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## Educating for Global Citizenship: Conflicting Agendas and Understandings

*Educating for global citizenship is increasingly named as a goal of education. This study examines the variations in intent and approach to global education and educating for global citizenship. A review of the literature identifies the links between citizenship and globalization as well as the conflicting discourses and agendas surrounding citizenship education in a globalized neoliberal policy context. Using a conceptual framework that highlights three contrasting approaches to globalization—a neoliberal approach, a radical approach, and a transformational approach—this article compares three global education policies and their citizenship education approaches and highlights the issues implicit in each as well as the problems and possibilities for furthering a social justice agenda. The article concludes that education for global citizenship is a complex and contested concept and that educators who claim to be educating for global citizenship must be clear on the implications of their work.*

*L'éducation civique visant la formation de citoyens du monde est de plus en plus évoquée comme un des buts de l'éducation. Cette étude porte sur les différentes intentions et approches relatives à cet objectif. Une analyse documentaire identifie les liens entre la citoyenneté et la mondialisation, en même temps que les discours et les programmes contradictoires en ce qui concerne l'éducation civique dans un contexte mondialisé de politiques néo libérales. S'appuyant sur un cadre conceptuel qui met en évidence trois approches contradictoires à la mondialisation – une approche néolibérale, une approche radicale et une approche transformationnelle – cet article compare trois politiques en matière d'éducation planétaire et leur approche à l'éducation civique tout en faisant ressortir les enjeux liés à chacune ainsi que les problèmes et les atouts quant à la possibilité de faire avancer un programme de justice sociale. Nous concluons que l'éducation visant la formation de citoyens du monde constitue un concept complexe et contesté et que les enseignants qui prétendent offrir une éducation civique planétaire doivent bien comprendre les conséquences de leur travail.*

### Introduction

For at least the past decade, *educating for global citizenship* has become a main focus of many educators in both the formal school sector and the nonformal and nongovernmental organization (NGO) sector. Evaluations of this decade of work reveal that little identifiable or attributable progress has been made (Canadian Council for International Cooperation [CCIC], 2004). In the early 1990s, with help of Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) funds as well as grand visions of global solidarity, Canadian schools and community organizations joined together in efforts to educate students as members of a global society. Since that time, funding has been cut drastically and coordinated efforts across sectors have decreased as schools face their own local

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budget cuts and shifting mandates such as producing high scores on standardized tests. In this article I argue that this reduction in effective global education or education for global citizenship is a result of vastly different understandings of what global citizenship entails. Dower (2003) suggests that global citizenship comprises three components, “a normative claim about how humans should act, an existential claim about what is the case in the world and an aspirational claim about the future” (p. 7). I present three programs aimed at global citizenship education, each having a distinct understanding of the role for the global citizen, as well as particular normative, existential, and aspirational claims regarding global citizenship.

Global citizenship education has grown in its extent alongside understandings of the process of globalization. McGrew (2000) presents three approaches to globalization that reflect differing positions in the global economic, political, and social system. A neoliberal approach celebrates the dominance of a single global market and the principles of liberal transnational trade. From this perspective, a global citizen is one who is a successful participant in a liberal economy driven by capitalism and technology. In contrast, a radical approach presents globalization as an accelerated mode of Western imperialism that uses economic power for domination. A global citizen from this perspective understands how this system creates poverty and oppresses most of the world’s population and therefore has a responsibility to challenge state and corporate structures that increase the marginalization of countries in the global south. McGrew suggests a third understanding of globalization as that of transformationalism. From this position, globalization is understood as cultural, social, environmental, and political as well as economic, resulting in new patterns of inclusion and exclusion, as well as the erosion of North-South hierarchies. Hoogvelt (1997) suggests that an accurate understanding of globalization is as a nested arrangement of concentric circles, representing the world’s elites, the middle class, and the poor that cut across national boundaries. “North and South, First World/Third World are no longer ‘out there’ but nestled together ‘right here’ in all the world’s urban areas” (McGrew, p. 351). From this perspective, a global citizen understands herself or himself as intricately connected to people and issues that cross national boundaries. This personal connection with all others reflects an understanding that in order to create communities (local and global) that are just, democratic, and sustainable, citizens must understand their connection to all other people through a common humanity, a shared environment, and shared interests and activities. Each of these understandings of globalization suggests a particular role and set of actions for a global citizen.

Understanding the practice of educating for citizenship is equally challenging. Educators, although naming citizenship as key to their overall goals, have had difficulty responding to aspects of citizenship outside its traditional space in the public sector. This is not surprising as even a brief scan of these views presents a tangle of often competing understandings and definitions. As a concept often connected primarily with political positioning and participation in the electoral process, citizenship is now being debated in new arenas. No longer connected with just the public sector, the language of citizenship is creeping into both the private sector and civil society. Businesses make claims

to good corporate citizenship in response to criticism of their environmental and social effects.<sup>1</sup> Civil society organizations have claimed engaged citizenship as a key descriptor of their activism and social change agendas.<sup>2</sup>

These contested definitions reflect wider discourses and tensions in society. Moller (2002) identifies neoliberalism as a powerful source of a particularly narrow philosophy about the role of citizens. "For neoliberals, 'consumer choice' is the guarantor of democracy.... in this way democracy moves from a political concept to an economic concept ... Equity is confused with consumer choice" (p. 10). In a modern, neoliberal society, a citizen's role is primarily an economic one, that of consumer, influencing society through individual acts of consumption. In contrast, a growing movement against neoliberalism presents active citizenship as the radical force necessary to challenge the hegemony of the market and to protect the environmental and social well-being of society (Apple, 2000; Osler, 2000). Lister (1998) suggests that there are two aspects of citizenship,

to be a citizen and to act as a citizen. To be a citizen means to enjoy the rights necessary for agency as well as social and political participation. To act as a citizen involves fulfilling the full potential of the status. (pp. 328-329)

Isin and Wood (1999) suggest that an understanding of citizenship needs to be based on the ethos of pluralization as the necessary response to the tensions of multiple identities and loyalties that currently exist in the contemporary globalized world. As transnational and global factors come to affect individuals and communities, new links and networks have been formed to address these factors. The political and social reality has shifted to include the interdependence of relationships as people find ways to address their common needs and concerns locally, nationally, and transnationally as global citizens.

### *Three Approaches to Global Citizenship*

#### *The Neoliberal Global Citizen*

In the neoliberal perspective, the role of the individual as an entrepreneur in the private sector is a privileged position. With the government role focused on creating space for free market expansion, particularly in areas not traditionally market friendly, the citizenship response is both to access these markets and to "ameliorate the disordered fault of capitalist progress" (Thomas, 2000, p. 43) in the form of interventions at the local level. Thomas describes interventionism as a parallel response alongside neoliberal development as evidenced by the increase in development agencies or trustees of development such as NGOs and international NGOs (INGOs). There were 6,000 INGOs in 1990 and 26,000 in 1999 (*Economist*, 1999). INGOs, although certainly not homogeneous in approach or mandate, have been instrumental in bringing the discourse of global citizenship to the community level. These organizations employ millions of people who travel throughout the world bringing with them an agenda for "global development." Interventionism engages people in actions that both remove barriers to modernization and address the problems of neoliberal development such as social disparity and environmental degradation. This group of people, along with millions of global business entrepreneurs, has taken advantage of advances in technology that make communication and movement across time and space a simple matter of Internet access and a

jumbo jet. The result is an understanding of the global citizen as traveler. This citizen strives to create a place beyond traditional boundaries and local restrictions where he or she can access the political, social, economic, and environmental rewards of participation in a global society. Social connection through international liberalism is sought by these citizens, and global citizenship from this perspective is enacted through dialogue and participation. Change is created in the interstices of self, other, and the social context and facilitated by a global economic system. Relationships, both economic and social, are sought freely across time and space without being encumbered by national boundaries. When spending time with people who work in international development agencies, it is always interesting to hear discussions of zigzagging through the world in their work. For example, I was recently in a conversation with two aid workers who said, "I want to get back to the Latin America desk because I only have Indonesia and the Philippines now" and "I have to do project monitoring in Bolivia, Nepal, and Zambia. It will be good to get out of the office" (personal communications, 2004). Iyer (2000) provides another example of this global citizen:

"One country's not enough," said a sweet, unplaceable soul who approached me one night at a gathering in rural Japan, introducing himself as half-English and half-Japanese, though he thought of himself as Malaysian (he'd spotted me, clearly, as a fellow in-between). "When I'm in England, there's a part of me that's not fulfilled; that's why I come here—to find the other part." (p. 19)

*Policy Example: International education*

Although there are endless examples of programs that encourage international travel and global experience, I focus on an international education policy that is typical in jurisdictions throughout the developed world. International education programs focus on the recruitment of students from abroad as well as providing opportunities for local students and teachers to participate in international travel. The Alberta government funds and oversees an international education program that is part of its wider international relations policy. The focus on international education as a means to successful participation in global economics is clearly indicated in recent policy that links such participation with the role of global citizenship.

Globalization and our multicultural society have increased the need for knowledge of other languages and cultures for effective communication, for better human relations in our own diverse Canadian society, and for a competitive edge in the shrinking world of economics. (Alberta Learning, 2003, p.1).

Alberta will be internationally recognized as a leading provider of education, skill development and industry training, and Albertans will be well prepared for their role in the global market place and as global citizens. (Alberta Learning, 2001, p.3)

Key components of the program of international education of this jurisdiction involve a student exchange, a teacher exchange, and international student recruitment.

International student recruitment in both the basic education and postsecondary sectors and international marketing of Alberta expertise in

education and training programs and services, provide net economic benefits to the province. Subsequent multiplier effects from related business, student and tourism expenditures amplify the benefit to the provincial economy. With expanding worldwide demand for education and training and learners' ability to access leading educational programs wherever they are located, international education offers important growth opportunities for Alberta's economy. (Alberta Learning, 2003, p. 1).

In the post-secondary sector, Alberta institutions receive funding support to carry out student exchanges in four countries where Alberta has a special relationship. These exchanges typically involve language and cultural studies. A number of post-secondary institutions have also developed extensive networks and partnerships with institutions in other countries which provide Alberta students with study-abroad and exchange opportunities. Exchange participant report that these programs enhance their own learning and international awareness. Home jurisdictions and institutions report that the programs benefit participants' classmates as they study alongside international students. (Alberta Learning, 2003, <http://www.learning.gov.ab.ca/IntlEd/Activities.asp>)

#### *Approach to Global Citizenship*

The key aim of the global citizenship education efforts from this perspective is to increase transnational mobility of knowledge and skills. Global citizenship, then, is primarily linked to global economic participation, either through participation in business or an instrumental interventionism that mediates the uneven effect of such global actions. It is based on a fundamental understanding that as individuals we should be able to move throughout the world freely, enjoying the rewards regardless of national or other boundaries. The role of education, then, is to facilitate this participation through building relationships (e.g., exchange) based on cultural understanding as well as capacities such as language acquisition. This is understood as how to prepare global citizens able to negotiate this liberal global environment. Liberal relationships that result from these exchanges are understood to be the catalyst for successful participation in the global marketplace. However, without attention to issues of power and access, these global citizens will assume that their position of privilege is a natural position and a sign of success. Although they might support intervention efforts, for example, donations to charities, to mitigate the suffering of those who are not successful, the focus disregards any need for structural change and in fact is antithetical to such change. Therefore, promoters of this form of global citizenship will be largely opposed to the social change agendas of the radical global citizenship and transformational global citizenship projects.

#### *The Radical Global Citizen*

A radical approach to development and citizenship involves an analysis of the global structures that serve to create deep global inequalities. This analysis identifies a "deepening North-South divide as a consequence of uneven globalization" (McGrew, 2000, p. 350). With governments in the global south having declining power, the role of the global citizen is to challenge the structures that perpetuate these circumstances. Rather than focus on building liberal relationships across the globe, the radical global citizen identifies these

relationships and any sense of global or national solidarity as a by-product of the hegemony of economic globalization. The structures that serve to reinforce this hegemony include international institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, and the World Trade Organization (WTO) also known as the Bretton Wood institutions. These institutions were established at the end of WWII to address post-war reconstruction. Originally just the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, the World Trade Organization was added in the 1990s. Currently the group of organizations has grown to five, all under the direction of the World Bank. Of great importance is the fact that the World Bank's director is appointed by the United States government. (compare [www.brettonwoodsproject.org](http://www.brettonwoodsproject.org)). The Bretton Wood institutions face intense challenges from anti-globalization and anti-poverty organizations for their economic policies, for example, structural adjustment programs.

Since the early 1980s, World Bank and IMF loans have increasingly required that recipient countries agree to Letters of Intent committing themselves to a Structural Adjustment Program (SAP), which typically has the following features:

- massive cuts to government spending, particularly in areas such as health and education;
- mass layoffs of public employees;
- liberalization of trade and removal of restrictions on foreign investment;
- withdrawal of subsidies on basic goods consumed by the poor such as bread, rice, and oil;
- cuts to wages of all public employees;
- devaluation of the local currency—which cheapens exports, but makes imported goods on which the population depends more expensive (and thus represents a further cut in living standards);
- privatization of state-owned companies such as public telephones, railway, and electricity systems. (McNally, 2002, pp. 163-164, see also, George, 1997; Thomas, 2000)

These policies have been aggressively instrumented in most countries of the world, but not without challenge. As a result, there has been a drive to create the radical global citizen. “Contemporary globalization, in the radical view, is thus implicated in the intensification of global poverty, deprivation, conflict and violence” (McGrew, 2000, p. 351). The radicalized global citizen is challenged to build solidarity through breaking down these global structures of oppression.

*Policy Example: Halifax Initiative World Bank Boycott*

Policy approaches and programs that promote a radical global citizenship have as their goal a disruption of the structures that hold the dominant global capitalist system in place. Motivated by strong ethical positions of social justice, these global citizens engage in direct actions aimed at forcing radical economic, political, and social change. The World Bank Boycott is an example of a radical approach to global citizenship. It is an international campaign that demands an end to socially and environmentally destructive World Bank policies and projects through grassroots financial and political power. Launched in April 2000 by organizations in 36 countries, the campaign links

people directly affected by World Bank practices with organizations and investors who can affect the flow of money to the Bank with a goal of halting those practices (Halifax Initiative).

The campaign targets a key source of World Bank finance, international bond sales. The Bank receives most of its resources to finance lending to over 100 developing countries from the sale of World Bank bonds on private capital markets. Bonds are bought by governments, universities, mutual funds, pension funds, trade unions, life insurance companies, churches, and civic groups. Employing the tactics of the anti-apartheid movement, ordinary people are organizing locally to boycott these bonds, effectively threatening the Bank's primary source of funding. The boycott campaign has three central demands, which were established by the boycott's international coordinating committee, with representatives from organizations and social movements from 14 countries. The campaign demands an end to the World Bank's harmful structural adjustment policies; 100% debt cancellation and an end to environmentally destructive projects, including oil, gas, mining and dams.

#### *Approach to Global Citizenship*

This approach to global citizenship calls people to action against global institutions, particularly financial institutions that are the main architects of global economic liberalism. In order to create the radical change in north-south relations, citizens must understand the link between the economic activities of these institutions of political, economic, and social oppression and economic destruction, for example, SAPS. This project utilizes the power of local citizens to draw attention to the effects of the international institution and to challenge the basic structures that support it. Citizens are engaged as global citizens in linking marginalized people in the south and the investors, mainly in northern countries, and demanding radicalization of these institutions.

The challenge of this approach to global education is seeing global relations as more than one of victors, villains, and victims. The relationships between global institutions and local experiences of oppression are more complex than this approach might suggest, and therefore engagement as global citizens requires finding new ways to be in relationship if change is to be more than just shifting exploitation from one group to another.

People-centered development for poverty eradication is ultimately about recognizing the rights of the vulnerable and transforming the power relations, and cultural and social interests, that sustain inequality. Development is therefore a political process that engages people, particularly people who are poor and powerless, in negotiating with each other, with their governments, and with the world community for policies and rights that advance their livelihood and secure their future in the world. (Tujan, 2004, p. 7)

Understanding this complexity and finding new ways of being in relationship are needed to fully achieve the justice agenda of the radical global citizen.

#### *The Transformationalist Global Citizen*

From a transformationalist perspective, globalization is viewed as more than a new form of imperialism or just a path to a single global market economy. Although recognizing that globalization is highly uneven in its effect, it is understood that globalization has resulted in a complex and dynamic set of international, national, and local relationships that has created new patterns of

inclusion and exclusion. As a result, new ways of negotiating between local and global actions and agendas, resolving conflict, and acting in solidarity need to be established. There are indications that new models of transnational relations are evolving that link marginalized people throughout the world. There is a shift from a geographic North-South division to a socioeconomic division that cuts across nations and regions (Hoogvelt, 1997). The reality is that in both the north and south, there exist concentrations of wealth and power along with increasing poverty and exclusion. This reality has significant implications for the roles of both the state and civil society as new forms of governance are established that include public and private interests, domestic and transnational agencies, as well as an increasing number of north-south coalitions established to influence policy. "A new development consensus is emerging—often referred to as the post-Washington or Geneva consensus—which recognizes development as a shared global challenge and responsibility amongst states and societies, North or South, industrializing as well as post-industrial" (McGrew, 2000, p. 352). The global citizen in this frame understands his or her role as one of building relationships through embracing diversity and finding shared purpose across national boundaries. Understanding that the complexity of citizenship in a global world is created by and creates a vast network of diverse relationships, the global citizen seeks to include and engage others based on their shared common humanity. The overarching theme of the social justice work being done to eradicate poverty and improve the life possibilities of the marginalized is *a better world is possible*. Not content to just challenge the unjust structures that exist, people throughout the world are joining together to create social justice through deep compassion and accompaniment, through creating democratic spaces for building inclusive community, and through action that links the local experience with the shared global experience.

*Policy Example: Building Knowledge in Partnership*

The transformationalist understanding of the role of the global citizen is illustrated in a recent policy capacity-building initiative that involved Canadian civil society organizations working internationally, their southern partner organizations, as well as other members of southern civil society organizations. The aim of this project was to engage participants in the international voluntary sector in a knowledge-generating process that would build capacity to influence local, national, and international policy. Based on core values of solidarity, equity, and social justice, this participatory process "encouraged collaborative sharing of knowledge and perspective, creativity, innovation and effective engagement" (CCIC, 2003). This project was designed to create a global alliance that allows for engagement on issues of global concern.

It is important to build strong networks, North-North, North-South, South-South, which take into account strategic access ... An important part of these relationships is for Northern NGOs to "close the loop" with other Northern based organization focusing on similar issues ... The foundation of an alliance must be based on shared values and principles. (CCIC)

The objectives of participation included:



- To explore with members processes of learning and working in North/South partnership to build knowledge for policy influence and the challenges and power dynamics inherent to these processes.
- To begin to collectively examine methodologies for addressing these dynamics and challenges.
- ... to increase the capacity in the membership for learning for policy influence, and level of involvement in policy development processes. (CCIC)

Central to this approach to global citizenship is the focus on knowledge-building, which is the key element of the process and the intended outcome of this project. Participants were engaged in critiquing the processes of sharing knowledge that exist in current relationships. "How can we transform processes of extraction to mutual learning? What knowledge do you need from us? This is the knowledge we need from you" (CCIC). The goal of this process was to transform social and political relationships between people across national boundaries. The fundamental position underpinning this project is that

we need to develop political awareness through education and social mobilization at the base, with a critical approach as to how society and political power works. To achieve results civil society must work through coalitions and networks, global, regional and national networks with different commonalities of constituencies. (personal communication, CCIC, 2003)

#### *Approach to Global Citizenship*

This project reflects an understanding of the importance of creating democratic spaces for community and coalition-building across local, national, and regional boundaries. Through this process citizens are able to link action at the local and global level to build authentic challenges to those forces that perpetuate oppression, poverty, and marginalization. These processes of building relationships and creating space for dialogue and change are meant to engage participants in acting on an understanding of their common humanity and shared concerns. In this the global citizen is a companion, accompanying the *other* on a journey to find just and compassionate responses to injustice. These relations act as fractals, local patterns of embracing diversity that are reproduced to create global stability through creating new forms of inclusion and transnational solidarity. The policy challenge in this approach to citizenship is to ensure that *just* action is achieved in the complexity and complicity of relationships and engagement as a citizen of a global world.

#### *Conclusion*

As global citizenship takes a more central focus in education policy, it is important that we have a clear understanding of the actual goals of global citizenship being presented. There is a sense that little has been accomplished in the past decade despite significant efforts by formal and nonformal educators to engage students as global citizens. As this study has revealed, approaches to global citizenship are vastly different in their intent and approach. The three approaches presented in this study function in isolation from one another and can be understood as counterproductive in engaging people as global citizens, particularly the neoliberal approach as compared with the radical and transformationalist positions. The neoliberal global citizen learns to expect unrestricted access to the rewards of a liberal global economic system.

Any challenge to this access is viewed as problematic protectionism. The radical approach to global citizenship that focuses solely on the hegemony of global structures may in fact mask how local and global actors are intertwined to create exploitation and increased marginalization of particular groups, for example, poor women and children, and also how local and global actors can create change in these unjust situations. Global citizens learn that the world is determined by structures that prevent authentic change or relationships from developing. As understandings of how common experiences of poverty and marginalization extend beyond state boundaries have developed, a new approach to global citizenship has developed. Based on understandings of a shared planet and a common humanity, global citizens learn that compassion and care become powerful connections that cross the typical boundaries of state, nationality, race, class, and sex. Power relations become negotiated in localized contexts as spaces of interaction are established for dialogue and deliberation. These become global spaces through the connection of transnational networks and coalitions of solidarity.

Educators include global citizenship goals in recognition that citizens need to be engaged in issues and actions beyond their local context. How this engagement is viewed determines what type of global citizen is created in the process. If citizens of the wealthiest nations learn that their role as global citizens is to compete in the global marketplace, then the structures of inequality that keep members of less wealthy countries marginalized will be perpetuated, if not strengthened. New ways of structuring relations between nations and within nations need to be learned into existence through building spaces of understanding and engagement that extend beyond traditional boundaries and create new ways of negotiating global relations. This must be the role of the global citizen.

#### *Notes*

1. For example, one international pharmaceutical company states that “global citizenship is about how a company advances its business objectives, engages its stakeholders, implements its policies, applies its social investment and philanthropy and exercises its influences to make a productive contribution to society” ([http://media.pfizer.com/file/corporate\\_citizenship](http://media.pfizer.com/file/corporate_citizenship)). A large energy company describes its environmental policies as part of “a philosophy of global citizenship, based on building strong relationships with people, communities and nations” (<http://www.shell.com/content/>).
2. The CCIC (1996) describes global citizenship from a civil society perspective “Global citizenship nurtures collective action for the good of the planet and promotes equity. As citizens, each person has equal rights. Global citizenship hinges on Canadians recognizing that they are members of a community of peoples who share a single planet.” An international development organization defines global citizenship as “more than the sum of its parts. It goes beyond simply knowing that we are citizens of the globe to an acknowledgement of our responsibilities both to each other and to the Earth itself ... it is about the need to tackle injustice and inequality and having the desire and ability to work actively to do so” (<http://ccic.ca/002/public.shtml>).

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