.

For Banks, conditional offers of national citizenship, based on an imposed choice of assimilation or exclusion, fail to satisfy those whose multiple loyalties are not restricted to a single and exclusive commitment to a nation defined by others. He illustrates this by reference to indigenous minorities (Kurds, Chechens), religious minorities in secular states (Muslims in France) and racialized minorities such as African Americans all of whom may well have ‘ambivalent feelings’ towards the government of the nation-state that they inhabit. The ambivalent feelings stem from their experiences of everyday racism (Essed, 2002) and exclusion. Additional categories of people who are frequently unable to secure their rights and their dignity include increasing numbers of stateless people; those displaced by war, ethnic cleansing and natural disasters brought about by climate change; other migrants; nomadic peoples; indigenous nations; and minority citizens in the United States who still struggle for the most basic rights and dignity (Howard-Hassmann, 2015; Kingston, 2019).

Observing the ways in which denial of civic status to indigenous people in Thailand led to their extreme exploitation, including trafficking, Lesley Kingston challenges international organizations and scholars to recognize the importance of the issue of defining entitlement to personhood without which human rights are regularly denied. The struggle for recognition of all human beings as fully human is a prerequisite for promoting the opposite of failed citizenship which she calls functioning citizenship. When governments, ministers or political figures base their rhetoric and decisions on ethnonationalist agendas, they ascribe identities of foreignness, illegality and noncitizenship to migrants and minorities. Naming minorities and migrants as foreign or illegal renders them less worthy persons whose human rights can be ignored because they are considered as less than full citizens or even denied their status as fully human. Labelling groups of people as not included in the national ‘we’ not only perpetuates inequalities but also renders some persons more worthy than others for protection and political membership. In other words, such discourses and regulations cause some individuals to be accepted as more fully human than others (Kingston, 2019).

In his contribution to *Citizenship Education and Global Migration* (Banks, 2017a), Will Kymlicka notes that there appears to be a consensus among the writers that a combination of multicultural citizenship education and cosmopolitan human rights education provides a ‘compelling ideal’ (2017, p. xx). The realization of this ideal ‘requires

that we re-imagine the nation as cosmopolitan' (Osler & Starkey, 2010, p. 119). This is a challenge to nativist and ethno-nationalist ideologies, narratives and discourses. It therefore requires a firm theoretical platform from which to generate powerful counter-narratives that will provide the motivation to stand up for ideals that transcend national politics.

Human rights have political, economic and cultural dimensions and so can inform critical patriotism and facilitate understandings of cosmopolitan and universal values. As well as potentially transforming the lives of individuals and communities, an explicit reference to human rights helps to strengthen understandings of the international institutions that have been established to promote freedom, justice and peace in the world.

Banks's typologies of citizenship

Having an indisputable commitment to multicultural education, Banks is in a strong position to provide intellectual leadership in citizenship education. He starts from a triangular model of types of citizenship (2008). He proposes four stages of which the least powerful, at the apex of the triangle, is *legal* citizenship. This is conceptualized as applying to people who have a right to participate in political processes in the nation-state where they live, but who fail to use this opportunity. Legal citizenship, the most superficial level of citizenship in the typology, applies to citizens who are legal members of the nation-state and have certain rights and obligations to the state but do not participate in the political system in any meaningful ways.

A slightly more active approach is undertaken by those who practise *minimal* citizenship. Such citizens, conceptualized as adults, participate in formal electoral processes by voting for mainstream parties and candidates but are reluctant to engage further in political activities. As the name implies, the third level, *active* citizenship, applies to those engaged in actions to improve the life of their communities (at any level from local to global). The implication is that they work within the system, closely obeying the law and working by conventional means to influence governments and law makers. Active citizens may participate in protest demonstrations or make public speeches regarding conventional issues and reforms. The actions of active citizens are designed to support and maintain, but not to challenge, existing social and political structures.

The most powerful form of citizenship in Banks's model is *transformative* citizenship. This involves civic actions designed to promote social justice by challenging existing laws. Following Kohlberg's (1981) stages of moral development, Banks conceptualizes them as postconventional citizens. He illustrates the concept by reference to Rosa Parks whose refusal to give up her seat on the bus to a white man in Alabama in 1955 was a pivotal event in sparking the civil rights movement. Banks provides another example in the students who sat down in a lunch counter reserved for Whites in 1960 in Greensboro, North Carolina. They initiated a movement that challenged and finally ended laws that enforced racial segregation.

The essence of transformative citizenship is that such citizens are inspired by a vision of a better world, that sociologists have called a utopia (Osler & Starkey, 2010; Mannheim, 1936). This vision, when contrasted with an actually existing state of affairs may trigger feelings of indignation or anger that stimulate a political reaction based on a desire to

change the world. When they move to actions that challenge and disrupt the status quo citizens are likely to find that the State mobilizes its agents, such as police officers, to prevent what in its terms is considered public disorder. Transformative citizens confront inequality and injustice by appealing to a moral authority that is higher than the narrowly defined legal authority of a particular local or national government. As Banks defined it in:

Transformative citizenship involves civic actions designed to actualize values and moral principles and ideals beyond those of existing laws and conventions. Transformative citizens take action to promote social justice even when their actions violate, challenge, or dismantle existing laws, conventions, or structures. (2008, p. 136)

In other words, transformative citizenship education may involve challenging unfair rules and practices by taking unsanctioned action (Al-Nakib, 2017).

In promoting transformative citizenship as goal for education, Banks identifies a source of moral authority that on the one hand is associated exclusively with non-violence and on the other hand is recognized as based on universal principles, namely the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The report of the consensus panel that he convened affirms:

Citizens in democratic multicultural nation-states endorse the overarching ideals of the nation-state, such as human rights, justice, and equality, and are committed to the maintenance and perpetuation of these ideals (Banks et al., 2005, p. 8).

This definition underlies the development of the concept of transformative citizenship education articulated by Banks in 2008 and subsequently developed as an educational response to ‘failed citizenship’.

Human rights education and transformative citizenship education

The first occasion on which the phrase *human rights education* is used in an international published document is the report of the 1978 UNESCO International Congress on Teaching of Human Rights, held in Vienna. In 1993, following the end of the cold war the World Conference on Human Rights was also held in the city. The final report of the World Conference, the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, trumpeted a ‘new consensus’ (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR], 1994). This apparent advance in achieving a global consensus on the importance of human rights education concealed a setback from a post-colonial perspective. An earlier UNESCO Recommendation specifically endorses, as a guiding principle, an educational dimension to ‘the struggle against colonialism and neo-colonialism in all their forms and manifestations, and against all forms and varieties of racialism, fascism, and apartheid’ (UNESCO, 1974 Section 3.6). This strong and consensual commitment, made across the ideological divisions of the Cold War, was severely attenuated at the Vienna conference that celebrated its end. The new consensus merely emphasized, in a slightly clumsy formulation, ‘the importance of incorporating the subject of human rights education programmes’ (Para 33). (Abu Moghli, 2020).

International agreements on what is meant by human rights education take as their starting point aims for education as articulated in foundational documents and instruments such as the constitution of UNESCO (1945) which promotes: ‘collaboration among the nations through education, science and culture in order to further universal

respect for justice, for the rule of law and for human rights and fundamental freedoms ...'. Another early attempt to codify the role of education in promoting human rights was the drafting of Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which affirms the aim of education as: 'strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms'.

This commitment by the international community is amplified in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (1989) which suggests the importance of both multicultural education and human rights education. It envisages preparing children:

for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin.

Complementing these human rights instruments (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, UN Convention on the Rights of the Child) there are a number of international recommendations and resolutions that tend to be advisory rather than legally binding. They help to define the scope and direction of human rights education. For example, an international consensus was reached that courses should be 'rooted in the students' concrete situation' and 'take real life conditions as its starting point'. (UNESCO, 1979). The implication is that an approach based essentially on transmitting knowledge of human rights instruments is inadequate. It invites students to contribute examples of their own struggles and issues and their lived experience of discrimination and injustice in their communities. The same guidance gives powerful examples of such disadvantage, suggesting that HRE has a mission of 'protecting and promoting the rights of groups particularly exposed to discrimination such as national, ethnic, linguistic, religious and other minorities, migrant workers and their families and immigrants' (Art 12). Taken together, this guidance provides a level of official support for a bottom up pedagogy that invites students to contribute their own personal and family narratives as a starting point for human rights education.

The *United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training* (UNDHRET) (2011) proposes a model of teaching *about*, *through* and *for* human rights. Knowledge *about* human rights includes normative content based on human rights instruments and an understanding that there are universally acknowledged standards for individuals and agents of the State including teachers. A key principle is that human rights are universal, indivisible and interdependent. Learning and teaching *through* human rights is a pedagogical approach that respects the rights and cultures of both educators and learners. Teaching *for* human rights focuses on outcomes including empowering persons to enjoy and exercise their rights and to respect and uphold the rights of others. Whilst this model is influential, it is inadequate as a definition of human rights education. A definition would require a greater emphasis on developing respect for human rights as opposed to simply requiring knowledge of human rights instruments (Lile, 2019). The UNDHRET in its article 4 articulates a statement of purpose that aligns human rights education strongly with multicultural education based on transformative citizenship education. It proposes that human rights education should focus on 'combating and eradication of all forms of discrimination, racism, stereotyping and incitement to hatred, and the harmful attitudes and prejudices that underlie them'. Whilst many governments

sign up to such statements, the support in practical terms from ministries of education can be minimal if not hostile.

The reliance of many human rights educators on simply transmitting knowledge of human rights standards has been critiqued as declarationist (Keet, 2007; Zembylas & Keet, 2018). The critique is that the focus of human rights education is often restricted to referencing internationally recognized human rights instruments, at the expense of the lived realities of people and peoples in struggle. When viewed from the perspective of stateless Palestinians struggling against aggressive settler colonialism there is a need for the definition and reality of human rights education to start from lived experience rather than the constantly ignored international law (Abu Moghli, 2020).

Narratives and counternarratives in human rights education for transformative citizenship

Scholars attempting to provide analyses and evidence to help teachers implement recommendations and guidance such as those provided by international organizations take as a starting point that invoking human rights has the power to challenge politically and culturally powerful individuals and institutions (Baxi, 1997). However, simply describing, listing or explaining human rights may fail to engage learners and is unlikely to be transformative. Banks is quite clear that transformative citizens challenge laws and structures that are barriers to social and racial justice.

A pedagogical approach that has been advocated as enabling students to understand the powerful potential of human rights is the use of narratives. Narratives, or stories, have the power to engage the emotions as well as the intellect. From a pedagogical perspective, biographical narratives based on well-known cases illustrate ways in which courageous individuals gather support to challenge those with the power to end injustices. The respectability of the Nobel Peace Prize means that teachers can feel confident in introducing the stories of exemplary Nobel laureate transformative citizens who have challenged an unjust albeit legal status quo in defence of human rights. In this vein, the Robert F. Kennedy Centre for Justice and Human Rights has developed a programme named *Speak Truth to Power* drawing on the inspiring case studies collected by its founding director, Kerry Kennedy (2003). Schools can access over 50 detailed lesson plans for social studies teachers that provide detailed background information on well-known human rights defenders and transformative citizens such as Nobel laureates Martin Luther King (1964), Rigoberta Menchú Tum (1992), Nelson Mandela (1993) and Malala Yousafzai (2014). The materials include case studies from around the world that highlight struggles against discrimination. Issues raised include civil and political rights, discrimination on the grounds of ethnicity, race, sex, sexuality, religion, class, caste and indigenous status.

When the lessons were trialed in four schools in the UK, teachers felt confident to use the materials to illustrate political action and this interested and motivated the students. 'Focusing on human rights defenders helped the teachers to establish political action as a significant focus from the outset'. It was engaging with 'the process of promoting human rights, rather than the body of knowledge of human rights' that motivated students (Jerome, 2017, p. 4). This is an example of social studies teaching promoting inspiring case studies as examples of transformative citizenship. It is based on a narrative

approach where exceptional lives are recounted, and students invited to identify with the struggles for justice and human rights.

The role of narrative in both human rights education and multicultural education has been developed and theorized in this journal by Osler (2015) who draws on Bhabha's concept of the 'right to narrate' (2003) to promote educational responses that challenge unitary national grand narratives by ensuring that the voices of minorities can be heard. Such interventions can help to deconstruct official knowledge and enable the reimagining of nations and peoples as cosmopolitan. Osler uses the story of a Chinese citizen, pseudonym Yongmin, collected by a co-author. Yongmin recounts his experiences during the turbulent history of China from the 1950s to the 1980s. Using this narrative, 'the relatively dry material of the UDHR comes to life and takes on real meaning and significance'. It 'engages the emotions as well as the intellect and promotes a sense of solidarity with the struggles of another' (Osler, 2016, p. 57).

Transformative citizenship education in hostile environments

I now elaborate and expand on one of Banks's suggested interventions to actualize transformative citizenship education, namely: social studies teaching. I draw particularly on the case studies from across the world commissioned by Banks for *Citizenship Education and Global Migration* (2017a). I look for examples of social studies teachers addressing failed citizenship by adopting a human rights perspective and encouraging students' narratives and counternarratives. The vignettes are examples of transformative citizenship education.

A pedagogy based on narratives of exemplary individuals engaged in struggles for human rights provides political context and emotional pull. It aims to inspire emulation, even if in a localized community such as a school. However, when students develop their own counternarratives that challenge dominant discourses, they participate in a wider struggle for social justice. The evidence from the Banks case studies suggests that developing personal counternarratives is a powerful pedagogical process for developing transformative citizens. Banks commissioned 16 case studies with the intention that geographical coverage should be as wide as possible. This was achieved by identifying scholars actively engaged with social studies teaching and citizenship education and asking them to produce a state-of-the-art chapter for their designated country and to include within it a profile of a teacher. The chapters are arranged by geographical area as: North America and South Africa, North Western Europe, East Asia, Middle East, Latin America (Banks, 2017a).

Of the 16 national reports there were four where the researchers were unable to provide a teacher case study. Of the 12 case studies of teachers, 5 are identifiably from a minority. This is likely to be a much higher proportion than in the national teacher population. It may suggest that minority teachers, who are likely to have experienced discrimination at first hand, are particularly likely to wish to engage their students in powerful learning experiences that may transform their understandings of their capacities to engage with the world around them. However, this may come at some cost to them. For instance, the teacher from Brazil, Solange, explained that colleagues constantly denied the existence of prejudice and insisted on their duty to transmit the messages of the textbooks without question. Her attempts to challenge the system, even in small

ways led to her ostracization 'the school setting is full of suspicious looks and small gestures, showing that the presence of people who "dare" to ask questions is bothersome' (Verrangia & Silva, 2017, p. 448). Teachers, and particularly teachers from minority backgrounds, who challenge the complacency of schools and suggest that prejudice does exist, and official syllabuses may be inadequate, have themselves to be courageous to overcome the suspicious looks and disapproval of others in the school. Where the existence of prejudice is denied or minority cultures and languages suppressed, the culture of the school may be a hostile and racist environment likely to generate what Banks calls failed citizenship (2017b). In other words, minority students may experience rejection and even denial of their full and equal humanity (Kingston, 2019). Several teachers in the case studies reported that they were working in such hostile environments.

Veronica, a Ghanaian-British teacher working in a predominantly White school in outer London highlighted pervasive racism in the surrounding community. Examples included insults from passing drivers to female students in hijabs; students repeating negative media stereotypes of migrants; police stopping and searching minority students without giving a reason (Osler, 2017). The teacher in the case study from Germany, Núr, was from a minority Pakistani heritage background. She was working in a context where Muslims face hostility and othering as a result of pervasive narratives that position them as not really European and not really German. Rather, her Muslim students with German nationality reported frequently experiencing being cast as foreigners, immigrants, fundamentalists, even terrorists. Male Muslim students were stereotyped as aggressive and female students as passive and submissive (Eksner & Cheema, 2017). The teacher from France, Arnaud, was also working in a context where the French state outlaws religious symbols of any kind in public places. Observant Muslims may not wear a headscarf in school and no concessions are made for students whose dietary requirements include avoiding pork. Not surprisingly many minority students consider this to be a hostile environment where full and equal citizenship is denied (Bozec, 2017).

Esteban, the exemplar teacher from Mexico, was working with students whose families used a variety of indigenous languages that were threatened by a monocultural school system. He reported that other teachers actively discouraged and suppressed the use of indigenous languages. They also denigrated traditional community forms of dress, insisting that the students would only be taken seriously when seeking work if they adopted the dress code of the majority population (Levinson & Elizarrarás, 2017). Another minority teacher from a Kurdish background features in the case study from Turkey. Mr Ozgur, working in a context where the state has a long history of privileging Turkish language and culture at the expense of minorities, observed that minorities and refugees in his class were shunned by fellow students of majority background because of their limited capacity to communicate in Turkish. The authorities provided no language support to the minorities, who consequently were being educated in a hostile environment (Aydin & Koc-Damgaci, 2017). The teacher in the Singapore case study, Malik, is also from a minority Malay-speaking background. His students, in a highly stratified education system, face discrimination in education, housing and employment reinforced by a culture where 'everyday racism [is] facilitated by reductionist, essentialized, racial identifiers' (Ismail, 2017, p. 266).

The exemplar teacher from Kuwait, Amani, works in a Muslim majority context, though one where most of the inhabitants are deprived of the rights and services that come with the formal political status of nationality. Discrimination also exists within the community of those with Kuwaiti citizenship. Amani recognized the severe limitations placed on the ambitions of her female students. Social benefits are provided through male citizens, depriving women of economic independence. If they choose to marry a non-Kuwaiti citizen, women lose their entitlement to housing and they cannot pass their citizenship to their spouse. A conservative Islamic culture reinforces these inequalities and discriminatory practices (Al-Nakib, 2017).

Promoting structural inclusion through counternarratives

All the case study teachers used their sometimes-limited agency to help their students push back against the hegemonic narratives and structures that risked them becoming failed or at the least unequal citizens. In each case they found imaginative ways to encourage their students to develop counternarratives that challenge the implicit dominance of the ruling mainstream narratives.

One approach is to focus on ensuring that students engage with and come to appreciate cultural forms other than those of the dominant majority. Solange, from Brazil, focussed on African-Brazilian history including songs addressing racial discrimination, a game from Mozambique, dancing, and images of Black people. She used these as stimulus material for her 7-8-year olds to write and read each other's autobiographical accounts thinking about their ethno-racial belonging. She presents this as an exercise of children's speech through writing, which promotes Article 13 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) on freedom of expression. It is also explicitly developing a counternarrative to the official syllabus that only offered stories of European origin. A more symbolic approach to counternarrative using cultural forms was taken by Veronica, the British teacher, who organized a multicultural fashion show, thus challenging the predominant perceptions of fashion as necessarily linked to luxury brands (Osler, 2017).

Amani, the teacher from Kuwait, adopted prefigurative practice in challenging cultural expectations both in her way of presenting herself and in the classroom environment. An observant Muslim, Amani wears a hijab in school and prays five times a day. She sets an example of promoting counternarratives by upsetting expectations about Muslim women. She wears bright clothes mixing Middle Eastern and Western styles and makes it known that her husband is responsible for cooking for their family of six children. At school, she works with her classes of Grade 11 (16-year-old) girls in a way that challenges the official textbooks. Although the textbooks present human rights, these are always relativized by reference to Islam and the Kuwaiti constitution. Amani's tactic is to encourage a nonreligious perspective and humour. One discussion lesson focused on whether women could be judges in Kuwait, despite what religious interpretations have taught them. As well as teaching about human rights, Amani transformed her classroom so that she was teaching through human rights. The forward-facing desks were moved to the side and what she called a lab classroom was created as the bare room was decorated with posters, plants, electronic media, games, books, snacks and tablecloths.

Language is a hugely important constituent of culture. The Kurdish teacher from Turkey had the advantage of being able to speak several languages and this enabled him to engage with his students and encourage them to use and be proud of their home languages (Aydin & Koc-Damgaci, 2017). This unsanctioned action challenged the monolithic and monocultural official discourse promoted by the textbooks that merely paid lip service to human rights (Sen & Starkey, 2020). Similarly, the minority teacher from Singapore speaks several languages and uses his skills first to listen to his students and then to engage them in debates that challenge taken for granted perspectives. He encourages them to generate their own narratives and express their feelings about their own experiences that may contradict official reports (Ismail, 2017). The teacher from Mexico was also concerned about diminishing language diversity in the community so he got students to tape interviews with community members about their cultural and linguistic origins and the origins of the community and thus to produce counternarratives to the prevailing hegemonic discourse based on a single dominant national language (Levinson & Elizarrarás, 2017).

Another approach is the use of imaginative writing. Veronica, in London, organized an activity called Speak Out where she started from Martin Luther King's powerful rhetoric and encouraged her African heritage students to emulate this use of forceful and emotionally compelling speech to challenge reductive national narratives and racist behaviours. Arnaud, working in Paris, got his students to write imagined diaries and first-person accounts of people with different perspectives engaged in the Algerian decolonization war of 1954–62. This challenged the dominant national narrative that until the 21st century refused the use of the word war for this liberation struggle.

Imaginative fictional writing suited to social media was used by the minoritised teacher working in Germany. She adopted a human rights-based approach where students were asked to critically examine public discourses, media coverage and news and look for examples of where and how abuses and discrimination occur. They look for examples of stigmatization of both visible (skin colour) and less visible (religion, LGBT) minorities and there was a focus on ways in which Muslims are portrayed. She also provided as discussion material vignettes, or short narratives involving dilemmas such as whether to attend football practice or religious worship. The students responded in creative ways producing counternarratives in the form of mini dramas for a radio broadcast or postings on social media (Eksner & Cheema, 2017).

One teacher, Amani, took the development of counternarratives to an explicitly political level. She encouraged campaigns conducted by the students. Initially they wrote to the principal to request greater possibilities of participation, explicitly invoking article 12 of the UNCRC. Emboldened, they wrote a letter to the ministry of education, supported in drafting by a lawyer, that complained that 15 minutes break was not long enough to eat, pray and use the restroom (Al-Nakib, 2017).

Conclusion

The sense of social injustice that inspired Banks to develop and theorize multicultural education has led him to identify failed citizenship as an urgent issue for educators to address. He proposes transformative citizenship education as a vehicle for counteracting the ascribed negative identities that perpetuate discriminations. This article takes forward

Banks's theoretical contributions by proposing failed citizenship, counternarratives and human rights as the lenses through which to view the case studies he commissioned to exemplify transformative citizenship education. Counternarratives build on convictions that they can be justified by reference to human rights including freedom of expression and opinion (articles 12–14 UNCRC) and the right to respect for cultural identities and languages (article 29 UNCRC).

One finding from the analysis in this article is that teachers engaged in transformative citizenship education develop prefigurative practice. They attempt to model in the classroom the fairer and more inclusive society that they are trying to promote. The most colourful example of this is the case from Kuwait. This article also identifies the main strategies teachers use to encourage the development of counternarratives that challenge prevailing dominant discourses and ideologies. First there is the promotion of local and heritage cultures in the face of hegemonic grand narratives of homogenous national cultures. Second there may be a focus on minority and indigenous languages as a particularly important element of culture. This focus constitutes in itself a counternarrative. A third strategy is to encourage imaginative writing as a way of enabling students to transcend the restrictive normative accounts that constitute official knowledge. A further strategy is the more explicitly political approach of letter writing to authorities.

By commissioning case studies of social studies teachers in a variety of national contexts from around the world, Banks hypothesized that they would provide justification for his theory of failed citizenship and illustrate his concept of transformative citizenship education. The information on the circumstances of teachers' contexts strongly suggests that many of their students may be perceived as less worthy or failed citizens by dint of ascribed identities such as foreigner, migrant or minority. Whilst these relatively few examples provide detailed descriptions of how teachers are implementing transformative citizenship education, an evaluation of the results remains as a goal and an opportunity for future studies.

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