Using Critical Discourse Analysis to Address the Gaps, Exclusions and Oversights in Active Citizenship Education

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Abstract
There is great concern that active citizenship policies, curriculum and/or pedagogy are not working effectively, and many researchers are seeking ways to engage students more in public affairs and political realities. In this dissertation, I explore the captivating universe of active citizenship education and the discourses that propel it, using critical theory, documentary method and critical discourse analysis. I analyze over 400 documents that directly or indirectly relate to citizenship education to determine where we have been, where we currently are, and where we ought to go with active citizenship education. As a result of my research, I discovered that the discourses that originally constructed notions of the citizen, citizenship and the rights of the citizen (e.g., Socrates, Machiavelli, Rousseau, Jefferson, Roosevelt, and Martin Luther King, Jr.) differed, but they often shared themes of self-reflection, critique, and emancipation. Unfortunately, these fundamental pillars fell increasingly by the wayside when, for example, globalization spun its web (e.g., mass migration, the Internet, access to faster systems of travel and free trade). Correspondingly, neoliberal discourse penetrated local, state and global systems, and citizenship education like many other aspects of society was altered. A newly designed ‘global’, ‘unregulated’, ‘knowledge society’ claimed a new vision for civil society and thus citizenship and citizenship education. Such discourses became imbedded not only in the corporate world but also in public institutions – education was not immune to this. I discovered that although universal discourses such as sustainability, cooperation, and human rights are promoted in secondary citizenship education via social studies curriculum, little of this discourse is instituted in policy, curriculum and pedagogy. Students are not being given many classroom opportunities to become reflective, engaged and empowered citizens with the capacity to shape society and challenge institutionalized oppressions such as racism, poverty, sexism, ageism, and classism. Based on moral, ethical and democratic imperatives, I present recommendations on how to move forward to create the citizenship education programs youth deserve. I provide guiding principles, a navigational illustration, and an exemplar of what a revised citizenship education curriculum might look like.

Recommended Citation
Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is an interdisciplinary approach to the study of discourse, or put simply talk and text, that views language as a form of social practice. Scholars working in the tradition of CDA generally argue that (non-linguistic) social practice and linguistic practice constitute one another and focus on investigating how societal power relations are established and reinforced through language use. In this sense, it differs from discourse analysis in that it highlights issues of Critical discourse analysis can often be used to reveal power relationships, and how certain groups can be marginalized. Nielsen and Nørreklit (2009) apply critical discourse analysis to the field of management coaching, which they depict diagrammatically in Figure 1 as follows: Figure 1. Model of critical discourse analysis as applied to management coaching. The approach of Michel Foucauld, the French philosopher, sociologist and historian, is more abstract and less linguistically based than that of Fairclough. An Introduction to Critical Discourse Analysis in Education, 2nd edition. New York: Taylor and Francis at www.routledge.com/textbooks/9780415874298. Aim of this Presentation. This goal of this presentation is to introduce a form of discourse analysis called Public Consultative Discourse Analysis (PCDA) that is complementary to the critical discourse analysis presented in Chapter 8. Whereas CDA focused on the analysis of discourses and social practices, PCDA seeks to put the analysis “to work” in the policy making process, making the results of the discourse analysis immediately relevant to the context, actors, and actions. Thus, discourse analysis is inserted into the policy making process itself. A Different Kind of Example…