

MAPPING CIVIC VALUES IN SRI LANKAN SECONDARY SCHOOL CIVICS TEXTBOOKS (GRADES 6–9): A SYSTEMATIC DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

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Abstract

While textbooks are the most important tool for passing on citizenship values to youth, the civic values included in Sri Lankan secondary school curricula remain under-researched. This systematic document analysis examines four state-published Civics Education textbooks for Grades 6 to 9, issued by the Educational Publications Department, Sri Lanka. The study uses Westheimer and Kahne's (2004) framework of citizenship orientations and Hanna's (1963) concentric circles model to discuss: (a) which civic values are highlighted in each grade, (b) how civic complexity deepens as students move through grades, and (c) what key civic gaps appear at each level. Results show a consistent and sequenced curriculum that begins with the individual and the school in Grade 6, moves to family and culture in Grade 7, then to national democratic institutions in Grade 8, and finally to political systems, local government, and conflict resolution in Grade 9. Civic values such as responsibility, respect, discipline, and ethnic harmony are consistently highlighted, while political knowledge is strengthened in the higher grades. However, the analysis reveals limited emphasis on critical civic agency, gender equality, social justice, and meaningful democratic participation skills across all four grade levels, reflecting a tendency toward compliance-oriented citizenship education found in other Asian postcolonial contexts. These findings have implications for curriculum renewal, teacher development, and civic education policy in Sri Lanka and South Asia.

Keywords

civic values; citizenship education; textbook analysis; document analysis; Sri Lanka; curriculum studies; South Asia; multicultural education

1. INTRODUCTION

Textbooks have a privileged role in the civic formation of students, not only as teaching tools but also as ideological products representing state sanctioned visions of the good citizen (Apple, 1992; Pingel, 2010). As such, civic education textbooks analysis serves as a valuable lens on the political and moral assumptions that are both invisible in the formal teaching of citizenship and legitimate within the institutional structures of citizenship education.

Sri Lanka is a particularly interesting situation to analyses. It is a postcolonial, multiethnic island state, coming out of a long-standing civil war (1983-2009) and faces drastic problems concerning national identity, social cohesion, democratic legitimacy and multicultural citizenship.

These tensions have resulted in continual political contestation, curriculum changes, and scholarly debate concerning civic education (Gallagher, 2016; Bush & Saltarelli, 2000). However, systematic scholarly focus on the Civic Education subject and the textbooks that comprise its key core has been limited in Sri Lanka, which is where the subject is taught as compulsory in all the government schools from Grade 6 to 11.

This paper fills this gap by systematically analyzing four state published Civic Education textbooks (Grades 6-9) from Educational Publications Department of Sri Lanka using the document analysis method. Three interrelated concerns motivate the research.

There is a need first for an empirical report on the civic values being transmitted through the official curriculum as a baseline for the evaluation and reform of the curriculum. Theory is a second line of interest in exploring the ways in which a postcolonial, multicultural society organizes the development of civic knowledge from grade to grade. Third, there is a practical issue, based on the researcher's experience as a government school teacher of Civics Education, relating to the extent to which the present textbooks prepare students with the civic skills required for the modern democratic life.

The study is guided by the following research questions:

- RQ1: What civic values are depicted in the secondary school Civic Education textbooks of Sri Lanka (Grades 6-9)?
- RQ2: What are the changes of civic knowledge, values, and complexity at each of the four grade levels?
- RQ3: What are the gaps and/or limitations in civic values depicted throughout the curriculum?

This study has threefold importance. Empirically, it gives a systematic cross-grade analysis of the Sri Lankan Civics textbooks, which has not been done in the scholarly literature so far. In theory, it makes a contribution to comparative citizenship education scholarship with respect to postcolonial and multicultural Asian contexts. In a pragmatic sense it offers

recommendations for textbooks revision and teacher professional development on the basis of evidence in Sri Lanka.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. *Textbook Analysis in Civic Education Research*

Textbooks systematic analysis in the realm of education research is not a new thing. Content analysis, critical discourse analysis and document analysis have been used to analyses the construction and representation of knowledge, social groups, normalization of ideological stances and the transmission of civic values in textbooks (Pingel, 2010; Vickers & Jones, 2005). More specifically in the field of civic and citizenship education, textbook analyses have been undertaken in various countries and continents (e.g., Ethiopia: Anawoke & Engida 2024; China: Weninger 2018; Malaysia: Tan 2018; Indonesia: Print 2007), and the overall trends are fairly similar: states use textbooks to shape citizen identity.

One theme that emerges from this literature is that in many national settings, civic education textbooks emphasize social conformity, national unity, and obeying authority, rather than critical civic engagement and democratic participation (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004; Journell, 2011). Such textbooks often perform what Agbaria (2011) calls 'hegemonic citizenship'—citizenship that is based on loyalty, compliance and cultural assimilation but not critical agency and democratic deliberation.

Recent evidence provides further support for this trend and helps to elucidate its mechanisms. The 109 studies reviewed in Jerome et al. (2024) indicate that the nature of the pedagogical activity, in addition to the content of the textbook, is important for shaping civic dispositions, with studies showing that pedagogical approaches that evoke active dispositions are more likely to foster such dispositions. In a postcolonial context very similar to Sri Lanka, Obiagu (2024) discovered that civics teachers in Nigeria, like those in Sri Lanka, tend to have personally responsible and communitarian views on citizenship, and that the justice-oriented conception of citizenship is not prioritized — meaning that the textbook compliance bias is commonly reproduced and not counterbalanced in the classroom enactment of civics.

2.2. *Citizenship Orientations: A Theoretical Framework*

This work is based on Westheimer and Kahne's (2004) powerful typology of citizenship orientations. Based on empirical research on civic education programmes in the United States, they identify three types of citizenship that can be nurtured through civic education: (1) the personally responsible citizen, who follows rules, pays taxes, and acts honestly; (2) the participatory citizen, who actively engages in the life of the community and civic institutions; and (3) the justice-oriented citizen, who critically examines social structures, challenges

injustice, and advocates for systemic change. These three orientations lie on a spectrum of civic involvement ranging from passive compliance to active efforts of transformation.

This model is especially fruitful for the study of civic education in postcolonial countries, where the traditional focus of civic education has been on values of social harmony and national unity, all of which point towards the concept of the personally responsible citizen, but not on participatory or justice-oriented civic competencies (Kennedy, 2008; Bajaj, 2012). This framework is used here as an analytical lens to examine civil society orientation that can be found in the Sri Lankan Civics textbooks.

2.3. The Concentric Circles Curriculum Model

Often, the structure of civic education curricula is interpreted in the sense of the 'expanding environments' or concentric circles model first proposed by Hanna (1963), which has been widely used in Asian curriculum design. This model suggests that civic education should start with the closest social setting of the student (self and family) and gradually move out to the community, the nation, and the world. The model is based on a developmental rationale: civic ideas that can be related to children's immediate and local experiences are the most meaningful.

The concentric circles model has been very influential, but it has received a good deal of criticism. Children's ability to think abstractly about civic issues is underestimated by the model and their passive attitude toward citizenship – learning about prevailing social structures, not challenging or changing them – is reinforced by the model, according to Brophy and Alleman (2006). This critique is especially relevant in the context of Sri Lanka where the flow from self to school to family to nation evokes the questions as to when the students are given a chance to critically question these environments.

2.4. Civic Education in South and Southeast Asia

Studies on civic education in Asian postcolonial contexts are always marked by the ambivalence between the state's need for social cohesion and national unity, and democratic aspirations for critical citizens and active participation (Kennedy, 2008; Print, 2007). Research in India (Bajaj, 2012), Singapore (Sim & Print, 2009), Indonesia (Wahab, 2010) and Malaysia (Tan, 2018) has also shown that civic education curricula in these countries focus on civic roles and social conformity while civic rights and critical agency are minimized.

Sri Lanka has a unique place in this regional context. Its diverse multiethnic and multireligious population (Sinhalese 74.9%, Tamil 12.6%, Muslim 9.7%, others) and its political context, as a post-conflict state, present specific challenges and opportunities for civic education. Lately, starting after 2009, there is again policy debate about the potential of civic education to serve as a tool for reconciliation and social cohesion (Gallagher, 2016),

but there has been no systematic study of how much or how little of these functions is apparent in the content of the official textbooks.

The gendered aspect of this question has been a focus in recent work. In the context of the present study, the Grade 9 Civic Education textbook has been analyzed and, according to Emerson and Kovinthan Levi (2021), the nation-building syllabus in Pakistan and Sri Lanka generalizes the traditional stereotype of gender in which the protection of the physical boundaries of the state is reserved for men while women are responsible for protecting the moral and cultural integrity of the state. This body of work offers an important basis for juxtaposing the current study's result (in Section 4.4) that gender equality does not appear as an explicit civic value in any of the four textbooks.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. *Research Design*

The study takes qualitative approach where document analysis is used as the methodological approach (Bowen, 2009). Such a method was judged to be the most suitable and feasible one for the research problem under study because the study aims to analyse the civic values in the official curriculum materials, not the behaviors, attitudes or experiences of human participants.

Qualitative research, in general, is interested in meaning, in how something is created, represented and understood in the specific social and institutional context (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The phenomenon to be studied in this research is the construction of civic identity in the official textbook content.

The analytical approach is based on critical content analysis in educational research (Krippendorff, 2018; Morgan, 1993). Critical content analysis is more than a count of frequencies or surface description of the content in text, but engages with how ideas are expressed in the text, the underlying assumptions, who is represented, and, importantly, what is missing or absent. This is especially important when looking at the analysis of civic education materials, in which civic values are not necessarily portrayed in a neutral way, but are impacted by state priorities, political contexts, and dominant social ideologies (Pingel, 2010).

The researcher has a unique insider positionality in relation to this study as a practicing government school teacher of Civics Education in Sri Lanka. The Sri Lankan schooling context, first-hand experiences of the use of these textbooks in classroom teaching and personal experiences with the civic values introduced in the textbooks served as valuable interpretive resources throughout the analysis.

In order to minimize the possibility of preconceptions influencing the interpretation, the researcher kept a reflective journal throughout the analytical process. This reflexivity practice

aligns with the trustworthiness criteria put forth by Lincoln and Guba (1985), who assert that reflexive journaling is a crucial way of improving the credibility of qualitative findings.

3.2. Data Sources

The main sources of primary data are four Sri Lankan government secondary school textbooks of Civic Education, which are published by the Educational Publications Department under the authority of the Ministry of Education and are provided free of charge to all the secondary school students in the government schools. Table 1 below gives an overview of the four textbooks analyzed.

Table 1. Overview of Textbooks Analyzed

Grade	Central Theme	Chapters	Pages	Print Year
Grade 6	Self, School, and Local Region	3	102	2019 (6th print)
Grade 7	Family, Society, and Culture	3	122	2019 (5th print)
Grade 8	Democracy, Public Services, and Work	6	150	2019 (4th print)
Grade 9	Governance, Conflict, and Technology	6	172	2019 (3rd print)

Note. All textbooks published by the Educational Publications Department, Government of Sri Lanka.

3.3. Analytical Procedure

The analytical process was conducted in three stages: firstly, using a three-phase document analysis framework proposed by Bowen (2009), with additional dimensions taken from principles of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and critical content analysis (Krippendorff, 2018).

Stage One: Preliminary Skimming and Familiarization

The initial phase was a detailed reading of entire four textbooks. This phase was not started with an initial coding scheme, but rather with an open and exploratory approach that aligned with the inductive approach recommended by Braun and Clarke (2006).

Each textbook was read as an integrated text that was attentive to the propositional content but also to the organization of the textbook, the order of the topics, the use of a storytelling approach, the kind of activities it offers students, the assumptions it makes about learners and citizens as part of its pedagogy. Initial observations were made in a reflective research journal which documented, not only what was in each textbook, but what seemed to be missing.

Stage Two: Development and Application of the Coding Framework

The second stage was the elaboration of a thematic coding system and systematic application of the thematic coding system to all four textbooks. The coding framework has developed using a combination of both deductive and inductive approaches (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006).

The theoretical codes were used to create deductive codes related to the theoretical frameworks guiding the study, namely citizenship orientations—Westheimer and Kahne (2004), and existing codes from civic education scholarship. Inductive codes were generated from the data in the preliminary reading phase.

After coding, eight thematic categories emerged: civic values and moral formation; rights and responsibilities; democratic knowledge and political literacy; multicultural and intercultural understanding; environmental and sustainability awareness; civic participation and civic agency; world of work and economic citizenship; gaps and silences.

Stage Three: Interpretive Analysis and Cross-Grade Comparison

This third stage was a transition from the coded data to larger interpretive conclusions regarding the patterns, progressions, tensions and absences found across the four textbooks.

All four books were coded, and the resulting data were created in a comparative matrix in which the presence or absence of each civic theme at each grade level could be simultaneously visualized.

The interpretive analysis then drew on the theoretical frameworks to theories the patterns identified, paying special attention to the relationship between what was explicitly present in the textbooks and what was conspicuously missing.

3.4. Trustworthiness and Limitations

The credibility and consistency of the analysis was ensured by coding the framework before the analysis and systematically using it in all four textbooks. Member checking was done through a process of discussing preliminary findings with a Civics Education colleague for verification.

The main drawback of this study is the fact that it is based on the intended curriculum only, represented in the official textbook and that enacted or experienced curriculum is not looked into. Future research is needed to fill this gap by using classroom observation and student interview methods.

4. FINDINGS

4.1. Structural Organization and Curricular Progression

The four textbooks show a logical and sequential organization based on the concentric circles model of civic education (Hanna, 1963). The civic perspective progresses from immediate to more distant social contexts from grade to grade as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Civic Scope Progression Across Grades

Grade	Primary Civic Focus	Civic Environment
Grade 6	Self-identity, school community, local administration	Self → School → Village
Grade 7	Family structures, social institutions, cultural identity	Family → Society → Culture
Grade 8	Democratic processes, public services, world of work	State → Nation → Economy
Grade 9	Political systems, local governance, conflict, technology	Polity → Global → Future

One of the more remarkable aspects of structure is the significant rise in the complexity of the curriculum from Grade 8 upwards. The Grade 6 and 7 each have three chapters, the main emphasis being on moral and social values in familiar social settings.

There are now 6 chapters in each grade (8 and 9), twice as many, which cover significantly more complex civic, political and global concepts. The number of pages increases from 102 in grade 6 to 172 in grade 9 (a 68.6% increase) as the amount of content increases.

This structural change implies a developmental sequence in which moral socialization occurs first and then political education is imparted, a sequence that is typical of the worldwide pattern in designing civic curricula (Kerr, 1999), but that also raises some questions: When do students have their first experiences of critical civic agency?

4.2. Civic Values Identified Across Grades

4.2.1. Values Present Across All Four Grade Levels

There are four civic values that are found throughout the grade 6 to 9 curriculum and are prominent:

- Responsibility and duty: There is a lot of material in each textbook about individual responsibilities and duties in each context, always presented as in relation to rights.
- Respect for authority and elders: Narrative examples, role model profiles and explicit instruction on respect for authority and elders are included across all four grade levels.
- Discipline and law-abidingness: Students are constantly encouraged to obey rules and regulations in any social setting and discipline is regarded as a virtue and a civic duty.

- Honesty and moral integrity: Moral values (truthfulness, integrity, and ethical conduct) are always emphasized, with narrative examples, cautionary stories, and explicit character development content.

4.2.2. Values That Deepen and Expand Across Grades

There are several civic values that are taught in earlier grades and continue to grow as the course moves forward:

- Ethnic and religious harmony: Although this topic is introduced in Grade 7, it receives significant attention in Grade 8 – where the term ‘multicultural society’ is introduced, and there is an analysis of data on ethnic distribution in Sri Lanka, and explicit promotion of ‘intercultural respect’; and in Grade 9, when conflict resolution and political pluralism are covered.
- Rights awareness: In Grade 6, students are introduced to the concept of rights within the school context, in Grade 7, their rights are extended to civil and political rights, in Grade 8 they are referred to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and in Grade 9, their rights are based on constitutional provisions.
- Democratic values: A few references to democratic values are made in Grade 7, but this is sustained and detailed in Grades 8 and 9, where the concepts of direct and indirect democracy, universal franchise, constitutional governance, the role of opposition and judicial sovereignty are discussed.

4.2.3. Values Introduced Only in Upper Grades

Some more complex civic concepts are only introduced in Grades 8 or 9, marking an intentional sequence in the development of ideas:

- Political literacy: Grade 9 is the only grade in the curriculum to include instruction on the political party systems (single party, bi-party, and multi-party), the role of political parties and the institutions of local government.
- Conflict resolution: Grade 9 has a separate chapter on conflict resolution which includes what constitutes conflict, types of conflict, formal conflict resolution (mediation board, judicial inquiry) and qualities of a constructive conflict resolver.
- Technology and sustainable development: only in grade 9 the question of the impact of technological change on the economy, society and environment is discussed in the context of sustainable development.

Table 3 provides a comprehensive overview of the presence and depth of civic values across all four grade levels.

Table 3. Civic Values Presence Matrix (Grades 6–9)

Civic Value / Concept	G6	G7	G8	G9
Responsibility and duty	✓	✓	✓	✓
Respect for authority and elders	✓	✓	✓	✓
Discipline and law-abidingness	✓	✓	✓	✓
Honesty and moral integrity	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ethnic and religious harmony	—	✓	✓✓	✓✓
Environmental awareness	Partial	—	✓	✓✓
Rights awareness	✓	✓	✓✓	✓✓
Democratic values	—	Partial	✓✓	✓✓
Political parties and systems	—	—	—	✓✓
Local government and governance	—	—	—	✓✓
Conflict resolution skills	—	—	—	✓✓
Technology and social change	—	—	—	✓✓
UN Child Rights (UNCRC)	—	—	✓	✓
World of work / civic economy	—	—	✓	✓✓
Media literacy	—	✓	✓	✓
Critical civic agency / advocacy	—	—	—	—
Gender equality	—	—	—	—

Note. ✓ = present; ✓✓ = major focus; — = absent; Partial = incidental mention. Bottom two rows indicate values absent across all grades.

4.3. Pedagogical Approaches and Role Models

It is not only that the four textbooks are different in content, but that they also represent a sequential development in the assumptions of how civic learning is to take place.

Grade 6 is the most activity rich, and features over a quarter of the activities that are explicitly identified within the grade level and across the standards and are broadly constructivist in their approach to civic learning (Vygotsky, 1978; Dewey, 1916).

In Grade 7, there are “named fictional student characters” that engage in extended dialogic learning through structured classroom conversations, a pedagogical practice that has been well established in civic education where Gutmann (1987) argues that democratic education must itself be democratic in form.

In grades 8 and 9, this dialogic form is increasingly accompanied by analytical schemes, tables of data, legal references, and examples of other countries which allow for analysis from a Piagetian developmental logic (Piaget, 1972). The key pedagogical features for each grade are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4. Pedagogical Features and Learning Orientations Across Grades

Feature	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 9
Primary pedagogical mode	Activity-based	Dialogic	Analytical-dialogic	Analytical-political
Student tasks	24+ explicit	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
Use of dialogue	Minimal	Extensive	Moderate	Moderate
Data tables / frameworks	Absent	Minimal	Present	Extensive
Legal / constitutional refs	Absent	Absent	Present	Extensive
International comparisons	Absent	Minimal	Present	Extensive
Dominant learning orientation	Constructivist	Communicative	Analytical	Political-structural

4.3.2. The Role of Biographical Role Model Narratives

A frequent pedagogical feature in all four textbooks is the heavy reliance on biographical role model narratives, long-form descriptions of inspirational people whose lives exemplify the civic virtues the textbooks aim to instill. This approach is representative of the general Confucian approach to moral education around models or exemplars (Kennedy, 2008; Lickona, 1991; Berkowitz & Bier, 2005).

What is analytically important is the internationalization of role models at all grade levels over time. All role models in Grade 6 are local civic with only two national figures – C.W.W. Kannangara (Father of Free Education) and Senaka Bibile (pharmacologist).

The first international figure is introduced in Grade 7: Wilma Rudolph, the African-American sprinter, is portrayed as self-confident and resilient. Interestingly, the story is about her personal overcoming of disability, with her experience of living in segregated society being completely absent, thus failing to evoke social justice as a civic theme.

In Grade 9, Abraham Lincoln is introduced as the only role model in the four textbooks whose action is related to the dismantling of a structural injustice (abolition of slavery) and not to individual achievement. The curriculum follows a concentric circles approach, with national heroes being the starting point and moving towards global citizens, and this development is progressive.

4.4. *Critical Gaps in Civic Values Representation*

Despite its logical and sequential development, the analysis reveals important, enduring omissions in civic values depicted in all four textbooks:

- Lack of critical civic agency: Students in all four grades are seldom depicted as civic agents who are able to question and criticize or challenge a society or political system. The curriculum is always designed to produce citizens who are recipients of civic learning and moral development, a 'personally responsible' approach to citizenship (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004), and not citizens who are participative or justice-oriented.
- Gender equality: No one of the four textbooks mentions the value of gender equality as a civic value and no one critically considers the roles of men and women in the family, school, or community. In the examples of narratives, women are portrayed mostly in domestic and caring capacities. This is not an incidental, but is structurally similar to how gendered visions of citizenship are encoded in the textbooks of the South Asian region, as detailed in the work of Emerson and Kovinthan Levi (2021). This is notable missing relative to the international civic education frameworks and Sri Lanka's responsibilities under the CEDAW and SDGs.
- Social justice and structural inequality: The concepts of poverty, structural discrimination and social justice are hardly dealt with in all four grades. When the concept of economic hardship is mentioned, it is explored on an individual level, with resilience narratives, rather than as a critique of structure – a pattern that reflects Bajaj's (2012) analysis of civic education in South Asian contexts.
- Active democratic participation: Active democratic participation (community organizing, deliberative dialogue, peaceful protest, civic advocacy) is not so prevalent in the curriculum despite the inclusion of voting as a right in Grades 7 and 9.
- Digital citizenship: Digital citizenship (which includes the rights and responsibilities of the digital citizen, social media civic implications, digital literacy, and cybersafe) is superficially discussed in a stand-alone technology chapter that is not connected to other civic expectations.

5. DISCUSSION

The results of this study indicate that Sri Lankan Civic Education curriculum is structurally coherent, developmentally progressive and effective in delivering a clear set of moral and social civic values.

The progression of concentric circles, from self to school, family, society, nation, to global politics (Grades 6–9) is a logical developmental sequence for civic learning, consistent with internationally accepted principles for curriculum design (Kerr, 1999). The underlying

focus on ethnic and religious harmony, which became more prominent in Grade 8 than in Grade 7, is a positive curricular development in response to the imperative for social cohesion and post-conflict reconciliation that has informed Sri Lankan education policy since the post-2009 period (Gallagher, 2016).

But, using the typology of citizenship orientations by Westheimer and Kahne (2004), the curriculum shows a clear and consistent emphasis on the ‘personally responsible citizen’ (citizen who has duties, respects rules, maintains social order) and not participatory or justice-oriented citizenship orientations.

This bias is not an incidental one, but a structural one: it is reproduced across the four grade levels, through all pedagogies, and is manifested in the absence of content on critical civic agency, gender equality, social justice and active democratic participation. This is a trend that has been seen in other postcolonial Asian contexts (Anawoke & Engida, 2024; Print, 2007; Tan, 2018), and that supports Kennedy's (2008) argument that civic education in many Asian societies is marked by the continuous struggle between democratic aspirations and statist imperatives. It also supports the result of Obiagu (2024) which revealed that the current postcolonial civics teacher has personally responsible rather than justice-oriented conceptions of citizenship, implying that the bias that was identified here at the textbook level is likely to be reinforced, and not corrected, in classroom practice unless it is consciously addressed through teacher professional development.

This is especially notable with regard to the lack of gender perspectives in all four textbooks. Sri Lanka has committed to achieving gender equality in its national and international frameworks, such as CEDAW and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and this is reflected in its constitution.

Its systematic omission from the Civic Education curriculum is implicitly suggestive of the civic experiences that are seen as central—and that in turn implicitly reinforces gender hierarchies that civic education, at its best, should be challenging (Bajaj, 2012). This discovery is consistent with the comparative study of the nation building curricula of Sri Lanka and Pakistan by Emerson and Kovinthan Levi (2021), who conclude that in both countries, women are symbolically linked to cultural and moral ideas, but not necessarily to civic and political roles.

In addition, the paper points to the gradual introduction of more politically sophisticated material in Grades 8 and 9, such as the nature of direct and indirect democracy, constitutional rights, the structure of political parties, local government and the formal processes for conflict resolution as a real curricular strength.

This content gives students the structural “know” to inform their civic engagement. The problem, however, is that this knowledge is delivered declaratively (that is, as content to be learned) and not as a foundation for reflective civic practice. It is instructive to consider the review conducted by Jerome et al. (2024) which indicates that while the declarative content of the curriculum is a reliable producer of civic knowledge gains, experiential and dialogic

approaches are important for learning outcomes of active citizenship, which are largely absent from the upper grade textbooks in Sri Lanka.

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

For the first time, this study has systematically analysed the Civic Education textbooks of secondary school level (Grades 6 – 9) in Sri Lanka. The analysis shows that the curriculum builds on a logical concentric circles sequence and the delivery of a system of moral and social civic values, such as responsibility, respect, ethnic harmony and democratic knowledge, is effective across the four grade levels. These are significant accomplishments which demonstrate the thoughtful design of the curriculum and a deep commitment to social cohesion in a diverse, post-conflict society.

Yet the analysis also shows that there is a constant and significant disconnect: The curriculum is overwhelmingly focused on personal responsibility and passive citizenship, and critical inquiry, active citizenship, gender-aware citizenship and justice orientation are largely overlooked. This is also a concern for the quality of civic education and in the long term for the health of democratic culture in Sri Lanka.

Based on the results of this study, it is recommended that the following activities should be conducted:

- For curriculum developers: Content related to active democratic participation, gender equality as a civic value, social justice, and digital citizenship should be added to the Civics textbooks in the future, with a focus on Grades 6 and 7 where such content is currently not included.
- For teacher educators: teacher training programmes – whether PGDE or in-service – should introduce teachers to the pedagogical skills necessary to complement the content of textbooks with critical inquiry approaches, deliberative discussion and civic action projects led by the students.
- For researchers: More studies are needed to investigate the enacted and experienced curriculum, or how teachers implement these textbooks and how the students are influenced by civic education content. Comparing with other civic education curricula in South Asia would also help to strengthen the evidence base in the region.

Finally, this study offers evidence-based insights based on a postcolonial, multicultural context within Asia – an area that has been underrepresented in comparative civic education scholarship – and thus adds to the international literature on textbook analysis and citizenship education. The results highlight the need to continuously and critically examine official civic education curricula as a prerequisite for developing the type of active democratic citizenship needed by pluralistic societies.

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