

A Review on Relationship between Curriculum and National Identity in China

Jun Wang

Universiti Teknologi Malaysia Chinese Department, Qiongtai Normal University, Haikou, Hainan, China Key Laboratory of Child Cognition & Behavior Development of Hainan Province, Haikou, Hainan, China
Email: jwang@graduate.utm.my

Sanitah Mohd Yusof, Yi Zhao

Universiti Teknologi Malaysia
Email: p-sanitah@utm.my, zhaoyi@graduate.utm.my

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Abstract

Because the study of national identity allows for the exploration of pathways to promote social cohesion, exploring the important influence of national identity on society has become a focus of researchers' attention. The purpose of this review is to do an examination of curriculum and national identity and to explore the potential for research on the impact of curriculum education on national identity. The paper focuses on assessing the concept of national identity, the educational content of national identity in textbooks, and the relationship between curriculum and the formation of students' national identity. The content of national identity in textbooks has been widely studied, but the mechanisms by which instructional materials influence students' national identity have not been empirically examined. Empirical research on students' national identity perceptions, attitudes, evaluations, emotions, and behaviors from the dimensions of curriculum content, curriculum objectives, instructional design, teaching methods, teacher literacy, and curriculum evaluation are all areas that need to be explored.

Keywords: National Identity, Curriculum, Textbook Materials, China

Introduction

National identity is a subjective sense of belonging to a particular national group that is accompanied by a complex set of cognitions and emotions that express one's attitudes toward this and other ethnic groups (Barrett & Davis, 2008; Blank & Schmidt, 2003). National identity is a multidimensional psychological construct Safa et al (2022), as well as a dynamic concept Smith (1991), which reflects the changing conditions of a nation and the influence of various socially contradictory factors. Reasons for studying national identity include the fact that a weaker national identity can threaten social cohesion and exacerbate ethnic conflict Verkuyten & Martinovic (2012), but another, more important reason for studying national

identity is that it is important to understand the determinants of national identity because national identity has a significant impact on other aspects of society, such as social conflict Canavan & Turkoglu (2022), labor market (Nekby & Rödin, 2010).

Children's national identity and attitudes are related to the environment and practice patterns in which they live (Barrett & Oppenheimer, 2011). The process of national identity formation is influenced by factors such as teachers, parents, school curriculum, and media. Scholars have studied age Barrett (2000), gender Batool & Ghayas (2022), citizenship Hainmueller et al (2015), and racial or religious segregation Drouhot & Nee (2019) and other demographic factors in relation to national identity formation. The influence of social context on national identity is also examined, for example, family education Vermeulen & Kranendonk (2021); Ogoro et al (2022), media Du (2023); Nguyen et al (2023); Aghapouri (2020), schooling Rohde-Liebenau (2020), peer influence Schulz & Leszczensky (2016), social conflict (Nair & Sambanis, 2019). National identity connotations, dimensions and their influencing factors have attracted a great deal of interest from researchers. A great deal of research has been conducted on the concept of national identity. Studies on the dimensions of national identity and its influencing factors have different focuses. The aim of the current study is to provide a comprehensive review on the relationship between curriculum and national identity, to explore the potential for research on the impact of curriculum education on national identity. Textbooks are prevalent in schools around the world, and their influence has endured. Textbooks used in American school's endeavor to inculcate in students' certain abstract political norms (e.g., equality, sovereignty, liberty, and tolerance, etc.); special emphasis is placed on patriotism, the supremacy of the state over politics (Fu, 2002). Scholars' analyses of school curricula have gradually gone beyond the knowledge-carrying function of curricula to the value analysis of curricula, emphasizing the influence of curricula on students' patriotism, sense of belonging, and national identity. Yong (1972) conducted an in-depth study of the issues of "knowledge and control" but he did not conduct a specific value-oriented analysis of the curriculum. Yong (1972) conducted an in-depth study on issues such as "knowledge and control", but he did not analyze the value orientation of the textbooks specifically. Apple, & Huang (2001) argues that the study of curricular knowledge should be the study of ideology, and he emphasizes that it is possible to understand in the study of the curriculum how social structure, social class embedded ideology influences the choice of curricular content. Every Government recognizes the importance of school education for the development of children's patriotism and sense of belonging to their country. A large number of countries have set up curricula related to patriotism and civic education in school education, and the teaching materials for these curricula are uniformly developed and utilized. Starting in 2019, in mainland China, teaching materials for Chinese language, history and political science subjects are uniformly developed and validated by the government. In recent years, the study of the relationship between curriculum and national identity has become a hot topic (Li, & Liang, 2021). The study of the relationship between the curriculum and the development of children's national identity can provide an in-depth explanation of the mechanisms by which the school curriculum influences the development of children's national identity; it is of great significance to curriculum developers, textbook writers, and teachers. At the same time, through curriculum research, it is possible to understand how the social structure and social class ideology of a particular era influence the choice of curriculum content.

This review assesses the concept of national identity, the educational content of national identity in textbooks, and the relationship between the curriculum and children's national

identity formation to provide an overview of research on the relationship between curriculum and national identity. At the end of the paper, a brief critical discussion is presented to provide an understanding of the research on the relationship between curriculum and national identity, as well as to address gaps in the literature for potential investigation in the future.

2. National identity

National identity has been conceptualized as a multidimensional psychological construct that reflects a person's beliefs and attitudes about membership in the country in which he or she resides and the process by which these beliefs and attitudes are formed (Phinney & Devich-Navarro, 1997; Molina & Preddie, 2020; Safa, Umaña-Taylor & Martinez-Fuentes, 2022). National identity is defined as an individual's perceived and emotional attachment to his or her nation-state and includes factors such as "a named population sharing a historical territory, common myths and historical memories, a communal culture, a common economy, and the legal rights and obligations of all members" (Smith, 2013). National identity can be understood as a person's sense of identification with and belonging to a nation or state; it refers to a feeling that a person shares with a group of people regardless of citizenship (Tajfel & Turner, 2004).

In order to measure the significance of national identity, researchers have operationalized the definition of national identity by dividing the content of national identity into dimensions. Barrett (2000) systematically articulated a content framework for national identity in children and adolescents. He divided national identity into three dimensions from a content perspective: cognitive, affective, and behavioral (Kolaříková, 2021; Kassa, 2023). However, when discussing the relationship between national identity and other social phenomena, national identity is often designed as a one-dimensional structure. Scholars have focused primarily on belonging (Schulz & Leszczensky, 2016; Jugert, Šerek & Stollberg, 2019; Martinez-Fuentes et al., 2022; Spiegler et al., 2022) and social phenomena, primarily using the belongingness dimension of the Phinney & Devich-Navarro (1997) scale (Martinez-Fuentes et al., 2021; Safa, Umaña-Taylor, & Martinez-Fuentes, 2021; Martinez-Fuentes et al., 2022; Spiegler et al., 2022).

Batool & Ghayas (2022) explored national identity into two dimensions: sense of belonging and sense of nationhood. The ethical view of national identity argues that people's sense of belonging to a nation depends mainly on criteria such as place of birth, lineage, and descent (Hadler & Flesken, 2018; Reeskens & Hooghe, 2010). The civic view of national identity bases people's sense of belonging on the country's political system, laws, and rules of behavior (Hadler & Flesken, 2018; Lenard et al., 2018; Reeskens & Hooghe, 2010). For example, Zhang (2010) argued that national identity mainly refers to an individual's or nation's identification of the political community to which they belong and the individual's expectation of the political community to which they intend to belong. Some scholars categorize national identity into two dimensions: ethnic national identity and civic national identity (Devos et al., 2020; Sumino, 2017). Gao permanently, Zhu (2010) argued that the cultural connection of ethnic identity comes from the bond of elements of originality, such as the commonality of customs, blood, ancestral origin, language, etc.; while civic identity is an identity based on political legitimacy and ideology. The modern nation-state is a historical construction of a community that embraces many ethnic groups on the basis of culture, ethnicity, religion, etc., and through the bonds of political connection such as territorial territory, central authority, and the unity of political and legal norms. Carey (2002) argues that national identity can be understood as a collective social identity through which people can categorize themselves

and others on the basis of belonging to a nation. This identity creates a sense of belonging to a people and a country and fosters positive attitudes towards them. It is a socially constructed identity and is constantly reproduced through the society's shared understanding of its own group, i.e. its own country and its values, symbols, traditions, shared experiences and memories. National identity is the identification of the citizens of a country with the historical and cultural traditions, moral values, ideals and beliefs, and national sovereignty of their own country (He & Huang 2008). In modern society, national identity is essentially a psychological common consciousness internalized by individuals or groups in society, i.e., awareness of one's own ethnicity, awareness of one's own country, awareness of one's own geographic area of existence, and cultural synthesis.

Therefore, the formation of national identity in modern society is the process by which the state shapes its citizens and reaches consensus. Human beings identify themselves with the state just as individuals identify themselves with their families, with both emotional and existential needs. The state needs to provide its people with orderly social order, welfare and legal protection to ensure that citizens' lives in this territory are safe, harmonious and well-being; on the other hand, the construction of the legitimacy and authority of the state requires the creation of a social and cultural environment conducive to national identity through education and other methods. Modern countries around the world have made education an important means of shaping citizens' feelings of national identity.

Curriculum and National Identity

Curriculum definition and research

Curriculum and instruction is a rapidly evolving field dedicated to transforming the educational landscape through improved curriculum design and instructional best practices (WGU, 2020). It consists of two components, "curriculum" and "instruction". The relationship between them is not "who contains who", both have their own objects of study, both need to have their own connotation and system, but at the same time there is a close relationship, mutual constraints, and mutual promotion between the two (Liao, 2007). The emergence and development of curriculum and instruction is the result of the development of educational practice and educational science, reflecting the historical evolution of education and social change. Curriculum and instruction occupy an important position in the field of education and play an important role in promoting quality education, improving national quality and enhancing the future competitiveness of the country.

In recent years, the research hotspots of curriculum and teaching have focused on the relationship between curriculum and teaching, the changes in the research hotspots of curriculum and teaching, and the reconstruction of the concept of curriculum field (Zhang, 2014; Wang, 2021). These studies provide important theoretical support for understanding and mastering curriculum and instruction. An & Wang (2016) found that theoretical research and practical exploration of classroom teaching focus on the study of basic theoretical issues of teaching, and teaching research focuses on practical exploration of classroom teaching reform. They argued that the future trend of curriculum and instruction research is reflected in the promotion of the discipline of curriculum and instruction through critical reflection. Classroom teaching research will become a hot area of curriculum and teaching concern, and the space for curriculum and instruction research will be further expanded. Wang & Ma (2011) found that the research and development of curriculum and instruction is becoming more mature, supporting and interacting with disciplines such as educational technology and comparative education. There are stable professional research institutions, teams, journals

and research topics in the field. Of course, there is an imbalance in research capacity between different regions. Wang et al (2017) found that the research on curriculum and instruction, which actively solves the educational problems in the information age, focuses on the basic theories of curriculum, the practical problems of curriculum, the basic theories of teaching, the practical problems of teaching, etc., which mainly include the integration of information technology and teaching, MOOC, flipped classroom, smart classroom, deep learning and so on. However, most of the current research on curriculum and instruction focuses on the development of a single discipline or an entire field, while not many researches study the impact of curriculum and instruction on students' emotions, attitudes and values by using curriculum and instruction as independent variables.

3.2 A research on the content of national identity in textbooks

Researchers have mainly interpreted and categorized the elements of national identity in textbooks in different ways, mainly using content analysis and textual analysis to analyze the content of national identity education in teaching materials in primary and secondary schools as well as in universities. Huntington (1981) divided national identity into political identity, cultural identity, and national identity (as cited in Lv & Yin, 2005). Wang (2014) divided national identity into four dimensions: ethnic, cultural, geographical and political. Yin (2016) divided national identity into four dimensions: subject, time, space and power, in which the subject dimension focuses on citizenship; the time dimension focuses on the country's history, present and future; the space dimension focuses on the country's geography, territory and its significance to the individual; and the power dimension focuses on the citizens' attitudes, emotions and evaluations of the country's political power institutions. Peng (2018) believes that in modern society national identity mainly contains six basic elements: citizenship identity, territorial identity, historical identity, institutional identity, cultural identity and social structure identity. Based on the classification of the elements of the educational content of national identity, scholars analyze teaching materials in primary and secondary schools and universities. In Chinese elementary school language textbooks, national identity has five dimensions: political identity, cultural identity, historical identity, geographic identity, and identity, and the element of cultural identity occupies an important position (Gao & Hao, 2020). Gao & Yan (2020) in the junior high school ethics and rule of law textbook, national identity education content accounted for 66.09%, especially focusing on the content of political identity education, of which political norms and political ideology, spiritual culture, citizenship content accounted for a higher proportion. However, Gao & Yan (2020) and Gao & Hao (2020) excluded ethnic identity from the analytical framework of textbooks. There is a general lack of multi-ethnic perspectives in the national image of textbooks, and the content of texts for different ethnic groups is uneven (Li et al., 2018). Hao (2020); Zhang (2022) argued that language textbook selection emphasizes revolutionary culture. In addition, Lee & Wang (2023) argued that Chinese elementary school language textbooks focus on describing historical events and heroes to form collective memories, enhance patriotism, and cultivate national identity, but there is less content about Hong Kong, Macao, and ethnic minorities in the textbooks, and that the current trend encourages students to follow Han-centered nationalism, which in turn marginalizes other minority ethnic groups marginalizing and ignoring minority cultures (Wang & Phillion, 2010). Not coincidentally, Bulgarian elementary school textbooks almost always maintain the homogenous ethnic Bulgarian and religious Orthodox nation, and the textbooks do not respond to the religious and ethnic plurality of the country (Katsarska, 2007). There is a large amount of literature on content analysis of textbooks, and the analytical framework is static

and designed around the content of the text. However, textbooks are organized, designed, and used inseparably from the conditions and methods of teaching and learning; therefore, textbooks should be analyzed from a comprehensive and contextualized perspective. That is, textbooks are studied in relation to educational practices. The emotional impact of textbooks on their users also needs to be empirically studied.

3.3 Relationship between curriculum and national identity

The relationship between national identity and curriculum is a complex and far-reaching theme. The relationship between the two can be explored from a variety of perspectives, including curriculum content, teaching methods, and educational goals (Pan, 2009; Qian, 2024). First, curriculum content is an important tool for shaping national identity. Incorporating national knowledge into the curriculum can help students to develop a national identity (Zhang & Yuan, 2023). For example, through the history curriculum, students can learn about the history and culture of their own country, thus enhancing their national identity (Han, 2023). Secondly, teaching methods also have an impact on national identity. Teachers' teaching and evaluation methods do not have much impact on national identity, but they should not be ignored. Li et al (2022) found that teachers should adopt diversified teaching methods and evaluation methods to enhance students' interest and motivation in learning, so as to better cultivate their sense of national identity. In addition, educational objectives are the key to national identity education. Wei & Hu (2021) advocate that educational goals should explicitly include the cultivation of students' sense of national identity, so that students can continuously strengthen their sense of national identity in the learning process. The cultivation of national identity is not an overnight process, but needs to be gradually implemented in long-term educational practices. Therefore, educators should pay continuous attention to the development of students' national identity and timely adjust educational strategies to meet their developmental needs (Li & Cao, 2016). The above literature from China is not an empirical study, but a summary of experiences about education and teaching. This is despite the fact that a large body of literature on nation-building in economics and political science recognizes education as an important tool used by governments to develop people's national sentiments (Weber, 1976; Anderson, 2020). Schools play a major role in the development of children's politicization by facilitating the acquisition of political knowledge and the acquisition of political ways of thinking and attitudes, with the transmission of systematic political knowledge playing the most obvious role. Although most educators support the view that schooling can positively influence students' political attitudes, Ehman (1980) found that in schooling, the explicit curriculum (i.e., textbooks, curricula, instructional materials, etc.) influences students' political knowledge but not their political attitudes and beliefs; the latent curriculum (i.e., teachers' attitudes, classroom climate, teachers' teaching styles, school management culture, school activities) have more significant effects on students' political attitudes and beliefs. A small number of scholars have examined the impact of schooling on students' national identity formation. Schools, curricula, and teachers play an important role in the formation of national identity in children and adolescents (Barrett & Oppenheimer, 2011). Zuo et al (2003) found that students subjectively perceived schooling as having little impact on the development of their national identity. Lowe (1999) argued that schooling is a means of denying national identity. Yuen & Byram (2007) found that political science teachers in Hong Kong believed that the political science curriculum failed to develop students' national identity and patriotic feelings. Serene 's (2010) study of national identity among elementary school children in Singapore and the United States in grades 4, 5, and 6 suggests that the school provides a set

of storytelling discourses about the country that is significant in the development of an active and patriotic citizenry. Compared to other European countries, German adolescents and adults are the most critical of their own country. Researchers explained that this finding is due to the school curriculum, which is characterized by a critical attitude toward the past in Germany (Barrett, 2005). However, Peña (2017) showed that seventh graders take social studies courses for academic purposes rather than to shape their national identity. In China, textbooks for language, politics, and history are uniformly developed and used by the state. The national curriculum tends to place great emphasis on the curriculum's cultivation of students' national affection. Language, culture and history are used to popularize national myths and promote national identity. Morality and the rule of law are used to inculcate national values and a sense of good citizenship. But research on the mechanisms by which curricula and teaching materials influence students' national identity formation is lacking, although one of the first empirical research evidences on the impact of school curricula (i.e., textbook content) on individuals' national identities was provided in (Chen et al., 2023). It also means that the mechanisms behind curriculum and national identity formation are beginning to receive attention from researchers, which will help explore how national identity can be studied from the perspective of curriculum instruction.

4. Conclusion

In China, a great deal of research has been done on textbooks for primary and secondary schools, but it is basically limited to analyzing the content of the texts from the perspectives of the framework in which they are written, their linguistic features, and their history and ideology, and the pedagogical dimensions of the use of these books, the ways in which teachers use them, and their impact on students' learning are all unknown. A small amount of literature has examined the impact of schooling on national identity. But there is no rich empirical research on the mechanisms by which the instructional materials that students are exposed to for the longest period of time and use most frequently in school affect students' national identity. The impact on students' national identity from the dimensions of curriculum content, instructional design, teaching methods, teacher literacy, curriculum objectives, and curriculum evaluation is worth further exploration. The relationship between instructional materials and teaching practices, and the potential impact of these materials on practices need to be empirically explored. Revealing the impact of national identity education content in instructional materials on teachers' teaching practices, and focusing on empirical research on the impact of national identity education content on students' national identity perceptions, attitudes, evaluations, emotions, and behaviors are all areas that need to be explored.

Conflict of Interests

In this research, we have no economic relations with other people and external organizations. We don't receive the funding from any organizations.

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